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A New Interpretation of Matthew 18:18-20: Reconciliation and the Repentance Discourse

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The University of Edinburgh
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Declaration

This is to certify that the work contained within

has been composed by me and is entirely my own work.

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Abstract

Matthew 18:18-20 is an important section of the discourse of Matthew 18 and one of the most important passages for Matthew's theology. The near identical wording of Mt. 18:18 to Mt. 16:19b-c gives this section even further importance. Mt. 16:17-19 has long been a source of disagreement about the place of Peter or the structure of the church in early Christianity, so the connection of Mt. 18:18 to Mt. 16:19b-c closely ties one important passage of Matthew to another.

This thesis proposes a new interpretation for Mt. 18:18-20 and also for Mt. 16:19b-c, though the primary aim of the thesis is directed to the new interpretation of Mt. 18:18-20. The entire section of Mt. 18:18-20 is an expression of a central and repeated emphasis of Matthew's theology, his emphasis on divine causation in human behavior. The heaven-first order of binding and loosing in Mt. 18:18 expresses the conviction that God causes a person to repent (which does not deny there also being human causation). When the sinner of Mt. 18:15 looses his sin from himself through repentance, and when disciples respond by treating him as if his sin were loosed, such loosing has already occurred in heaven because God caused the person to repent. When the sinner holds fast to his sin and thus is treated by disciples in kind as if his sin were indeed bound to him, this is so because of the absence of such divine influence to repentance or because of the withdrawal of such influence in cases where the sinner has resisted it. It is thus appropriate to say that what has been loosed or bound on earth has already been loosed or bound in heaven. This

explains the periphrastic future perfect verbal forms of Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18. Matthew moves from the focus primarily on sin in Mt. 18:18 to a focus on conflict in Mt. 18:19. When two persons reconcile and thus resolve conflict, such reconciliation will have been divinely caused. The apodosis of Mt. 18:19 gives information about the cause of the event of the protasis. Something similar happens in Mt. 18:20, where the presence of the exalted Jesus mediates the presence of God, who works together with the exalted Jesus to bring reconciliation for the name of Jesus. Such an interpretation is the basis for renaming the discourse. It is a repentance discourse.

This proposal for Mt. 18:18-20 avoids problems that have plagued previous interpretations of these verses. It does justice to the periphrastic future verbal forms and respects the linguistic evidence of Mt. 18:18-20. It also allows the interpreter to find a triad of triads structure that aligns the repentance discourse with the structure of the preceding discourses and with Matthew's use of triads in non-discourse material. Further, though this proposal is defensible on its own, it is also in continuity with Matthew's emphases on reconciliation and divine causation prior to Mt. 18. The results of this study are significant for source and redaction critical assessment of Mt. 18, for understanding Matthew's theology, and for understanding his conception of righteousness.

I. Introduction

This thesis proposes a new interpretation for Matthew 18:18-20. Although Matthew 18:18 and its counterpart in 16:19b-c have long been a source of contention, it appears that no solution offered by modern commentators has succeeded in freeing itself from significant criticism. The proposal advanced in this thesis aims to avoid such criticisms and make better sense of the verse and its context than has been done by previous interpretations. While Mt. 18:19-20 has generally been met with greater unanimity among scholars as to interpretation, the traditional interpretations of these verses have left scholars stuck with an analysis of Mt. 18:15-35 that is somewhat disjointed and inconsistent with Matthew's redactional or authorial style in other passages. In addition, the traditional interpretation of Mt. 18:19 as dealing with prayer suffers from its own criticism. The interpretation offered in this thesis avoids such problems, and not having been offered by any modern (or, in the knowledge of this author, ancient) commentator, is able to solve what has proven in the past to be one of the more stubborn problems in Matthean scholarship.

This opening chapter will give a brief survey of some scholarship on Mt. 18:18-20, point to previous scholarship on which this thesis builds, and give some remarks on the methodology or assumptions of the study. The second chapter will lay out the new proposal for Mt. 18:18-20. The third chapter will give some justification for this thesis' interpretation of the periphrastic future perfect verbal forms of Mt. 18:18, and the fourth chapter will critique some previous

views of the binding and loosing statement of Mt. 18:18. The fifth chapter will provide a conclusion.

1. A History of Scholarship for Mt. 18:18-20

A history of scholarship for Mt. 18:18-20 may be divided into three sections. Two sections would be for Mt. 18:18, and one for Mt. 18:19-20. Two significant issues must be dealt with in interpreting Mt. 18:18. One is how to interpret the periphrastic future perfect verbal forms. The other is how to understand the meaning of binding and loosing. This history of scholarship section will first examine proposals for the periphrastic future perfect verbal forms and then move to proposals for how to understand the meaning of binding and loosing. Then it will move to consideration of proposals for Mt. 18:19 and 18:20.¹ In this section, some scholars are not given much more than a footnote while the view of others receive some attention.

Usually this is not because of particular scholars being far more influential than others, but

1. In what follows, some scholars are not given much attention. Some literature does not take a definite and clear stance on the meaning of binding and loosing in 18:18 nor on the order of binding and loosing, or proved unhelpful. Cf. Barclay, William. (2001). *The Gospel of Matthew* (Revised and Updated ed. The New Daily Study Bible). Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, pp. 217-221) (Barclay's section on Mt. 18:18 is not of much help outside of his statement that the binding and loosing saying "cannot mean that the Church can remit or forgive sins, and so settle human destiny in time or in eternity." (p. 221)); Hauerwas, Stanley. (2006). *Matthew* (SCM Theological Commentary on the Bible). London: SCM Press; Brown, R., K. P. Donfried, & J. Reumann, Eds., (1973). *Peter in the New Testament: A Collaborative Assessment by Protestant and Roman Catholic Scholars*. New York: Paulist Press (see especially pp. 98-100, 107); Matthew, P. K. (1985). "Authority and Discipline: Matt. 16.17-19 and 18.15-18 and the Exercise of Authority and Discipline in the Matthean Community". *Communio Viatorum*, 28, 119-125; Gundry, Robert H. (1964). "The Narrative Framework of Matthew 16.17-19". *Novum Testamentum*, 7, 1-9; Dodd, Charles Harold. (1955). "Some Johannine 'Herrnworte' with Parallels in the Synoptic Gospels". *New Testament Studies*, 2, 75-86; Seitz, O. J. F. (1950). "Upon this Rock: A Critical Re-examination of Matt 16.17-19". *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 69, 329-340.

because scholars express views typical of others. If one is in many respects representative of others, there is not much need to do more beyond describing typical views and citing others with a similar opinion.

Though this division of the history of interpretation helps in bringing order to a wide variety of views, it may leave a reader without a clear sense of how some scholars perceive the flow of thought in Matthew 18:18-20. It may therefore be of some help to sketch in brief how some scholars explain how these three verses do or do not function together. This task will be taken up before moving on to examine history of interpretation for individual parts of Mt. 18:18-20.

(a) Previous Scholarship on the Rationale of Mt. 18:18-20

This section will focus on the flow of thought in Mt. 18:18-20 as viewed by certain scholars. The three subsequent sections will look at the three most important areas in the history of interpretation of Mt. 18:18-20, but the division of history of interpretation into these three areas does not easily lend itself to understanding how individual scholars have explained the relationships among and flow of thought within these three verses. In compensation for this, this section follows some of the thinking of certain scholars from one verse to the next and explains how they attempted to make sense of the three verses together.

Comprehensiveness in such presentation is unnecessary and would expand the size of this thesis' history of interpretation beyond what is appropriate, but the scholars selected in this section, if taken together, do represent a significant section of scholarly opinion and include

some of the most influential voices in Matthean studies. In order, the scholars whose views will be examined here are Davies and Allison, Nolland, France, Hagner, Allen, Gundry, Keener, Derrett,² Schweizer, Blomberg, Thompson, and Luz.

Davies and Allison contend that the binding and loosing statement of Mt. 18:18 follows Mt. 18:17 closely and "does not apply to the actions described in vv. 15 and 16"³; having taken Mt. 18:17 to be about excommunication,⁴ Davies and Allison interpret Mt. 18:18 to mean that "the halakhic decisions of the community have the authority of heaven itself. In context the reference is to the church's verdict on the behaviour of an individual Christian."⁵ Though Mt. 18:19-20 is thought not to be originally connected with Mt. 18:15-18, Mt. 18:18-20 "ground the authority of the church in theological propositions",⁶ with Mt. 18:19 indicating that the "power of the community depends upon the spiritual harmony (συμπωνέω) of its members"⁷ and Mt. 18:19 also clarifying "v. 18 by stating that agreement among believers on earth will have its sure effect in heaven."⁸

In coming right after the assurance of Mt. 18:19, Mt. 18:20 has "a promise that the risen Christ will be present where two or three are gathered 'in his name'. ... the meaning is that the

2. Some of Carson's view will also be examined.

3. Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C. (1991). *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments Vol. 2: Commentary on Matthew VIII-XVIII). Edinburgh: T & T Clark, p. 787.

4. Ibid., p. 786.

5. Ibid., p. 787.

6. Ibid., p. 782.

7. Ibid., p. 788.

8. Ibid., p. 788.

community's prayer becomes Jesus' prayer, and his prayer cannot but be answered."⁹ In this way, Davies and Allison tie the binding and loosing statement of Mt. 18:18 to Mt. 18:17, and they ground this binding and loosing authority of Mt. 18:18 in the prayer promise of Mt. 18:19 and the promise of presence in Mt. 18:20.

Nolland contends that the binding and loosing of Mt. 18:18 has to do with behavioural regulation. He says that

It has to do with bringing to bear on the lives of those who would be disciples the significance of all that Jesus was and brought. Having been instructed by Jesus, the church is able to prohibit and command in a manner that is backed by God himself. In the context of the attempt to bring back an erring brother or sister, the specific point will be that the church is able to confirm the standard of behaviour to which the erring one is being called to conform once more.¹⁰

Nolland indicates that the agreement between the two persons is presumably meant to filter out inappropriate requests. He says

Most likely the church is seeking guidance for exercising the role involved in vv. 17-18: behind the binding and loosing of v. 18 stands the praying of v. 19. There can be speaking on behalf of God himself and a putting of his will into effect in v. 18 precisely because of the successful praying of v. 19. In prayer the application of what has been received from Jesus to the specific case in hand will become clear.¹¹

For Nolland, then, Mt. 18:19 gives justification for Mt. 18:18 and an explanation of rationale behind it. Mt. 18:20 has a similar function for Mt. 18:19. It "offers explanation and support for what has been maintained in v. 19"¹²; the reasoning is that "since his presence

9. Ibid., p. 788-789.

10. Nolland, John. (2005). *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (The New International Greek Testament Commentary). Grand Rapids; Bletchley: Eerdmans; Paternoster, p. 748.

11. Ibid., p. 749.

12. Ibid., p. 750.

mediates God's presence, it surely brings with it the answer to prayer promised in 18:19."¹³

Nolland thus views the binding and loosing statement as assuring that application of Jesus' teaching to specific situations would be confirmed in heaven, grounds this authority in the conviction that clarity that would come in prayer in Mt. 18:19, and grounds this latter conviction in the assurance of Christological and divine presence to those gathered in prayer.

France thinks that binding and loosing in Mt. 18:18 is about determining what is and is not sin or what is and is not permitted. Unlike Davies and Allison, the order of binding and loosing for France is from heaven to earth. France's explanation for this in Mt. 16:19 was that the saying was "a promise not of divine *endorsement*, but of divine *guidance* to enable Peter to decide in accordance with God's already determined purpose."¹⁴ With such a view, the binding and loosing statement does not mean that God is bound to give his approval to anything disciples could think up.¹⁵ For Mt. 18:19, France says that "The prayer envisaged in context is likely to be for the restoration of the sinner", though France acknowledges that the wording does not restrict only to this situation.¹⁶ As with Nolland, the statements of Mt. 18:19-20 are grounded in Mt. 18:20, this time by France's remark that "His spiritual presence among them is the source of their authority to declare the will of God and to expect God to hear their prayers."¹⁷

13. Ibid., p. 751.

14. France, R. T. (2007). *The Gospel of Matthew* (The New International Commentary on the New Testament). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, p. 627.

15. Ibid., p. 697.

16. Ibid., p. 697.

17. Ibid., p. 698.

Hagner provides one of the clearer explanations for the relationship between different parts of Mt. 18:18-20. In his outline, Mt. 18:15-17 gives a procedure in the case of specific offense, an offense which can lead to public exposure and ostracism in Mt. 18:17. Mt. 18:18 is a "statement of the authority behind such discipline".¹⁸ Mt. 18:19 has to do with "the answer to prayer in such matters" and Mt. 18:20 with "the presence of Jesus in such circumstances".¹⁹ Hagner contends that Mt. 18:19 introduces an emphatic promise "to encourage the church in its administration of church discipline. In instances of discipline, the community leaders will 'ask' ... for guidance; where two ... are agreed ..., they can be assured of God's guidance in their decisions."²⁰

Hagner adds that the promise that disciples' agreement in disciplinary matters would be the will of heaven is restricted by its context.²¹ Mt. 18:20 adds still another promise, according to Hagner. In this case, it is that "In the conduct of its business, and again by context especially in the handling of church discipline ..., where two or three ... are gathered 'in my name' ..., there Jesus will be in their midst."²²

Allen thinks that the statement of Mt. 18:18 "means that the decisions of the community regarding what is or is not justifiable in its members must be regarded as final"; though he does not think that Mt. 18:19 is "in an original connection" he contends that Mt. 18:19 "gives the

18. Hagner, Donald A. (1995). *Matthew 14-28* (Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 33B). Dallas, TX: Word Books, p. 530.

19. Ibid., p. 530.

20. Ibid., p. 533.

21. Ibid., p. 533.

22. Ibid., p. 533.

reason for the assurance in v. 18. The decisions of the community will be final, because God will hear the petitions of even two Christians who agree together."²³ As with other commentators, Mt. 18:20 is thought to give clarity to Mt. 18:19 when Allen says that "the prayer of two who are agreed will receive an answer, because Christ is with His disciples in their prayer".²⁴ Mt. 18:20 would thus explain much of Mt. 18:19, and Mt. 18:19 would justify the binding and loosing statement of Mt. 18:18.

Gundry thinks that Mt. 18:18 has to do with "disciplinary retention of sins by means of ostracism" and "forgiveness of sins by means of restoration to fellowship".²⁵ Mt. 18:19 "promises answer to the prayers which are to accompany loosing, the last-mentioned action. ... the disciples may have confidence that *God* should forgive the sin of the brother who heeds reproof just as *they* have loosed, or forgiven, his sin."²⁶ In his section on Mt. 18:20, Gundry adds that

His dynamic presence provides the reason for the heavenly Father's answering their prayers. How could the Father refuse those who pray gathered in the name of his Son and blessed with the presence of his Son? Matthew writes "two or three" rather than "the church" to assure the two or three mentioned in v 16 that should their brother repent they do not need the rest of the church to pray successfully for his forgiveness. His refusal to heed the first reproof by the single brother sinned against might have seemed to require the prayers of the whole church.²⁷

23. Allen, Willoughby C. (1912). *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Matthew* (3 ed. International Critical Commentary). Edinburgh: T & T Clark, p. 198.

24. Ibid., pp. 198-199.

25. Gundry, Robert H. (1982). *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (2 ed.). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, p. 369.

26. Ibid., p. 369.

27. Ibid., p. 370.

Here again, Mt. 18:20 gives rationale for Mt. 18:19. But Gundry differs from some other commentators in that Mt. 18:19 does not have quite the same function of justifying Mt. 18:18. It addresses a question that could arise in a situation where the sinner does repent, but is not primarily intended to bolster an authority granted in Mt. 18:18.

Taking Mt. 18:17 as indicating excommunication, Keener thinks that the binding of Mt. 18:18 has to do with removing an unrepentant sinner from the community, and that in doing this disciples ratify the decree of the heavenly court.²⁸ Keener further says that "The 'two' or 'three' gathered for prayer in 18:19-20 must be the 'two or three' witnesses of 18:16; the 'matter' ... concerning which they agree is prayer for the offender."²⁹ Though Keener thinks that it is possible that the prayer could be "the negative prayer of execration", Keener also says that "in this context of forgiveness the prayer may represent a prayer for ultimate restoration".³⁰

Derrett takes a common view of the last part of Mt. 18:17 and of Mt. 18:18. According to him, Mt. 18:18 "conveys to the Church the power to make its own laws and apply them. They may 'bind', i.e., restrain, prohibit, and they may 'loose', i.e., permit, allow ... God will validate their acts."³¹ He goes further and says that treating someone whom the Church has condemned as a non-brother would be justified given that the Church's deliberations would be guided by the Spirit.³² In approaching Mt. 18:19-20, Derrett thinks that the context is important. With Mt.

28. Keener, C. S. (2009). *The Gospel of Matthew. A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*. Grand Rapids and Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, p. 454.

29. Ibid., p. 455.

30. Ibid., p. 455.

31. Derrett, John Duncan Martin. (1979). "'Where Two or Three Are Convened in My Name.': A Sad Misunderstanding". *Expository Times*, 91, 83-86, p. 84.

32. Ibid., p. 84.

18:15-18 starting with a sinner and with Mt. 18:21-22 emphasizing the duty to forgive sin, Derrett concludes that the two verses in between likely "have something to do with discipline, and with dispute settlement."³³ In Mt. 18:19, there is, according to Derrett,

Christ's authorization, pledging the support of his Father in heaven, for any accord or settlement arrived at by mutual agreement, whether or not it harmonizes with the Church's developing law, its exercise of the power to bind and loose. This verse is therefore supplementary to the verse immediately preceding it, and, perhaps, necessary to it.³⁴

It would appear from these words that Mt. 18:19 provides a sort of exception for Mt. 18:18. Whereas Derrett thinks that the binding and loosing statement of Mt. 18:18 has to do with a permitting or forbidding that is given divine endorsement, Mt. 18:19 would reserve a space wherein a process of arbitration or adjudication can be the means by which heavenly approval is given. Mt. 18:20 undergirds Mt. 18:19 on this view. Contending that Mt. 18:20 "has nothing to do with prayer", Derrett says that the

unofficial dispute-settlers, peacemakers, perform a divine function. The Christian, submitting to Christian discipline, has faith that the arbitrators whom he has partly chosen for himself, supplemented perhaps by one chosen by the Church, will act as colleagues of Christ himself, and therefore he will believe that their solution is his will. The practical result is that he will not run to the state court to have it set aside or rendered otherwise infructuous.³⁵

Carson agrees with Derrett that Mt. 18:19-20 should not be taken as giving a promise about just any prayer, and notes that if this passage deals at all with prayer, the interpretation

33. Ibid., p. 84.

34. Ibid., p. 85.

35. Ibid., p. 86.

should be limited by the context. He then discusses some of Derrett's view without any hint of disagreement, and yet does not clearly state that he agrees with all of Derrett's view.³⁶

Eduard Schweizer thinks that what was promised to Peter in Mt. 16:19 is promised to disciples in Mt. 18:18 and that in the context of Mt. 18, the binding and loosing "refer to the sinner, and represent conviction and acquittal."³⁷ Schweizer thinks that what the community decides in regard to binding or loosing would be ratified by God, but the community's authority "is ... the authority they gain through prayer. It is assumed, ... that the community prays according to God's will, as Jesus taught his disciples to pray in the Lord's prayer."³⁸ Schweizer here appears to have Mt. 18:19 give some clarification of the authority he sees given in Mt. 18:18. He does not seem, though, to connect Mt. 18:20 with Mt. 18:18-19 in a significant way.³⁹

Blomberg takes a somewhat similar approach to Schweizer. He contends that in Mt. 18:18 "Jesus is almost certainly referring to the procedures of vv. 15-17 involving the withholding or bestowing of forgiveness and fellowship."⁴⁰ When he comes to Mt. 18:19, Blomberg thinks that it restates the theme from Mt. 18:18, that "Jesus reiterates that actions of Christian discipline, following God's guidelines, have his endorsement" and for Mt. 18:20,

36. Cf. Carson, D. A. (1995). *Matthew: Chapters 13 through 28* (The Expositor's Bible Commentary). Grand Rapids: Zondervan, pp. 403-404.

37. Schweizer, Eduard. (1975). *The Good News According to Matthew* (Green, David E., Trans.). Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, p. 371.

38. Ibid., p. 374.

39. Cf. Ibid., pp. 374-375.

40. Blomberg, Craig L. (1992). *Matthew* (New American Commentary Vol. 22). Nashville: Broadman, p. 280.

Blomberg contends that in its context "v. 20 ... assures God's blessings on action properly taken to try to reconcile believers to one another (as in vv. 15-18)."⁴¹

Thompson thinks that the 'Truly I say to you' opening of Mt. 18:18 suggests that Mt. 18:18 somehow gives a conclusion to what is in Mt. 18:15-17. The opposition of accepting or not accepting correction in Mt 18:15-17 suggests an association with the opposition of binding and loosing. Thus, refusing to accept correction for his sin, a brother binds his sin more to himself and disciples in turn do the same, and he looses it, and so do disciples, when he accepts correction. Such binding and loosing are, in Thompson's view, ratified in heaven. The 'two of you' in Mt. 18:19 would include the sinner of Mt. 18:15 and the one who initially confronts the sinner, and might include even more.⁴² Thompson takes Mt. 18:19 as if it were something of a restatement of Mt. 18:18. After referring to the release of the sinner's sin on earth and also in heaven, he says, "In other words, when they reach an agreement and offer it to the Father in prayer, he infallibly grants their petition (v. 19). For they pray in the name of Jesus who himself is present in their midst (v. 20)."⁴³ Thompson's 'In other words' introduction encourages one to think that the prayer of Mt. 18:19 is a prayer for forgiveness and that the granting of this divine forgiveness corresponds to the heavenly loosing of Mt. 18:18. On this view, Mt. 18:20 is thought to shed light in some way on Mt. 18:19, though Thompson does not explicitly say in the passage

41. Ibid., p. 281.

42. Cf. Thompson, W. G. (1970). *Matthew's Advice to a Divided Community: Mt 17,22-18,35* (Analecta Biblica Vol. 44). Rome: Biblical Institute Press, pp. 201-202.

43. Ibid., p. 202.

above how praying in the name of Jesus and his being present in their midst would ensure a positive divine response to the prayer.⁴⁴

Luz thinks that in context, binding and loosing in Mt. 18:18 refer to forgiving or retaining sins; the disciples are given an authority to bind or retain sins such that they "bind heaven, that is God, not only in the present but also in his verdicts in the final judgment".⁴⁵ To this, Luz thinks that Matthew adds a verse (Mt. 18:19) indicating that "If two persons agree about anything for which they are praying, it will 'happen' for them."⁴⁶ Thinking that "all of the church's 'binding' and 'loosing' was probably accompanied by prayer", Luz contends that the prayer reference in Mt. 18:19 is not so much a limitation of the church's authority as it is a description and justification of it.⁴⁷ Mt. 18:19 "indicates what the basis is for the power promised to the church in v. 18. It originates in God, is rooted in prayer, and remains dependent on God."⁴⁸ Though Luz thinks that "There is in vv. 15-20 no systematic integration of the various lines of thought",⁴⁹ he thinks that in connecting Mt. 18:19-20 with the binding and loosing of Mt. 18:18, Matthew "brings all human activity under the power, the promise, and the grace of God."⁵⁰

44. The same is true of Thompson's statement about Jesus' presence on Ibid., p. 196. But see his statement on p. 198 that "In the Christian community, Jesus himself stands between the disciples and the Father, and his presence assures that their request will be granted." Thompson appears to think it axiomatic that Jesus' presence with those who pray ensures an affirmative response to the prayer.

45. Luz, Ulrich. (2001). *Matthew 8-20* (Crouch, James E., Trans. Hermeneia). Minneapolis: Fortress Press, p. 454.

46. Ibid., p. 458.

47. Ibid., p. 458.

48. Ibid., p. 458.

49. Ibid., p. 462.

50. Ibid., p. 462.

The views of other scholars could be included here, but the foregoing survey should be adequate for the present purpose. Taken together, the scholarly views given here represent a large section of scholarly opinion on the relationship between or among verses in Mt. 18:18-20. It is now time to turn to a more cross-sectional look, one that examines scholarly opinion on significant interpretive issues in these verses.

(b) Previous Scholarship on the Periphrastic Future Perfect Verbal Forms of Mt. 18:18

One significant question about Mt. 18:18 is the order of binding and loosing. For most commentators who have commented on the issue, the order that is important is not necessarily temporal order. Some scholars would not deny that the binding or loosing on earth would happen at the same time as the binding or loosing in heaven. The important issue is on the level of logical order. Does heaven respond to earth, even if its binding or loosing is sometimes temporally simultaneous? Is the binding or loosing in heaven logically prior to the binding or loosing on earth? If the use of 'logically prior' or 'logical order' is not sufficiently clear, an example may be of use. Even though both events happen at approximately the same time, the performative utterance of a master who says to his slave "I release you" is what logically results in the slave's release. The utterance is what produces and what is logically prior to the slave's being released even if both events are temporally simultaneous. That is logical order. If heaven's binding and loosing is logically prior to earth's binding and loosing, that is what may be called a heaven-first order. An earth-first order would be one in which earthly binding is logically prior. Such a difference can be expressed through the choice of a non-perfect future form (e.g. will be

bound ... will be loosed), which would express an earth-first order, or the choice of a perfect future form (e.g. will have been bound ... will have been loosed), which would come from the conviction of a heaven-first logical order.

Though there are scholars on both sides of the issue of logical order of binding and loosing in Mt. 18:18, most contemporary scholars have concluded that heaven's binding or loosing is logically subsequent to that of earth in Mt. 18:18. Argyle,⁵¹ Carter,⁵² Derrett,⁵³ Davies and Allison,⁵⁴ Cadbury,⁵⁵ Collins,⁵⁶ Bruner,⁵⁷ Cox,⁵⁸ Bassler,⁵⁹ Hendriksen,⁶⁰ Manson,⁶¹ McNeile,⁶²

51. Argyle, A. W. (1963). *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Cambridge Bible Commentary). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 127, 141-142.

52. Carter, Warren. (2000). *Matthew and the Margins: A Socio-Political and Religious Reading* (Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series Vol. 204). Sheffield Academic Press, p. 368, 336-337, 594.

53. Derrett, John Duncan Martin. (1983). "Binding and Loosing (Matt 16:19; 18:18; John 29[sic]:23)". *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 102, 112-117, pp. 112-113.

54. Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C., *Matthew 8-18*, pp. 638-640.

55. Cadbury, H. (1939). "The Meaning of John 20:23, Matthew 16:19, and Matthew 18:18". *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 58, 251-254, pp. 252-253.

56. Collins, Raymond F. (1992). Binding and Loosing *Anchor Bible Dictionary* London and New York: Doubleday, p. 744.

57. Bruner, Frederick Dale. (2004). *Matthew: A Commentary: Volume 2: The Churchbook: Matthew 13-28* (Revised and Expanded ed.). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, pp. 132-133, 229-233. Though Bruner translates text of 18:18 with "will have been bound ... will have been loosed", his words make it quite clear that he thinks of heaven's ratifying earth's action.

58. Cox, G. E. P. (1952). *The Gospel of St. Matthew*. London: SCM, p. 118.

59. Bassler, H. (1985). "Derrett's 'Binding' Reopened". *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 104, 297-300, p. 300.

60. Cf. Hendriksen, William. (2007). *El Evangelio según San Mateo* (Casanova, Humberto, Trans. Comentario al Nuevo Testamento). Grand Rapids: Libros Desafío, p. 684 and footnote 611 on p. 684.

61. Manson, Thomas Walter. (1949). *The Sayings of Jesus: As Recorded in the Gospels According to St. Matthew and St. Luke Arranged With Introduction and Commentary*. London: SCM Press, p. 205, 210-211.

62. McNeile, A. H. (1915). *The Gospel According to St Matthew*. London: Macmillan, pp. 243, 267.

Nolland,⁶³ Schnackenburg,⁶⁴ Thompson,⁶⁵ Caba,⁶⁶ Trilling,⁶⁷ Schweizer,⁶⁸ Hill,⁶⁹ Strack-

Billerbeck,⁷⁰ and Porter,⁷¹ have thought the logical order is from earth to heaven in Mt. 18:18.

Others who appear to have such a position, but for whom there is some ambiguity or uncertainty,

or for whom some qualification would be appropriate or needed, include Schweitzer,⁷² Allen,⁷³

Witherington,⁷⁴ Filson,⁷⁵ Corro,⁷⁶ Blomberg,⁷⁷ Pennington,⁷⁸ and Cullmann.⁷⁹ On the other side,

63. Nolland, John, *Matthew*, pp. 680-681.

64. Schnackenburg, Rudolf. (2002). *The Gospel of Matthew* (Barr, Robert R., Trans.). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, p. 160.

65. Thompson, W. G., *Matthew's Advice*, p. 188.

66. Caba, J. (1973). "El poder de la peticion comunitaria". *Gregorianum*, 54, 609-654, pp. 618-619.

67. Trilling, Wolfgang. (1959). *Das Wahre Israel. Studien zu einer Theologie des Matthäusevangeliums* (Erfurter Theologische Studien im Auftrag Des Philosophisch-Theologischen Studiums Erfurt Vol. 7). Leipzig: St. Benno-Verlag, p. 95, seems to support an earth-first order.

68. Schweizer, Eduard, *Matthew*, pp. 343, 371-372.

69. Hill, D. (1972). *The Gospel of Matthew* (The New Century Bible Commentary). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, pp. 262, 276.

70. Strack, Hermann Leberecht, & Paul Billerbeck. (1926). *Das Evangelium Nach Matthäus* (1 ed. Kommentar Zum Neuen Testament Aus Talmud und Midrasch). München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, p. 741.

71. Porter, Stanley E. (1988). "Vague Verbs, Periphrastics, and Matt. 16:19". *Filologia Neotestamentaria*, 2, 155-173, p. 162.

72. Schweitzer, Albert. (1910). *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede* (Montgomery, W., Trans.). Great Britain: A. & C. Black, Ltd., p. 371, fn. 1.

73. Allen, Willoughby C., *Matthew*, pp. 178, 180, 198-199.

74. Witherington, III, Ben. (2006). *Matthew* (Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary). Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, pp. 313, 315, 351.

75. Filson, Floyd V. (1971). *A Commentary on The Gospel According to Matthew* (2 ed. Black's New Testament Commentaries). London: Adam and Charles Black, p. 202, says that Mt. 18:18 confirms the church's authority "to exclude the unrepentant sinner" and says that "It assumes that the disciples (...) meet in loyalty to Jesus, seek divine guidance, and act with sincere concern for the good of individuals and the church. ... The Father will sanction decisions made in a loyal, loving spirit, for they express his judgment and purpose."

76. Corro, Annie del. (2002). "To Put or Not to Put a Footnote: Matthew 16:19". *The Bible Translator*, 53.2, 226-233, pp. 228-233.

77. Cf. Blomberg, Craig L., *Matthew*, pp. 255, 280.

78. Pennington, Jonathan T. (2007). *Heaven and Earth in the Gospel of Matthew* (NovTSup Vol. 126). Leiden: Brill, pp. 75, 205, 210.

79. Cullmann, Oscar. (1953). *Peter: Disciple-Apostle-Martyr: A Historical and Theological Study* (Filson, Floyd V., Trans. 2 ed.). London: SCM, pp. 204-206.

Mantey,⁸⁰ Dayton,⁸¹ Gundry,⁸² Morris,⁸³ Carson⁸⁴, France,⁸⁵ Albright and Mann,⁸⁶ Talbert,⁸⁷ Chamberlain,⁸⁸ Keener,⁸⁹ and Marcus⁹⁰ have thought that the logical order is from heaven to earth in Mt. 18:18. Morison⁹¹ appears to favor a heaven-first order, but with respect to his view, there is some ambiguity or uncertainty, or some qualification would be appropriate or needed.

Some of the commentators who think of a heavenly endorsement do not think the endorsement would be given to just any binding or loosing that disciples could do. Schlatter, for

80. Mantey, J. R. (1939). "The Mistranslation of the Perfect Tense in John 20:23, Matt 16:19, and Matt 18:18". *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 58, 243-249; Mantey, J. R. (1973). "Evidence That The Perfect Tense in John 20:23 and Matthew 16:19 is Mistranslated". *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 16, 129-138; Mantey, J. R. (1981). "Distorted Translations in John 20:23; Matthew 16:18-19 and 18:18". *Review and Expositor*, 78, 409-416.

81. Dayton, Wilber T. (1945). *The Greek Perfect Tense in Relation to John 20:23, Matthew 16:19, and Matthew 18:18*. ThD, ; Dayton, Wilber T. (1947). "John 20:23; Matthew 16:19 and 18:18 in the Light of Greek Perfect Tenses". *The Asbury Seminarian*, 2, 74-89.

82. Gundry, Robert H., *Matthew*, p. 335.

83. Morris, Leon. (1992). *The Gospel According to Matthew*. Grand Rapids and Leicester: Eerdmans and Inter-Varsity, p. 469.

84. Carson, D. A., *Matthew 13-28*, pp. 370-372.

85. France, R. T. (1989). *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, p. 247; France, R. T., *Matthew NICNT*, pp. 626-627, 697.

86. Albright, William Foxwell, & Christopher Stephen Mann. (1971). *Matthew* (The Anchor Bible Vol. 26). New York: Doubleday, p. 198.

87. Talbert, Charles H. (2010). *Matthew* (Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament). Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, pp. 196-197, 221.

88. Chamberlain, W. D. (1941). *An Exegetical Grammar of the Greek New Testament*. New York: The MacMillan Company, p. 80.

89. Keener, C. S., *Matthew Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, pp. 454-455.

90. Marcus, Joel. (1988). "The Gates of Hades and the Keys of the Kingdom (Matt 16:18-19)". *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 50, 443-455, pp. 447-449.

91. Morison, James. (1871). *Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew*. London and Glasgow: Hamilton, Adams, & Co. and Thomas D. Morison, p. 351 says that

His words assure us, therefore, that when any true church (see on Matt. xvi. 18) acts as a true church in matters of discipline, or in any other matters with which it has legitimately to do, *and does not turn its keys in the wrong way*, its decisions are in harmony with the will of the Lord of the church. They reflect on the earth the foregone determinations of God in heaven.

example, uses language of divine endorsement, but he thinks of binding or loosing depending on whether a person repents. The rule of repentance should thus determine the binding or loosing, and this rule is already given.⁹² Tasker speaks of carrying divine sanction in 16:19 and having eternal sanction for 18:18, but his view that receiving such sanction in 18:18 was conditional makes it debatable whether 'earth-first' order by itself gives the whole picture.⁹³ Smith says that "heaven actively participates" in the binding and loosing" and that "Heaven's participation functions both as promise and as threat."⁹⁴ What one makes of this is left to the scholar. Hagner treads lightly on the issue, stating that "Whether this is already decreed in the will of God or subsequently ratified as the will of God is not the issue here. Peter's authority, in short, is such that he speaks on behalf of heaven".⁹⁵ Calvin speaks of ratification, but insists that such ratification only occurs in certain circumstances.⁹⁶ Other commentators are not very clear and helpful on the issue of order.⁹⁷

92. Cf. Schlatter, Adolf. (1948). *Der Evangelist Matthäus: Seine Sprache, sein Ziel, seine Selbständigkeit*. Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, pp. 555-556.

93. Tasker, R. V. G. (1961). *The Gospel According to St. Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary* (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, pp. 158, 173. If it would not give the whole picture, then it may be noted that Mantey has some similarity with Tasker in regard to conditionality, but Mantey is quite clear about the issue of order.

94. Smith, Robert H. (1989). *Matthew* (Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament). Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, p. 222.

95. Hagner, Donald A., *Matthew 14-28*, p. 474.

96. Cf. Calvin, John. (1999). *Commentary on Matthew, Mark, Luke - Volume 2*. Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, pp. 251-253. Cf. also p. 205.

97. Green, F. W. (1936). *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew In the Revised Version with Introduction and Commentary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 204, 214-215; Plummer, Alfred. (1910). *An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to S. Matthew* (2 ed.). London: Elliot Stock, pp. 227, 231, 254; Evans, Craig A. (2012). *Matthew* (New Cambridge Bible Commentary). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, pp. 315, 334, says that Mt. 16:19b-c assures "the apostle that he has heaven's backing" (p. 315).

Disagreement among commentators is reflected in differences in translation of Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18. Some translations choose a non-perfect future form (e.g. will be bound ... will be loosed) or future perfect form (e.g. will have been bound ... will have been loosed), but include note(s) indicating that the other form is a possibility. Versions that have a non-perfect future form (e.g. will be bound ... will be loosed) in the apodosis of the main text, but with note(s) indicating that a future perfect is a possibility, include New International Version, English Standard Version, Nueva Biblia Latinoamericana de Hoy (NBLH), and La Biblia de las Américas (LBLA).

Versions that have a future perfect form (e.g. will have been bound ... will have been loosed) in the apodosis, with note(s) indicating that a non-perfect future form is a possibility, include Nova Versão Internacional, and Holman Christian Standard Bible translation. The Palabra de Dios para Todos version has a future perfect in the main text, and in a footnote has a future form after the word "Textualmente"; there is some uncertainty as to what to be made of this.

Other versions choose one form and do not have a note indicating that the other is a translational possibility. Versions that have a future perfect form (e.g. will have been bound ... will have been loosed) in the apodosis without a note indicating that a non-perfect future form is a possibility in Mt. 18:18 include Young's Literal Translation,⁹⁸ Mounce Reverse-Interlinear New

98. If the following is a future perfect: "shall be having been bound in the heavens, ... shall be having been loosed in the heavens." See Goodspeed, Edgar J., & et al. (1931). *The Bible: An American Translation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Testament, New American Standard Bible, the amplified Bible (AMP),⁹⁹ New English Translation (NET), New Life Version (NLV), World English Bible (WEB), La Bible du Semeur (BDS), and Second 21 (SG21). The Hoffnung für Alle (HOF) version has "Was ..., das soll auch im Himmel gebunden sein. Und was ..., das soll auch im Himmel gelöst sein", and Martin Luther's 1545 version has "Was ... soll auch im Himmel gebunden sein, und was ..., soll auch im Himmel los sein." This 'oughtness' (cf. the "soll") in the German translation probably indicates that heaven's binding or loosing was thought to be prior to earthly binding or loosing when earthly binding or loosing was done appropriately.

Versions that have a non-perfect future form (e.g. will be bound ... will be loosed) in the main text without a note indicating that a future perfect form is a possibility in Mt. 18:18 include Nueva Versión Internacional, Revised Version, American Standard Version (ASV), King James Version and Authorized Version (KJV and AV), New King James Version (NKJV),¹⁰⁰ Revised Standard Version (RSV), New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), Moulton's Modern Reader's Bible, James Moffatt's translation, Edgar Goodspeed's translation,¹⁰¹ the New English Bible, W. L. Courtney's The Literary Man's New Testament, Frank Schell Ballentine's The Modern American Bible Matthew translation, Robert D. Weekes' translation, the New American Bible,¹⁰²

99. There is a Mt. 16:19 note that actually stresses that the apodosis indicates something prior to the protasis, and the Mt. 18:18 note refers back to this note.

100. This version has a Mt. 16:19 note indicating that a future perfect form is a possibility, but there is no such note in Mt. 18:18.

101. If "will be held in heaven to be forbidden, ... will be held in heaven to be permitted" counts as a non-perfect future.

102. If "shall be held bound in heaven, ... shall be held loosed in heaven" is a non-perfect future.

George M. Lamsa's Peshitta translation,¹⁰³ Christian Community Bible,¹⁰⁴ Joseph Bryant Rotherham's The Emphasized Bible translation (1902), Knox Version (1945), William Tyndale's translation (1526), H. Highton's A Revised Translation of the New Testament (1862), Leicester Ambrose Sawyer's translation (1858), La Sainte Bible Nouvelle Version Second Révisée (Cinquième Édition), 21st Century King James Version (KJ21), Common English Bible (CEB), Complete Jewish Bible (CJB), Contemporary English Version (CEV), Darby Translation, Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition (DRA), God's Word Translation, Good News Translation (GNT), Lexham English Bible (LEB),¹⁰⁵ New International Reader's Version (NIRV), New Living Translation (NLT), The Voice Translation (VOICE), Worldwide English translation (WE), Wycliffe Bible (WYC), Dios Habla Hoy (DHH), Nueva Traducción Viviente (NTV), La Palabra (BLP), Reina Valera Contemporánea (RVC; and also RVR1960, RVR1977, RVR1995, and Reina-Valera Antigua (RVA)), Traducción en lenguaje actual (TLA), Louis Segond (LSG), Nouvelle Edition de Genève (NEG1979), Neue Genfer Übersetzung (NGU-DE), Schlachter 1951 (SCH1951; cf. also SCH2000), Conferenza Episcopale Italiana (CEI), La Parola è Vita (LM), and Nuova Riveduta (NR1994; cf. also NR2006).

Among scholars, two earlier figures in the debate over the periphrastics were Cadbury and Mantey. Mantey's *Journal of Biblical Literature* submission prompted an editor to solicit a

103. Lamsa, George M. (1957). *The Holy Bible from Ancient Eastern Manuscripts: Containing the Old and New Testaments Translated from the Peshitta, The Authorized Bible of the Church of the East*. Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers.

104. If "shall be bound in Heaven, ... shall be unbound in Heaven" in 16:19 and "Heaven will keep bound; ... Heaven will keep unbound." in 18:18 count as non-perfect future forms.

105. There is no note for Mt. 18:18, but there are Mt. 16:19 notes indicating that a future perfect is a possibility for the binding and loosing verbs.

response from Cadbury, and both Mantey's view and Cadbury's were published in the same issue in 1939. Some time after these articles, Wilber Dayton, who was at one point Mantey's student, would complete his dissertation examining the issue of the periphrastics in Mt. 16:19, Mt. 18:18, and Jn. 20:23. Cadbury argued that the perfect need not always necessitate a past action whose effect continues to the time of the perfect verb, and that a perfect in the apodosis need not necessarily mean that the verb of the apodosis indicates an event prior to the verb of the protasis. For translation, he advocated for "Matthew's future perfects an expression 'shall be once for all' and for John's perfects 'shall be at once.'"¹⁰⁶ In a similar way, Hagner says that the future tense and perfect participle are employed "To indicate the final authority of this 'binding and loosing'"¹⁰⁷ and Davies and Allison says that "In Mt. 16.19 the future passives are probably emphatic futures".¹⁰⁸ Thompson says that "The conditional relative clauses ... express the same nuance (probability/eventuality) as the previous conditional clauses (vv. 15a.15b.16a.17a.17b). The periphrastic construction in the main clause ... is equivalent to a future perfect, and implies a permanent effect."¹⁰⁹ Mantey thought that the evidence for the dual temporal reference of the perfect was just too strong for a limited set of anomalous examples to override, and saw no compelling reason why the typical sense of the perfect should not also be found in the periphrastic future perfects of Mt. 16:19 and 18:18.

106. Cadbury, "Meaning", p. 253.

107. Hagner, Donald A., *Matthew 14-28*, p. 474.

108. Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C., *Matthew 8-18*, p. 638.

109. Thompson, W. G., *Matthew's Advice*, p. 188. In Thompson's text there is a footnote, but this quotation does not indicate the presence or location of such a footnote; many quotes in this thesis will not indicate the presence or location of footnotes or endnotes if present in the original text.

Commentators since then have referred back to Cadbury and Mantey. It seems evident from discussion of linguistic evidence that some commentators choose to interpret the periphrastic future perfects not mainly because of the strength of the linguistic evidence, but because a heaven-first order of binding and loosing does not seem to fit well with their interpretation of the rightly related issue of what is meant by binding or loosing. Having arrived at a position of what is meant by such terms, and thinking that such a position would not fit best with a heaven-first order, scholars have utilized the type of evidence provided by Cadbury and let it be an escape valve for an otherwise weak linguistic case. Examples of such an approach include Davies and Allison's commentary and Derrett. They made an appeal to certain exceptional uses of the perfect and considered these uses to give some legitimacy to taking the periphrastic future perfects of Mt. 18:18 as not indicating a heaven-first order.

Other commentators take the linguistic evidence more seriously.¹¹⁰ France finds it significant that Matthew chose the periphrastic perfect future form when he could have chosen the future passive indicative, which would have been more suited to an earth-first order of binding and loosing. Carson's argument is similar to and yet different to France. His is a paradigmatic argument. Both of these authors argue for a heaven-first order. A new development occurred with Stanley Porter's application of his verbal aspect theory to the periphrastic future perfects. Having argued in his work on the Greek verb that the indicative form does not grammaticalize temporal reference, Porter insisted that the future perfect periphrastics do not

110. For Carson and France, see chapter three.

indicate that the action of the apodosis occurred prior to the action of the protasis. In his opinion, the perfects are stative, and the order of binding and loosing is from earth to heaven.

The interpretation of the meaning of binding and loosing is legitimately tied to the interpretation of the periphrastic future perfects. Certainty about the meaning of binding and loosing would preclude a heaven-first order if that meaning were incompatible with a heaven-first order. Even if this were to occur, the earth-first order would still be against the general trend and strength of the linguistic evidence that favors a heaven-first order. The best interpretation would be one that neither lets linguistic evidence override evidence about the meaning of binding and loosing, nor lets the evidence about the meaning override the linguistic evidence. The interpretation provided in this thesis does not require one body of evidence to override another. In the linguistic area, it will be argued that the better of the argument lies on the side of Mantey, Carson, and France, though some attention must be given to Porter. In the area of evidence pertaining to the meaning of binding and loosing, scholars have overlooked an important aspect of Matthew's theology that clears some of the way for a new interpretation of binding and loosing, an interpretation that respects evidence inside of Matthew and outside of it. That aspect of Matthew's theology will be examined in the next chapter, but here attention still needs to be given to previous scholarship on the meaning of binding and loosing. Porter's challenge will be addressed in the third chapter.

(c) Previous Scholarship on Binding and Loosing in Mt. 18:18

What is meant by binding and loosing in Mt. 18:18 is one of the more contested areas of Matthean scholarship.¹¹¹ The issue is complicated by the fact that Mt. 16:19b-c contains a nearly identical binding and loosing statement. This presents the interpreter with the task of how to interpret two nearly identical binding and loosing statements that occur in two very different contexts. Further, Mt.16:19b-c is part of a larger passage that has been the subject of considerable disagreement in other respects. There has been significant disagreement about the reference of 'rock' and the 'gates of Hades' in Mt. 16:18, and also about the reference of the 'keys of the kingdom of heaven' in Mt. 16:19a. So much uncertainty has resulted in a range of proposed interpretations of Mt. 16:17-19.

History of interpretation for much of Mt. 16:17-19 has already been covered in the literature.¹¹² Such history and the relative importance of Mt. 16:17-19 has meant that the binding

111. Some scholars do not take a definite and clear stance on the meaning of binding and loosing statement as found in 18:18, or proved unhelpful. Cf. Emerton, J. A. (1962). "Binding and Loosing - Forgiving and Retaining". *Journal of Theological Studies*, 13, 325-331; Duling, Dennis C. (1987). "Binding and Loosing: Matthew 16:19; Matthew 18:18; John 20:23". *Foundations and Facets Forum*, 3/4, 3-31; Pennington, Jonathan T., *Heaven and Earth*; Caba, "El poder" (though Caba cites Trilling on p. 618, the author of this thesis did not find a clear and definite stance on this issue in searching some of the main text of Caba's article).

112. Cf. Burgess, Joseph. (1976). *A History of the Exegesis of Matthew 16:17-19 from 1781 to 1965*. Ann Arbor, MI: Edwards Brothers; Ludwig, J. (1952). *Die Primatworte Mt XVI, 18-19 in der altkirchlichen Exegese*. Münster: Aschendorff; Fröhlich, Karlfried (1963). *Formen der Auslegung von Matthäus 16, 13-18 im lateinischen Mittelalter (Teildruck)*. Tübingen; Obrist, Franz. (1961). *Echtheitsfragen und Deutung der Primatsstelle Mt. 16, 18f. in der deutschen protestantischen Theologie der letzten dreißig Jahre* (Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen Vol. 21: 3-4 Heft). Münster: Aschendorff; Oepke, A. (1948). "Der Herrspruch über die Kirche Mt 16.17-19 in der neuesten Forschung". *StTh*, 2, 110-165; Campenhausen, Hans von. (1969). "The Power of the Keys in the Primitive Church". In *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries*. (pp. 124-148). Stanford: Stanford University Press. .

and loosing statement of Mt. 16:19b-c has already received considerable attention. Views expressed on the binding and loosing statement of that passage cannot be easily set aside for Mt. 18:18 given that Mt. 18:18 is nearly identical to Mt. 16:19b-c. At the same time, while the similarity between Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18 means that this thesis will engage with some of the scholarship on or related to Mt. 16:19b-c, the focus of this thesis on Mt. 18:18 does grant some justification for not giving full attention to some issues and history of Mt. 16:17-19. In this section, although some coverage of history of scholarship for Mt. 16:19b-c will be given, the focus on Mt. 18:18 means that there will not be a full history of interpretation for the 'rock' and 'gates of Hades' of Mt. 16:18, nor for 'keys of the kingdom of heaven' in Mt. 16:19a.

Most of the interpretations of the binding and loosing statement in Mt. 18:18 can be categorized under six or fewer main headings. Many of those interpretations can be further subdivided by whether they interpret the order of binding and loosing to be from heaven to earth, or from earth to heaven. Although there are some implausible views, mainstream opinions of commentators have generally affirmed that binding and loosing have to do 1) with authority for or declaration of forgiveness of sin, 2) with authority for discipline, a ban, or excommunication, 3) with authority for determination of sin, or 4) with authority for such determination of sin through interpretation, application, or abrogation of scripture, or 5) with some composite or mixing of elements of two or more of these views. Some commentators clearly belong in a category, though there is not so much clarity on the order of binding and loosing, or the view has sufficient nuance or qualification that putting it into an earth-first or heaven-first order category

without elucidating comment(s) could be somewhat misleading. Such commentators are usually included in a footnote to the main header in the following taxonomy.

A Taxonomy of Interpretations of Mt. 18:18

Declaration of Forgiveness of Sin in Accordance With Law of Repentance

1. Heaven-first order as expression of divine influence¹¹³ in repentance (Larson)
2. Earth-first order (Thompson¹¹⁴, Blomberg¹¹⁵)

Authority for Forgiveness of Sin¹¹⁶

3. Earth-first order (A. Schweitzer, Luz, Bassar¹¹⁷)

Authority for Discipline, Excommunication, or a Ban from Community¹¹⁸

4. Heaven-first order (Carson, Keener)
5. Earth-first order (Bornkamm, Strack and Billerbeck, Schnackenburg, Cox)

Authority for Determination of Sin¹¹⁹

6. Heaven-first order (Mantey, Morris, France, Robinson)
7. Earth-first order (Davies and Allison, Manson, Argyle, Derrett, Allen, Carter)

113. If this thesis repeatedly indicates that a statement gives information about the cause of an event and indicates that God is part of the causal explanation, such usage is not meant to deny human causation for the same event. Here, if it is said that something is divinely caused, that allows that there is also a human cause.

114. Although Thompson speaks of ratification in heaven, it is clear that disciple binding or loosing is in response to whether or not the sinner repents.

115. But see the previous section.

116. Cf. the view of Jeremias (see below).

117. Bassar uses the language of 'having the bonds of death loosed' or those bonds 'set in place' (see below). This is not exactly the language of forgiveness of sin, but the outcome for forgiven/unforgiven sin seems to be the same as bonds of death being loosed/set in place.

118. Cf. Wilcox, Max. (1975). "Peter and the Rock: A Fresh Look At Matthew XVI. 17-19". *New Testament Studies*, 22, 73-88, pp. 82-83; Calvin, John, *Matthew, Mark, Luke Commentary*, Vol. 2, pp. 204-207, 251-252; Filson, Floyd V., *Matthew 2nd Ed.*; Büchsel, F. (1964). δέω (λύω) *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, pp. 60-61; Robinson, Bernard P. (1984). "Peter and His Successors: Tradition and Redaction in Matthew 16:17-19". *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, 21, 85-104, p. 94; Ladd, George Eldon. (1993). *A Theology of the New Testament* (Revised ed.). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, pp. 115-116; Morison, James, *Matthew*, p. 351.

119. Cf. Tasker, R. V. G., *Matthew*, pp. 158, 173; Evans, Craig A., *Matthew*, pp. 315, 334; Rice, Edwin W. (1887). *People's Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew*. Philadelphia: The American Sunday-School Union, p. 170.

Authority for Determination of Sin by Interpretation or Application of Scripture or of Teaching of Jesus¹²⁰

8. Earth-first order (E. Schweizer, Nolland, Collins)

9. Heaven-first order (Talbert, Marcus' composite view)

10. Composite Views (Marcus, McNeile, Hagner, Hill, Schlatter, Kingsbury, Gundry, Bonnard)
Implausible Views

12. Magic, or opposition to Satan or Demon(s)

13. Vows

14. Totality

(i) Implausible Views

Although a variety of proposals have been put forth for the meaning of binding and loosing in Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18, some proposals have failed to garner wide support. Accordingly, a history of interpretation for binding and loosing may be divided into proposals that have attracted a significant following, and those that have not. This section will look at some ideas that have not gained broad support among commentators. Falk thinks that Peter's being granted 'keys of the kingdom of heaven' meant that what he would bind/loose on earth would be bound/loosed in heaven, and cites both Mt. 16:19 and 18:18. He then says that "This saying makes use of the rabbinical competence of making decisions on vows and other ritual questions, extending it to a monopoly on salvation."¹²¹ Falk seems to advocate that the binding and loosing statement in Mt. 18:18 grants disciples power to determine a person's salvation and also to decide on cases in which a vow is involved, but a specific focus on vows would seem out of

120. Cf. Smith, Robert H., *Matthew*, pp. 202-203, 222-223; Powell, Mark Allan. (2003). "Binding and Loosing: Asserting the Moral Authority of Scripture in Light of a Matthean Paradigm". *Ex Auditu*, 19, 81-96, p. 88; Streeter, Burnett Hillman. (1929). *The Primitive Church: Studied with Special Reference to the Origins of the Christian Ministry: The Hewett Lectures, 1928*. London: MacMillan and Co., pp. 59-60.

121. Falk, Z. (1974). "Binding and Loosing". *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 25, 92-100, p. 99.

place for the context of Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18.¹²² Hiers surveys a range of evidence in which binding or loosing has to do with Satan or demon(s). He remarks that "If we take seriously the substantial body of synoptic evidence which indicates that Jesus thought and acted in terms of the apocalyptic and dualistic thought world of some of his Jewish predecessors and contemporaries," then it would be reasonable to infer that 'binding' and 'loosing' have "the sense most commonly found in the intertestamental writings, namely, in connection with the task of overcoming Satan's powers."¹²³ Although he thinks that "Matthew 16:18 makes explicit what is implicit in 16:19: that Peter has power over the minions of Satan", he adds that

As the authorization sayings are formulated in Matthew, however, the meanings seems to have been extended more broadly. In their Matthean contexts they suggest that Peter and the others would have authority to deal with whatever problems might arise in the continuing years of the church.¹²⁴

Conybeare is similar to Hiers. He surveys examples in magical texts and he says that "We can hardly doubt that the choice of the phrase 'binding and loosing' to describe the power conferred by Jesus was suggested by these magic arts."¹²⁵ But the context of Mt. 16:19 and 18:18 means that such an interpretation of Mt. 16:19 and 18:18 in their Matthean setting would be unlikely.¹²⁶ Lambert gives evidence of two things expressing totality and uses such evidence in

122. Cf. Hiers, R. (1985). "'Binding' and 'Loosing': The Matthean Authorizations". *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 104, 233-250, p. 233. and Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C., *Matthew 8-18*, p. 636. Both Hiers and Davies and Allison's commentary associate Falk with the idea of binding or loosing being about vows, but do not make it clear that Falk seems to think binding and loosing in Mt. 16:19 and 18:18 include this but are significantly broader in scope. In fairness to Falk, his position is not that the binding and loosing statement(s) in Matthew is or are only about vows.

123. Hiers, "'Binding' and 'Loosing'", p. 249.

124. Ibid., p. 249.

125. Conybeare, F. C. (1897). "Christian Demonology". *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 9, 444-470, pp. 469-470.

126. Büchsel, F., δέω (λύω), p. 60, says that "A purely magical binding and loosing ... is ruled out by

support of his claim about Mt. 16:19 and 18:18. He says that Mt. 16:19 "s'agit de la totalité du pouvoir remis à saint Pierre" and that Mt. 18:18 "ne peut s'agir que de la totalité des actes posés par les disciples du Christ dans l'union et la charité."¹²⁷ Lambert's proposal has been criticized for being too vague and lacking patristic support, and has rightly not won much of a following among scholars.¹²⁸

(ii) Declaration of or Authority for Forgiveness of Sin

This thesis' view of binding and loosing in Mt. 18:18 has some similarity with the view of Thompson.¹²⁹ Thompson says that

the act of binding or loosing can be verified in any one of the attempts to convince the brother of his sin. ... the fact that the previous regulations include a natural opposition between acceptance and non-acceptance of fraternal correction [...] suggests an association with the opposition between bind and loose.¹³⁰

With this association, Thompson thinks that

Each time the brother refuses to accept the fact of his sinfulness, he and the disciple (along with the witnesses and "the church") bind his guilt more closely to his person. But when the brother listens to the correction and accepts his objective guilt, they release his sin. Both actions are immediately ratified in heaven.¹³¹

the context." Emerton (Emerton, "Binding and Loosing", p. 326) says that the use of the verbs "in a magical sense is probably irrelevant to these passages in the New Testament." Cf. also Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C., *Matthew 8-18*, pp. 635-637.

127. Lambert, Gustave. (1944). "Lier-délier, l'expression de la totalité par l'opposition de deux contraires". *Vivre et penser [Revue Biblique]*, IIIe Série, 91-103, p. 102.

128. Cf. Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C., *Matthew 8-18*, pp. 636-637.

129. Blomberg, Craig L., *Matthew*, p. 280, cites Thompson and says "Then the church's loosing and forgiving—forgiving or refusing to forgive—carries the very authority of God." Bruner's view is similar to Thompson (Bruner, Frederick Dale, *Matthew 13-28*, pp. 230-232).

130. Thompson, W. G., *Matthew's Advice*, p. 202.

131. Ibid., p. 202. Cf. his statement on the same page that "This interpretation resembles a linguistic parallel in Pseudo-Jonathan (Nm 30,6.9.13). ... Matthew applies the same opposition to a different situation in which a brother has sinned, and he and the disciple who attempts to win him back bind or

In Thompson's interpretation, disciples bind his guilt to him when he continues to embrace his sin, and they loose his sin from him when he himself abandons his sin and repents of it. Disciples' binding and loosing is accordingly merely treating the sinner as he treats himself. Though Thompson speaks of guilt, one might also speak of sin. The more tightly the sinner clings to his sin, the more do disciples treat him as if his sin is indeed bound to him. This approach seems similar to that of Schlatter.¹³² The interpretation of this thesis parallels in some respects Thompson's view. A main difference between Thompson's view and the view of this thesis is that in this thesis, the order is from heaven to earth, an order which expresses the conviction that it is God's influence that brings the sinner to repentance. Also, this thesis views binding as a definitive step in which disciples regard or treat someone as if the person were not a true member of the disciple community; on that view, there is a sense in which binding of Mt. 18:18 does not happen before the third stage of the process of Mt. 18:15-17 has been reached. There can be a sense in which disciples bind the sin to the sinner before that third stage, but this would not be the binding of Mt. 18:18.

A notable stream of commentators has interpreted the binding and loosing statement of Mt. 18:18 as dealing with forgiveness of sin or withholding such forgiveness. Attention has already been called to Falk's thought that a monopoly on salvation is given by binding and loosing statement(s). Jeremias' view was that the power of the keys is judicial. According to him disciples are granted "authority to pronounce judgment on unbelievers and to promise

release his guilt."

132. Cf. Schlatter, Adolf, *Matthäus*, pp. 512, 514, 555-556.

forgiveness to believers", an "authority in the dispensing of the word of grace and judgment".¹³³

Of Mt. 18:18 in its context, he says that the power of loosing "is the power to promise

forgiveness"¹³⁴ and, like Martínez,¹³⁵ thinks that the power or authority of 18:18 was given to not more than twelve disciples initially.¹³⁶ In another work, Jeremias says that messengers' authority

includes both the communication of salvation and the imposition of judgment. It is the judge's authority to acquit and pronounce guilty that is described by this pair of opposites and the synonymous phrases 'bind and loose' (Matt. 18:18 and, derived from it, 16.19) and 'forgive and retain sins' (John 20:23). These pairs of words meant that the messengers receive total authority. Their action in judgment is an eschatological function performed proleptically (Matt. 19.28).¹³⁷

There is some justification for taking Jeremias' words to mean that disciples were given authority or power to determine the eschatological fate of others, though there is some uncertainty as to whether or not this was his view. Some caution seems appropriate. Schweitzer is clearer. Schweitzer indicates that "It is to their part in the judgment that belong also the authority to bind and to loose which He entrusts to them—first to Peter personally (Matt. xvi. 19) and afterwards to all the Twelve (Matt. xviii. 18)—in such a way, too, that their present decisions will be somehow or other binding at the Judgment."¹³⁸

133. Jeremias, Joachim. (1965). κλείς *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, pp. 751-752.

134. Ibid., p. 753.

135. Martínez, E. R. (1961). "The Interpretation of 'Oī Mathētai in Matt. 18". *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 23, 281-292, pp. 290-292.

136. Jeremias, Joachim, κλείς, p. 752.

137. Jeremias, Joachim. (1971). *New Testament Theology* (Bowden, John, Trans.). London: SCM Press, p. 238.

138. Schweitzer, Albert, *Quest*, p. 371, fn. 1, but see all of p. 371.

Luz is similar to Schweitzer. Of the rabbinic pair of words *הִתִּיר/אָסַר* (Aramaic *שָׁרָא/אָסַר*), Luz says that "The primary meaning is 'forbidding' and 'permitting' with a halakic decision of the rabbis, that is, the interpretation of the law. Less frequently, but documented in contemporary sources, a judge's activity is meant. Then 'to bind' and 'to loose' correspond to 'to put in fetters' or 'to acquit.'"¹³⁹ Mt. 19b-c, Luz says, "is presumably thinking of teaching, while in 18:18 the thought is of judging, without the two meanings being mutually exclusive."¹⁴⁰ Elsewhere, he also says that binding and loosing in Mt. 18:18 "refer ... not to teaching or interpretation but rather to judicial decisions, and in the context they must have the meaning of 'retaining' or 'forgiving' sins."¹⁴¹ In Luz's mind, this is no small authority, but one that allows disciples to bind God in regard to the final judgment. Luz says that "When they forgive or retain, the disciples bind heaven, that is, God, not only in the present but also in his verdicts in the final judgment." and that Mt. 18:18 "gives the decisions of the church and its members about which vv. 15-17 speak an unprecedented authority than can scarcely be surpassed."¹⁴²

Basser quotes a *Didascalia Apostolorum* passage and says that Mt. 16:19 and 18:18 "were taken to mean that bishops (the first being assumed to have been Peter) were endowed with the power to free one from the punishments of sin or to keep one doomed because of sin.

There is no hint here of 'permitting' or 'forbidding' activities."¹⁴³ In the next paragraph, he says,

Thus, in the NT passages, good-standing membership in the church is tantamount to "having the bonds of death loosed," whereas the loss of this status is

139. Luz, Ulrich, *Matthew 8-20*, p. 365.

140. Ibid., p. 365.

141. Ibid., p. 454.

142. Ibid., p. 454.

143. Basser, "Derrett's 'Binding' Reopened", pp. 299-300.

tantamount to "having the bonds of death set in place." ... According to Matt 16:19 and Matt 18:18, the churches have the right to say who is secure upon the "rock" and who is not. They hold the keys to the kingdom. One will either be free of death or bound by it. Heaven has concurred to follow the dictates of the churches.¹⁴⁴

It is evident from this survey that some scholars take the binding and loosing statement as granting power over others in regard to forgiveness. As has been pointed out, there is some basis for binding and loosing being associated with a judge, and this linguistic evidence would fit both with the view that Mt. 18:18 grants a power of forgiveness (or withholding forgiveness), and with Thompson's view that disciples' forgiving or not-forgiving the sinner are in accord with the sinner's own reaction to his sin.

(iii) Authority for Discipline, Ban, or Excommunication

Another stream of commentators has contended that binding and loosing in Mt. 18:18 deals with church discipline, or with a ban from community or acceptance into it.¹⁴⁵

Büchsel says that "it is only rarely that אסר and התיר or שרא mean to impose or remove a ban, to expel from and receive back into the congregation. Nevertheless, this meaning is attested, and

144. Ibid., p. 300.

145. In addition to scholars treated in this section, see Ladd, George Eldon, *Theology of the NT*, pp. 115-116. Green, F. W., *Matthew*, pp. 204, 214-215, Robinson, "Peter and His Successors", pp. 93-94; Calvin, John, *Matthew, Mark, Luke Commentary, Vol. 2*, pp. 251-252, Filson, Floyd V., *Matthew 2nd Ed.*, p. 202, the earth-first view of Cox, G. E. P., *Matthew*, pp. 118-119, the heaven-first order of Morison, James, *Matthew*, p. 351. Wilcox, "Peter and the Rock", pp. 82-83 thinks that the binding and loosing statement in Mt. 18:18 "looks like a 'general rule' (כלל) about the disciplinary powers of the churches assembly". Though Schnackenburg thinks that binding and loosing deals with both the lifting of a ban or excommunication, and with forbidding and declaring permitted, he seems to think that in Mt. 18:18 disciplinary authority is particularly in view. Cf. Schnackenburg, Rudolf, *The Gospel of Matthew*, pp. 160, 177.

must therefore be considered as the true sense of δεῖν καὶ λύειν in Mt. 16:19; 18:18. ... the weight of probability is definitely in favour of the interpretation: 'to impose and remove the ban.'¹⁴⁶

Carson says that Peter would "be given the keys of the kingdom: i.e., by proclaiming 'the good news of the kingdom' (4:23), ... he will open the kingdom to many and shut it against many."¹⁴⁷ On this reading,

The periphrastic future perfects are ... perfectly natural: Peter accomplishes this binding and loosing by proclaiming a gospel that has already been given and by making personal application on that basis (Simon Magus). Whatever he binds or looses will have been bound or loosed, so long as he adheres to that divinely disclosed gospel.¹⁴⁸

If the keys of the kingdom are its good news, Carson accordingly takes those keys to be something not limited just to Peter. They were keys that members of the Twelve and disciples outside of the Twelve would possess, and this is relevant to or part of church discipline, according to him.

If the church, ..., has to exercise the ministry of the keys, if it must bind and loose, then clearly one aspect of that will be the discipline of those who profess to constitute it ... Jesus' disciples, in accordance with his gospel of the kingdom, take up the ministry of the keys and bind and loose on earth what has with the coming of the kingdom been bound or loosed in heaven.¹⁴⁹

Carson would appear to associate repentance/non-repentance of the person in Mt. 18:15-17 with positive/negative response to the gospel of the kingdom, such that a person's not

146. Büchsel, F., δέω (λύω), p. 61.

147. Carson, D. A., *Matthew 13-28*, p. 373. Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C., *Matthew 8-18*, pp. 640-641 finds the idea attractive that a historical saying behind part or all of 16:19 was not far from the opening and closing of the kingdom through Peter's preaching. See Emerton, "Binding and Loosing".

148. Carson, D. A., *Matthew 13-28*, p. 373.

149. Ibid., p. 374.

repenting of sin would be an effective rejection of the gospel of the kingdom that has already been revealed. Keener also thinks that Mt. 18:18 has to do with church discipline. Although Keener says that 'binding and loosing' presumably mean that a community's halakic decisions have heaven's authority, he thinks that in the context of Mt. 18:18, such authority

"applies to judicial decrees and not merely to legal theory. By removing an unrepentant sinner from Jesus' community, believers merely ratify the heavenly court's decree; The person has been excluded not only from the community but from salvation ... "Binding" and "loosing" refer to the judicial authority of gathered Christians to decide cases on the basis of God's law. Most scholars thus recognize that this passage applies to church discipline (....)"¹⁵⁰

Keener here thinks of discipline or not being a part of the community, and he seems to think of the order in Mt. 18:18 being from heaven to earth.¹⁵¹ Strack and Billerbeck's volume contends that Mt. 18:18 leaves no doubt that binding and loosing have to do with the promulgation or removal of a ban. Though it indicates that δέω and λύω in themselves do not have the meaning of enforcing and repealing a ban, the difficulty is softened by appeal to Aramaic synonym(s).¹⁵² But Strack and Billerbeck's volume goes one step further and contends that binding and loosing in 16:19 also implies or means not only the authority for enforcing or removing a ban, but also the authority for declaring what is right and not right in a community of disciples.¹⁵³ Bornkamm is similar to Strack-Billerbeck. He says that

150. Keener, C. S., *Matthew Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, pp. 454-455.

151. See Ibid., pp. 454-455, and p. 430, where he says that

In both functions — evaluating entrants and those already within the church — God's people must evaluate on the authority of the heavenly court; the verb tenses allow that they merely ratify the heavenly decree (see comment on 18:18; cf. Mantey 1973; idem 1981; Keener 1987; see more fully comment on 18:18).

152. Strack, Hermann Leberecht, & Paul Billerbeck, *Matthäus*, p. 738.

153. Ibid., p. 739.

To the congregation is given authority to "bind" and to "loose" which, according to the concluding saying (18:18), is also effective at the Last Judgment. ... it is certain that Matthew 18:18 refers to disciplinary authority and not, as Matthew 16:19, primarily to teaching authority. In our passage, the sayings confirms the right, which is reserved solely to the assembled congregation, definitely to excommunicate the impenitent brother.¹⁵⁴

(iv) Authority for Determination of Sin

Although different terms are sometimes used for describing determination of what is sin, another stream of commentators thinks that binding and loosing in Mt. 18:18 has to do with determination of sin.¹⁵⁵ Commentators in this section tend not to be as explicit in their treatment of the basis for determination of sin as some commentators who quite clearly state that this determination is based on interpretation, application, or abrogation of scripture or of Jesus' teaching (see next section). Davies and Allison's commentary in its section on 16:19 endorses the view that

Peter, as a sort of supreme rabbi or prime minister of the kingdom, is in 16:19 given teaching authority, given that is the power to declare what is permitted (cf. the rabbinic *šérê/šērā'*) and what is not permitted (cf. the rabbinic *'āsar/'āsar*). Peter can decide by doctrinal decision what Christians must and must not do.¹⁵⁶

154. Bornkamm, G. (1970). "The Authority to 'Bind' and 'Loose' in the Church in Matthew's Gospel". In *Jesus and Man's Hope*. (pp. 37-50). Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. , p. 40.

155. In addition to views treated in this section, see Tasker, R. V. G., *Matthew*, pp. 158-159, 173; the heaven-first view of Carter, Warren, *Matthew and Margins*, pp. 336, 368, 594; Witherington, III, Ben, *Matthew*; Manson, Thomas Walter, *Sayings of Jesus*, pp. 205, 210-211, which, even in light of Manson's entertaining of the idea that excommunication is in view, seems to fit in this category given Manson's statements; Argyle, A. W., *Matthew*, pp. 127, 141-142; Garland, David E. (2001). *Reading Matthew: A Literary and Theological Commentary*. Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys, 195; Evans, Craig A., *Matthew*, pp. 315, 334; Rice, Edwin W., *People's Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew*, p. 170.

156. Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C., *Matthew 8-18*, pp. 638-639.

Of 18:18, Davies and Allison say that their conclusion regarding the binding and statement in 16:19 leads them to affirm that in 18:18 "the halakhic decisions of the community have the authority of heaven itself."¹⁵⁷ Davies and Allison also say that "In context the reference is to the church's verdict. (We take v. 18 to follow v. 17 closely. It does not apply to the actions described in vv. 15 and 16)."¹⁵⁸ Taking 18:17 to be about "the breaking off of fellowship" and "exclusion from the community", it concludes that the passage of Mt. 18:17 is "about excommunication"¹⁵⁹.

Davies and Allison, who characterize their view as having significant similarity with "the traditional Roman Catholic understanding"¹⁶⁰, do not give much room for this authority of binding and loosing to abrogate scriptural commands. They assert clearly that Jesus' fulfillment of the law does not warrant its being set aside when they say that

if the law is fulfilled, it cannot on that account be set aside. Fulfilment can only confirm the Torah's truth, not cast doubt upon it. And while Jesus' new demands may surpass the demands of the OT, the two are not contradictory ... Rather do the words of the Torah remain the words of God (cf. 15.4), their imperatival force undiminished.¹⁶¹

157. Ibid., p. 787.

158. Ibid., p. 787. But do observe Davies' assertion (Davies, William David. (1963). *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, p. 224) that in 18:18-20 "We have here the same assertion of the authority of the community to act 'on every matter', which refers back to the offender in xviii. 15 ff."

159. Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C., *Matthew 8-18*, p. 785.

160. Ibid., p. 638.

161. Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C. (1988). *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments Vol. 1: Introduction and Commentary on Matthew I-VII). Edinburgh: T & T Clark, p. 487.

Although Allison argues strongly that Jesus is to be viewed as a new Moses who gives a new Torah, he also says of the assertion "that a new law would necessarily contradict the old law (= Moses), which Jesus, on the contrary, upholds" is "as far as [he] can determine, empty of justification (unless it be patristic opinion; cf. Justin, ...)".¹⁶² From these statements, it appears that Peter and disciples would not be granted a power to abrogate scripture. If Peter and disciples are given power to make binding halakhic decisions, such decisions must still be subject to scripture already given.

Although Davies and Allison give appropriate criticism of Allen's view that Mt. 16:19 deals with Peter's authority in the coming kingdom,¹⁶³ Allen seems to be in significant continuity with Davies and Allison when he says that in 18:18 "the decisions of the community regarding what is or is not justifiable in its members must be regarded as final."¹⁶⁴ Derrett refers to the "The power given first to Peter and later to disciples"¹⁶⁵ and thus appears to think that Mt. 18:18 democratizes what he sees as binding and loosing authority giving to Peter in Mt. 16:19. Derrett thinks that disciples are given authority for determining what is and is not righteous when he says that

The sayings at Matt 16:19; 18:18, and John 20:23 therefore hold their places because even for the Christian communities a power to define right and wrong absolutely, and without other recourse to the deity, does indeed exist, and not by a natural process of discovery, but by the word of the Founder himself.¹⁶⁶

162. Allison, Dale C. (1993). *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology*. Minneapolis: Fortress, p. 323.

163. Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C., *Matthew 8-18*, p. 637.

164. Allen, Willoughby C., *Matthew*, p. 198.

165. Derrett, "Binding and Loosing", p. 112.

166. *Ibid.*, p. 113.

Mantey, Morris, Robinson, and France are similar to these commentators, but for these four, the order is from heaven to earth. At least for some of these four, disciples accordingly do not have an unfettered authority for determining what is right and wrong. For Mantey, if disciples' determinations do not match that of heaven, they are invalid.¹⁶⁷ For Peter in 16:19, France says that the binding and loosing saying is "a promise not of divine *endorsement*, but of divine *guidance* to enable Peter to decide in accordance with God's already determined purpose."¹⁶⁸ In his section on Mt. 18:18, France directs the reader to material in his Mt. 16:19 section "for the significance of the way this authority is expressed through the use of future perfect passives, and the effect this has on the apparently 'carte blanche' endorsement of fallible human decisions. The fact that God has given his people the role of declaring his will on earth does not mean that he is bound to add his divine sanction to anything they may think up."¹⁶⁹ Robinson also thinks that binding and loosing in 18:18 has to do with what is permitted and not permitted, but he ties his interpretation to the idea that the spirit of the risen Jesus would be with his disciples. He says,

They had the spirit of the risen Jesus with them. ... Relying on the power that they knew to be in their midst, they were certain that their code had divine endorsement: what they permitted on earth was permitted by the God who dwelt in them and guided them; what they forbade was forbidden equally by him.¹⁷⁰

He does not, though, give the same type of caution against 'carte blanche' endorsement as does France, but it does seem that heaven acts first for Robinson. Morris says that "*whatever* is

167. Mantey, "Mistranslation of the Perfect Tense", p. 246.

168. France, R. T., *Matthew NICNT*, p. 627.

169. *Ibid.*, p. 697.

170. Robinson, Theodore H. (1928). *The Gospel of Matthew* (The Moffatt New Testament Commentary). London: Hodder and Stoughton, p. 155.

neuter" in both Mt. 16:19 and 18:18 and that "this fits better with things than with people. If we take this seriously, the saying means that the Spirit-inspired church will be able to declare authoritatively what things are forbidden and what things are permitted."¹⁷¹ For 18:18, he says that

the probability is that we should understand the 'binding' and 'loosing' as declaring forbidden or permitted. That would certainly fit this context, where the church in the last resort has to say whether what the offender has done is forbidden to the Christian or whether it is permitted. To the church as a whole there is committed the responsibility of declaring what conduct is forbidden to the believer and what is permitted.¹⁷²

Morris is similar to Robinson when Morris says that

we must bear in mind that the verbs are future perfect: ... Jesus is not giving the church the right to make decisions that will then become binding on God. Such a thought is alien from anything in his teaching. He is saying that as the church is responsive to the guidance of God it will come to the decisions that have already been made in heaven.¹⁷³

It is apparent that a number of these latter commentators think of the heaven-first order as a limiting factor for the protasis of Mt. 18:18; disciples are not given authority to determine whatever they wish.

(v) Authority for Determination of Sin by Interpretation, Application, or Abrogation of Scripture or of Jesus' Teaching

A related and yet different view of binding and loosing is that it has to do with interpretation, application, or abrogation of scripture. This group of interpreters is similar to

171. Morris, Leon, *Matthew*, p. 426.

172. Ibid., p. 469.

173. Ibid., p. 469.

Davies and Allison's commentary in taking binding and loosing to be dealing with what is and is not sin, or what is or is not to be permitted. But this group of interpreters generally has a specificity about the supposed authority granted in Mt. 18:18. This specificity is not found in all commentators, but it focuses on interpretation and application of scripture or of teaching of Jesus.¹⁷⁴

According to Nolland, binding and loosing in 16:19 seem to be "about the regulation of behaviour. The imagery is similar to that found in *b. Šab.* 4a, where binding is used of a declaration that something is forbidden and loosing is used of what is permitted."¹⁷⁵ But Nolland does not think that Mt. 16:19 is primarily about giving Peter some broad and unfettered authority for such determinations. He says,

Though the need to address new situations is not to be ruled out, the thrust of the binding and loosing is a thoroughly conservative one: it is Peter's role to see that all that Jesus taught is brought to bear on people's lives; Peter binds and looses only as he has learned to do so from Jesus.¹⁷⁶

For 18:18, he says that the church, having received instruction from Jesus,

is able to prohibit and command in a manner that is backed by God himself. In the context of the attempt to bring back an erring brother or sister, the specific point will be that the church is able to confirm the standard of behaviour to which the erring one is being called to conform once more.¹⁷⁷

174. In addition to views cited below, see the earth-first order of Schweizer, Eduard, *Matthew*, pp. 343, 371-372.

175. Nolland, John, *Matthew*, p. 681.

176. *Ibid.*, p. 682.

177. *Ibid.*, p. 748.

Nolland thinks primarily of binding and loosing being done with teaching of Jesus, and through this he is able to limit the scope of binding and loosing.¹⁷⁸ B. H. Streeter is willing to give a broader scope to the saying. He wrote that

To Peter, then, is given that *true insight into the nature of the righteousness* taught by Christ—a righteousness that will 'exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees'—which is the indispensable qualification of one who is 'to bind and loose' (*i.e.* to expound the moral law) with such discrimination that what he shall 'bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven'.¹⁷⁹

Streeter thinks of Peter's possession of "that sound sense of moral values which enabled [him] instinctively to grasp the *via media* between legalism and licence, that made him—and has made men like-minded then and through the ages since—the solid rock on which the Church is built."¹⁸⁰ Streeter then says that

It is not surprising that it was to Peter, with his sympathy for freedom and experiment, not to James the hero of the conservative reactionaries, that Christ—so the more liberal Jews insisted—had given authority to 'bind and to loose'—to decide, that is, how much or how little of the Law the members of the new dispensation shall be required to observe.¹⁸¹

Powell is similar to Streeter in regard to what he thinks is the significance of binding and loosing saying(s) for the law. But whereas Streeter is quite open about Peter deciding the issue of how much or little that scriptural commands must be observed, Powell prefers language of discerning the true intent of Law. Powell says that "A majority of scholars now recognize that the terms 'to bind' and 'to loose' are best understood with reference to a practice of determining

178. Similar to Nolland is Smith, Robert H., *Matthew*, pp. 202-203, 222-223.

179. Streeter, Burnett Hillman, *Primitive Church*, p. 59.

180. *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

181. *Ibid.*, p. 60.

the application of scriptural commandments for contemporary situations."¹⁸² and claims that the "words are used in this regard by Josephus and in targumic materials."¹⁸³ He also says that

Jewish rabbis "bound" the law when they determined that a commandment was applicable to a particular situation, and they "loosed" the law when they determined that a word of Scripture (while eternally valid) was not applicable under certain specific circumstances.¹⁸⁴

Notice Powell's emphasis on law's validity and yet his language of law's not applying in certain specific circumstances; this is different from Streeter. Later, Powell says that "For Matthew, the issue is *identification* of sin. Final authority rests with the community to identify which behaviors constitute sin and which therefore require repentance."¹⁸⁵ Elsewhere, he says that "the application" of what he thinks is the Matthean paradigm assumes that "the question is whether there might be exceptions to a normative policy" and affirms that "Matthew's Gospel suggests that the church does in fact have the authority to make such determinations."¹⁸⁶ He later cautions that

It is important to note that for the rabbis (and for Matthew) loosing the law never meant dismissing Scripture or countering its authority. The law was never wrong when it was rightly interpreted. The issue, rather, was discernment of the law's intent and of the sphere of its application.¹⁸⁷

182. Powell, Mark Allan. (2003). "Binding and Loosing: A Paradigm for Ethical Discernment from the Gospel of Matthew". *Currents in Theology and Mission*, 30.6, 438-445, p. 438; This passage is found word-for-word the same as that in Powell, "Asserting Moral Authority", pp. 82, 95.

183. Powell, "Binding and Loosing Paradigm", p. 438; This passage is found word-for-word the same as that in Powell, "Asserting Moral Authority", p. 82.

184. Powell, "Binding and Loosing Paradigm", p. 438; This passage is found word-for-word the same as that in Powell, "Asserting Moral Authority", p. 82.

185. Powell, "Binding and Loosing Paradigm", p. 439. Again, the passage is found verbatim in his other article. See Powell, "Asserting Moral Authority", p. 83.

186. Powell, "Binding and Loosing Paradigm", p. 445.

187. Ibid., p. 439; See the same passage in Powell, "Asserting Moral Authority", p. 83.

These words of Powell indicate that he too thought of binding and loosing as dealing with what is and is not sin. But in his case, there is a particular emphasis on interpretation of scripture in this regard that is not present for some of the foregoing interpreters. Collins has some similarity with Powell. Collins says that

Within Matthew's community the Scriptures were midrashically interpreted (e.g., Matt 1:22) and an appropriate *halakah* was established (e.g., Matt 5:21-48). Thus it is probable that the practice to which the Matthean "binding and loosing" refers is the interpretation of the Scriptures and the determination of an appropriate Christian way of life.¹⁸⁸

He later says that "a significant element of Matthew's ecclesiology" is that "what is done within the Church, on Jesus' authority, is sanctioned by God (heaven)."¹⁸⁹ Talbert is similar to Powell and Collins, but he is clear that the order of binding and loosing is heaven-first. He says in their Jewish context, binding and loosing

refer to the practice of determining the application of scriptural commandments for contemporary situations (Powell 2003). In the context of Matthew, it seems to mean the same things as 13:52 ('bringing forth what is new and what is old' from the scribe's treasure). It is an interpretative task of saying what is appropriately relevant and what is not. ... Elsewhere in Matthew this discernment function is extended to all disciples (18:18; 13:11, 52).¹⁹⁰

Though Talbert cites Powell, he argues against Porter's view of the periphrastic future perfect and contends that "When Peter interprets, it is a reflection of what has been revealed to him."¹⁹¹

188. Collins, Raymond F., *Binding and Loosing*, p. 744.

189. *Ibid.*, p. 744.

190. Talbert, Charles H., *Matthew*, p. 196.

191. *Ibid.*, p. 197.

(vi) Composite Views

The preceding survey of scholarship has highlighted different ways of understanding the binding and loosing statement of Mt. 18:18. A number of commentators have taken binding and loosing to be about more than only one of the options mentioned above.¹⁹² This section will examine some of these composite views. It is notable that scholars often tie together two or more of the following:

1. determination of what is and is not right or sin,
2. authority for withholding or forgiving sin, and
3. excluding from community or accepting into community.

One may notice the similarity between these three items and major headings above. On more than one occasion, a scholar will present as alternatives acquittal or expulsion, as if whether or not a person is forgiven or not goes hand in hand with whether or not one is part of the community. Underlying this is the idea that the disciple community is a community for those who have had their sin forgiven. More than one scholar also links determination of what is and is not sin with authority of who may be excluded from the community. Scholars vary in the way that they express connections between categories. In view of such variety, this section allows greater space for explanation of scholarly views.

192. In addition to views covered in this section, cf. Hendriksen, William, *Mateo*, pp. 684, 736; Hagner, Donald A., *Matthew 14-28*, pp. 473, 532-533. Vermes, Geza. (2003). *The Authentic Gospel of Jesus*. London and New York: Penguin Books, pp. 41, 362-364 seems to connect the forgiveness of sin issue with expulsion from the community in some way, but one would be well advised to read his actual wording.

Powell contended that binding and loosing had to do with determination of what is and is not sin through proper interpretation of scripture. Marcus is similar to Powell and Streeter in a focus on interpretation of scripture. Unlike Powell, Marcus thinks the order is from heaven to earth. For him, binding and loosing deal with "promulgation of the true divinely revealed torah",¹⁹³ and "the gates of the kingdom of heaven open in order to allow the secret of the true interpretation of the law (= definition of what is bound and loosed) to pass from heaven to earth."¹⁹⁴ In light of 16:19 lacking "the casuistic, disciplinary context of 18:18", Marcus also felt that "the idiom in 16:19 inclines toward the more general, halakic interpretation", but the 'binding and loosing' of 18:18 "obviously refers to excluding from and accepting back into the community".¹⁹⁵ He connects these two by affirming that one follows from the other. He says that "as P. Billerbeck notes, those who define what is acceptable and what is unacceptable behavior in the community also necessarily define who is in and who is out of the community (Str-B 1. 739)."¹⁹⁶ It seems from this that Marcus thinks of binding and loosing as having to do with interpretation of law, determination of what is sin, and definition of who is in and out of the community. Although some of this view is shared with other interpreters, Marcus indicates that the binding and loosing statements authorize Peter and disciples to 'loose' scriptural commands. In regard to the saying in 16:19, Marcus says that Peter

is given total power to distinguish valid from invalid prohibitions, "binding" upon human beings the observance of certain of them—even some not explicit in the

193. Marcus, "Gates of Hades", p. 451.

194. Ibid., p. 450.

195. Ibid., p. 451.

196. Ibid., p. 451.

Mosaic Torah—and "loosing" them from the observance of others of them—even some enjoined by Moses.¹⁹⁷

Marcus develops his thought further. He thinks that Peter as authoritative teacher would not be enough. "Like Pharisaism, Matthew recognizes the need for continued interpretation of the Lawgiver's revelation. New situations will arise that are not covered even by the teachings in the Sermon and the rest of Matthew's Gospel."¹⁹⁸ Although new situations would arise, Marcus thinks that there would be new revelation in the Christian community.

Matt 16:18-19 promises that Jesus will not leave the community without a guide when this happens; subsequent to and because of his cosmic enthronement, he himself will be present in the halakic deliberations of his people (cf. 18:20), time after time opening up new facets of God's living, life-giving, eschatological law.¹⁹⁹

Though this passage does not mention Mt. 18:18, earlier in Marcus' article, in a footnote, he says that "It has often been noted that the power to bind and loose is vouchsafed to Peter in 16:19 but to the disciples as a group in 18:18. Peter, therefore, functions in 16:19 at least partly as a representative disciple."²⁰⁰ Even earlier he says that "the immediately preceding pericope (16:5-12) concerns the *teaching* of the Pharisees and Sadducees, to which, presumably, the exegesis of the law revealed to the Christian community is contrasted".²⁰¹ One may note that both Marcus and Strack and Billerbeck's volume connects authority for determination of what is sin to authority for expulsion from the community.

197. Ibid., p. 452.

198. Ibid., p. 454.

199. Ibid., p. 455.

200. Ibid., p. 452, footnote 50.

201. Ibid., pp. 451-452.

In his section on Mt. 18:18, Hill writes that the local congregation or community of disciples

is given the power (bestowed on Peter, 16:19, and therefore not exclusively his) of 'binding and loosing'. This may mean excommunication and absolution, or (according to Bonnard, p. 275) the right to pronounce for or against a disciplinary measure proposed against a brother—i.e. not a definite expulsion on their own authority, but the right of applying or not applying already existing penalties.²⁰²

Although this quotation might encourage thinking of Hill's binding and loosing as being similar to others who have associated binding and loosing with a ban or discipline, Hill indicates that the power is not exclusively Peter's, and for Peter, he thinks that binding and loosing do have to do with halakic determinations. This is evident when he says in his section on Mt. 16:19 that binding and loosing "may refer either to the authority to lay down binding rules (*halakōth*) and exempt from them, or to the power to practise discipline in the Church (notice the close association of authority and the Kingdom in verse 18), including the right to condemn or acquit (18:18)."; he then says that both of these interpretive options "amount to much the same thing in the end: Peter has authority to make pronouncements (whether legislative, as 'chief rabbi' (so Stendahl, in *Peake*, 687f.), or disciplinary) and these will be ratified by God in the Last Judgment."²⁰³ It appears that Hill ties together determination of what is and is not right and disciplinary action.

In his section on binding and loosing in 16:19, Osborne remarks that the best interpretation probably

202. Hill, D., *Matthew*, p. 276.

203. *Ibid.*, p. 262.

is to bring together this image of evangelism with that of discipleship, i.e., the authority of Peter and the church to declare the kingdom truths as they interpret and proclaim Jesus' teaching, guiding the new community regarding what is forbidden and what is permitted in both doctrine and conduct (thus including discipline in the church, cf. 18:18).²⁰⁴

In his section on Mt. 18:18, he says that the primary meaning

likely parallels John 20:23 in terms of retaining (= 'binding') or forgiving (= 'loosing') sins. The passive verbs used here are divine passives, which means that God is behind the community's decisions regarding forgiveness or condemnation of its wandering sheep/members. Behind this is the further aspect of church decisions as to which types of conduct are allowed and which are forbidden (so Morris).²⁰⁵

Osborne here ties together determination of what is and is not right with the granting or withholding forgiveness. For binding and loosing, Cullmann thinks that according to rabbinical usage, two explanations for binding and loosing

are equally possible: 'prohibit' and 'permit,' that is 'establish rules'; or 'put under the ban' and 'acquit'. Since for Jesus entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven is closely connected with forgiveness of sin (Matt. 18:18 and John 20:23), the latter meaning is doubtless chiefly in mind here, but without excluding the other, which is equally well attested by Rabbinical texts. Indeed, the power to teach and to discipline cannot be sharply separated.²⁰⁶

Cullmann later remarks that "this promise is given not only to Peter, but in almost the same words to the other disciples as well"²⁰⁷ Cullmann accordingly thought of forgiveness of sin and putting under a ban as tied to teaching. For Cullmann, three issues go together - expulsion/

204. Osborne, Grant R. (2010). *Matthew* (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament). Grand Rapids: Zondervan, p. 629.

205. Ibid., p. 687.

206. Cullmann, Oscar, *Peter: Disciple-Apostle-Martyr*, pp. 204-205.

207. Ibid., p. 205.

non-expulsion, unforgiven sin/forgiven sin, and determination of what is and is not right.

Bultmann is somewhat similar in tying two of these issues together. Bultmann remarks that

Das Wort ist eine Variante zu Mt 16, 19 und zwar eine spätere. Das Recht der Gesetzgebung wird hier der Gemeinde, d.h. praktisch ihren Repräsentanten, zugesprochen, - ... - Mt hat das Wort in seinem Zusammenhang (nach V. 15 - 17) speziell auf die von der Gemeinde bzw. ihren Autoritäten gespendete Sündenvergebung und ihre Verweigerung bezogen.²⁰⁸

From this, Bultmann appears to think both of the power of lawgiving and a power of forgiving sin or withholding of forgiveness. Schlatter thinks that binding and loosing in Mt. 18:18 has to do with forgiveness of sin or lack thereof. But this is based on whether a person repents. In this, Schlatter is similar to Thompson and to this thesis. There is no arbitrary power granted to disciples and confirmed in heaven to withhold forgiveness for the repentant or grant to the unrepentant, nor does either passage have to do with casuistry or lawgiving. Schlatter presents as alternatives forgiveness and according someone rights of a brother on one side, and on the other side expulsion and unforgiven sin on the other. Like others, then, he connects the forgiven/unforgiven sin issue to the being outside of/being accepted in the community issue.²⁰⁹

It is noticeable that in Schlatter's description of the process of Mt. 18:15-17, there does not appear to be significant uncertainty among community members about whether or not the action of the one person in question is wrong. In distinction to Derrett, who claimed that "it is an

208. Bultmann, Rudolf K. (1931). *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, pp. 150-151. My translation: 'The saying is a variant of Mt. 16:19 and clearly later. The right of lawgiving is here granted to the community, that is, practically to its representatives, - ... - Matthew has applied the saying in its connection (after Mt. 18:15-17) specifically to the forgiveness of sin and its refusal, granted to the community, or, to its authorities.'

209. Cf. Schlatter, Adolf, *Matthäus*, pp. 512, 514, 555-556.

agreed factor that what is bound or loosed is a questionable line of conduct"²¹⁰, for Schlatter the questionableness of the conduct does not seem a matter of concern. That it is wrong seems to be a given for Schlatter. Schlatter's focus is not on confirming a decision of disciples about whether some action of questionable moral propriety is wrong or right. It seems that for Schlatter, the focus is on the heavenly approval of going even so far as demanding the removal of a person from fellowship. Matthew's theology is one of divine mercy and patience, but Jesus' word is an affirmation that this divine mercy is limited by the sinner's response. This fact allows disciples who take the drastic step of breaking fellowship to know that they are acting in imitation of the attitude of heaven.²¹¹

Although one could argue that the disciples binding or loosing is in one sense already bound or loosed in the sense that disciples know that heaven's action is determined by what the sinner does and not by what others do, Schlatter still indicates that disciples' determination would receive divine endorsement. On this basis, there would be some justification for thinking of an earth-first order, but at the same time this would be based on the revealed truth that God forgives or withholds forgiveness depending on whether a person repents. It is a given for Schlatter's Jesus that response to sin was a critical factor in deciding people's fate before Jesus' time and would be so after his time. It was also critical for deciding who were God's true people. His view is not as clear and tidy as that of some others in regard to order. Kingsbury says that in Matthew's church, it is the entire community, gathered together in the name and consequently in the presence and on the authority of the exalted Son of God, which "binds and

210. Derrett, "Binding and Loosing", p. 113.

211. Schlatter, Adolf, *Matthäus*, pp. 512, 514, 555-556.

looses," that is to say, decides matters of church doctrine and church discipline (18:18-20). In these matters, the community strives for one thing, viz., that their decisions, made in the name of the exalted Son of God (18:20), are in keeping with the injunction given them by Jesus to "observe all that I have commanded you" (28:20).²¹²

Kingsbury connects authority for deciding church doctrine (presumably this includes deciding what is and is not sin) and authority for church discipline (which would presumably include authority for expulsion from community). In his section looking at Mt. 18:18, Gundry says that

In 16:19 the association of binding and loosing with scribal keys points to didactic prohibition and permission of kinds of conduct. Here, association with the problem of a sinning disciple points to disciplinary retention of sins by means of ostracism, and to forgiveness of sins by means of restoration to fellowship.²¹³

Gundry here makes the same move as other commentators. Expulsion from or acceptance into community is directly tied to sin being unforgiven or forgiven. Though Luz was covered in an earlier section, it may be added that he thinks teaching and judging can go hand in hand when he says that "Our text is presumably thinking of teaching, while in 18:18 the thought is of judging, without the two meanings being mutually exclusive."²¹⁴ Turner ties together exclusion from community and retention or forgiveness of sin when he says that

The community is authorized to determine whether a sinning disciple continues with the community or is excluded. This depends on the outcome of the process laid out in Matt. 18:15-17. Repentance leads to loosing, or forgiveness, and continued fellowship. The lack of repentance leads to binding, or retention of sin, and exclusion from the community. In 18:18 the consequences of the process of

212. Kingsbury, Jack Dean. (1979). "The Figure of Peter in Matthew's Gospel as a Theological Problem". *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 98, 67-83, p. 80.

213. Gundry, Robert H., *Matthew*, p. 369.

214. Luz, Ulrich, *Matthew 8-20*, p. 365. Cf. Luz, Ulrich. (1994). *Matthew in History: Interpretation, Influence, and Effects*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, p. 65

18:15-17 are shown to be extremely serious, affecting the eternal destiny of the offending party.²¹⁵

Carson, who was treated earlier, connects doctrine with discipline when he remarks that "The continuity of the church depends as much on discipline as on truth. Indeed, faithful promulgation of the latter both entails and presupposes the former."²¹⁶ McNeile thinks that "in the present context of the verse", the binding and loosing statement refers to "excommunication and forgiveness".²¹⁷ For 18:18, Bonnard thinks of a power "de l'absolution des péchés"²¹⁸ and a power that "se prononcer pour ou contre une mesure disciplinaire proposée dans l'Eglise contre un frère",²¹⁹ and accordingly ties together a power of clemency and a power of discipline. Plummer says that Mt. 18:18 indicates that "decisions of the congregation, ..., are final" and the disciples "have the authority to forbid and to allow, to refuse or to grant forgiveness"²²⁰; in the case of Peter in Mt. 16:19, and presumably of disciples in Mt. 18:18, one "would decide what, according to the teaching of Christ, was permitted or not."²²¹

Composite views covered in this section demonstrate that for some scholars, categories covered earlier are not walled silos. One category is tied to a second. That category is tied to a third. These connections are significant. The fourth chapter will provide substantive critique of

215. Turner, David L. (2008). *Matthew* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament). Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, p. 446.

216. Carson, D. A., *Matthew 13-28*, p. 374.

217. McNeile, A. H., *Matthew*, p. 267.

218. Bonnard, P. (1963). *L'Évangile selon Saint Matthieu* (2 ed. Commentaire du Nouveau Testament Vol. 1). Neuchâtel: Delachaux & Niestlé, p. 246.

219. Ibid., p. 275.

220. Plummer, Alfred, *Matthew*, p. 254.

221. Ibid., p. 231.

interpretations in categories covered earlier. It will give criticism of the view that binding and loosing have to do with some authority to grant or withhold forgiveness of sin. It will give criticism of Mt. 18:18 granting disciples power to determine what is and is not sin for others. It will give criticism of the view that binding is about expulsion from the community, and criticism of the view that binding and loosing in Mt. 18:18 are about interpretation or application of the law. If these different categories are all to be connected, criticisms associated with individual categories can be bundled together, providing an even stronger critique of traditional views of the binding and loosing statement of Mt. 18:18.

(d) Previous Scholarship on Mt. 18:19-20

The history of interpretation for Mt. 18:19-20 is remarkable in that nearly all modern commentators interpret the conditional statements as having an earth-first order. Scholars usually interpret such conditional statements as cause-effect statements. The result of praying (18:19) or coming together in 'my name' (18:20), it is thought, will be the Father's fulfillment of the prayer (18:19), or the Son's presence (or presence and guidance) (18:20). This, or something like it, is the approach of at least nearly every modern commentator,²²² and appears to have been the

222. Among many, cf. Vermes, Geza, *Authentic Gospel*, p. 364; Keener, C. S., *Matthew Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, pp. 455-456; Morris, Leon, *Matthew*, pp. 469-471; Schweizer, Eduard, *Matthew*, pp. 374-375; Carson, D. A., *Matthew 13-28*, pp. 403-404; Thompson, W. G., *Matthew's Advice* pp. 194-198; Witherington, III, Ben, *Matthew*, pp. 351-352; Turner, David L., *Matthew*, p. 446; Schlatter, Adolf, *Matthäus*, pp. 557-558; Nolland, John, *Matthew*, pp. 749-751; Luz, Ulrich, *Matthew 8-20*, p. 458; Hagner, Donald A., *Matthew 14-28*, p. 533; at least for Mt. 18:19, Gundry, Robert H., *Matthew*, pp. 369-370; France, R. T., *Matthew NICNT*, p. 697-698; Evans, Craig A., *Matthew*, p. 335; Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C., *Matthew 8-18*, pp. 787-78; Allen, Willoughby C., *Matthew*, pp. 198-199. Cf. Strack, Hermann Leberecht, & Paul Billerbeck, *Matthäus*, pp. 793-794.

position of at least nearly every ancient commentator.²²³ It is generally based on an unchallenged assumption about the type of statements to which Mt. 18:19 and 18:20 belong.

It is common to have Mt. 18:19-20 act as a contextual constraint on interpretation of Mt. 18:18. Robinson, after stating his view of binding and loosing in Mt. 18:18, says that "The same principle is applied to prayer. The church felt that if Jesus were really among them, then they must be thinking his thoughts and uttering his prayers. There could, therefore, be no doubt about the real fulfilment or the full satisfaction of their needs."²²⁴ Apparently Robinson takes the supposed promise of Mt. 18:20 of Jesus' presence for two or three who have gathered, and translates that presence into guidance for prayer of Mt. 18:19. He uses the same or a similar idea for Mt. 18:18. For him, disciples' decisions would be divinely guided, and so would receive divine endorsement.

Witherington and Turner have a similar approach to Robinson. Witherington indicates that Mt. 18:19 "is not a cart blanche for two agreeing prayers to be able to get from God whatever they want. This has to do specifically with the disciplinary matters already discussed."²²⁵ In regard to the statement of Mt. 18:20, Witherington says that "This saying is meant to make clear that the community must always act as though Jesus is present guiding the decision-making, as in fact he is."²²⁶ According to Witherington, Jesus "in fact" "is present

223. Cf. Luz, Ulrich, *Matthew 8-20*, pp. 459-461.

224. Robinson, Theodore H., *Matthew*, p. 155.

225. Witherington, III, Ben, *Matthew*, p. 351.

226. *Ibid.*, p. 352.

guiding the decision-making"; this gives Witherington a basis for his indication that Mt. 18:19 does not promise endorsement of any prayer whatsoever. Turner says that

The authority of the community is clarified here as emanating from the spiritual harmony of its members. The promises in 18:19-20 of answered prayer and God's presence must be seen in the context of the solemn matter of the sinning disciple. ... During the discipline process, the church on earth may be assured that the heavenly Father will guide and confirm its deliberations and prayers.²²⁷

For the statement of 18:20, Turner says that, "The promise of Jesus's presence with disciples who gather in his name ... ameliorates the difficulties of the discipline process."²²⁸

Turner, like Robinson, bases his view of the discipline process of Mt. 18:15-17 on the idea that God would guide deliberations and prayers of disciples. Given that Mt. 18:19 does not mention God's presence or guiding, Turner's interpretation would need to base itself on Mt. 18:20.

There is some basis for taking Mt. 18:20 as expressing a conviction that God would guide disciples. After referring to Mt. 1:23, Nolland asks and answers his own question: "Does 'Emmanuel' still remain true? Yes, it does. But its focus now is not the physical presence of Jesus but the group gathered in his name, because to such a group his abiding presence is promised. In this new way his presence continues to mediate the presence of God."²²⁹ Nolland thus bases God's presence with disciples at least partly on the Emmanuel name in Mt. 1:23. With this, he says that

Davies and Allison think in terms of 'the community's prayer becoming Jesus' prayer' and complete the logic with 'and his prayer cannot but be answered'. But Jesus' presence is functioning here in precisely the opposite direction: since his

227. Turner, David L., *Matthew*, p. 446.

228. Ibid., p. 446.

229. Nolland, John, *Matthew*, p. 751.

presence mediates God's presence, it surely brings with it the answer to prayer promised in 18:19."²³⁰

There is thus some textual basis for linking the promise of Jesus' presence in Mt. 18:20 with God's presence. Nolland also ties Mt. 18:15-18 to Mt. 18:19. Nolland remarks that "Presumably the agreement between the two is meant to exclude inappropriate requests. With this qualification, v. 19 represents a more expansive statement of the asking and receiving aspect of 7:7-8. However, in the present context 'two of you' appears to be the minimal group to function as the 'you' of v. 18 and therefore as the church of v. 17."; in its present context, though, and after asking what is envisaged as the thing that is asked for, Nolland says that

Most likely the church is seeking guidance for exercising the role involved in vv. 17-18: behind the binding and loosing of v. 18 stands the praying of v. 19. There can be a speaking on behalf of God himself and a putting of his will into effect in v. 18 precisely because of the successful praying of v. 19. In prayer the application of what has been received from Jesus to the specific case in hand will become clear.²³¹

Nolland ties Mt. 18:19 to Mt. 18:15-18, and he thinks that the 'two of you' in Mt. 18:19 as the minimal group necessary for Mt. 18:18. Given this, he thinks that 'two' is the minimal number needed to have a 'church' in Mt. 18:17. Keener and Luz are similar to Nolland in connecting Mt. 18:19-20 with some of Mt. 18:15-17. Keener remarks that

The "two" or "three" gathered for prayer in 18:18-20 must be the "two or three" witnesses of 18:16; the "matter" ... concerning which they agree is prayer for the offender. ... While this could refer to the negative prayer of execration ..., in this context of forgiveness the prayer may represent a prayer for ultimate restoration

230. Ibid., p. 751.

231. Ibid., p. 749.

(though cf. 1 Jn 5:16-17). Jewish excommunication even in its long-term form was normally reversible if repentance took place (...).²³²

In connecting the 'two' or 'three' gathered for prayer in Mt. 18:19-20 with the 'two or three' witnesses of 18:16, Keener's interpretation can hold at bay a more expansive interpretation of Mt. 18:19, one that avoids some unreasonable consequences. Whether he is justified in this connection is a different issue.

Luz's interpretation also attempts to circumscribe the scope of Mt. 18:18 with Mt. 18:19.

Luz says that

all of the church's "binding" and "loosing" was probably accompanied by prayer. In this sense the reference to prayer probably for him does not so much limit the church's authority to bind and to loose as it describes and justifies it. Thus v. 19 indicates what the basis is for the power promised to the church in v. 18. It originates in God, is rooted in prayer, and remains dependent on God.²³³

Noticeable here is that Luz effectively constrains the proper scope and use of Mt. 18:18 in his interpretation of Mt. 18:19, and he also ties Mt. 18:19 to Mt. 18:15-18. The sweeping language of Mt. 18:18 is limited by Mt. 18:19, and the sweeping language of Mt. 18:19 is limited by Mt. 18:15-18. In each case, Luz imports a limitation that the language of Mt. 18:18 or Mt. 18:19 does not have on its own.

Like many of the commentators above, France connects Mt. 18:19 with what comes before it when he says that "The prayer envisaged in context is likely to be for the restoration of the sinner (see introductory comments), but this saying is not framed in such a way as to restrict

232. Keener, C. S., *Matthew Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, p. 455.

233. Luz, Ulrich, *Matthew 8-20*, p. 458.

it to only one kind of prayer, and, as we have noted above, it may not originally have been linked to this context."²³⁴ France adds for the statement of Mt. 18:20 that "His spiritual presence among them is the source of their authority to declare the will of God and to expect God to hear their prayers. And that presence is promised not to a formally convened ecclesiastical council, but to any two or three of his people who meet as his disciples."²³⁵

France acknowledges what some other commentators do not when he recognizes that the wording of Mt. 18:19 makes it applicable to a broader set of issues than what is found in Mt. 18:15-18. His statement that Mt. 18:19 "may not originally have been linked to this context" expresses a sentiment common among other scholars. Luz says that "Verses 19-20 appear to have no connection either to vv. 15-18 or to vv. 21-22."²³⁶ Davies and Allison's commentary says that Matthew 18:19-20 has been added to the section on reproof and says that "As it stands, v. 19 clarifies v. 18 by stating that agreement among believers on earth will have its sure effect in heaven. But v. 19, which, detached from its context, would concern communal prayer in general, originally had a wider scope than v. 18, which is about communal discipline in particular. It is likely that v. 19 at one time offered assurance or encouragement: even if only two agree on something, it will be done for them".²³⁷ Allen wrote that Mt. 18:19 "cannot be in an original connection."²³⁸ Albright and Mann say that

it is unlikely that this verse is in its original context, for while vs. 18 dealt with conduct on the part of the community's members, vs. 19 is an exhortation to

234. France, R. T., *Matthew NICNT*, p. 697.

235. Ibid., p. 698.

236. Luz, Ulrich, *Matthew 8-20*, p. 450.

237. Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C., *Matthew 8-18*, p. 788.

238. Allen, Willoughby C., *Matthew*, p. 198.

faithfulness in prayer. Presumably this verse found its way to its present position because of the occurrence of *earth* and *heaven* in both verses.²³⁹

Noticeable here is the repeated sentiment among scholars that the discourse does not seem to fully cohere in this section. On the traditional interpretation, there is some justification for this sentiment in light of the expansiveness of Mt. 18:19-20. Those two verses might cover the situation of Mt. 18:15-17 in the traditional interpretation, but their language would justify much more.

Gundry is similar to France and Luz in that he is not convinced that Mt. 18:19-20 came to Matthew as tradition bound together with Mt. 18:15-18. He says that "The saying comes from Matthew himself" and refers to Mt. 18:20 as the "last verse of Matthew's expansion".²⁴⁰ Gundry does differ from France and Luz in another respect, though. Gundry is quite clear that he thinks that the prayer of two in Mt. 18:19 would be for forgiveness of a brother who sinned. Gundry says that Matthew adds in Mt. 18:19 "a saying that promises answers to the prayers which are to accompany loosing, the last-mentioned action. In other words, the disciples may have confidence in praying that *God* should forgive the sin of the brother who heeds reproof just as *they* have loosed, or forgiven, his sin" and later he adds that παντός, the modifier of πράγματος, "shows that no sin committed by a brother in the church goes beyond the possibility of forgiveness."²⁴¹

Thompson is similar to Gundry in that he thinks that prayer in Mt. 18:19 would be about forgiveness. But Gundry seems to think that prayer in Mt. 18:19 is prayer of disciples who are

239. Albright, William Foxwell, & Christopher Stephen Mann, *Matthew*, p. 221.

240. Gundry, Robert H., *Matthew*, p. 369.

241. *Ibid.*, p. 369.

not the sinner of Mt. 18:15. Thompson, though, thinks that 'two' in Mt. 18:19 includes the sinner of Mt. 18:15 and the person who confronted the sinner. It may also include persons of Mt. 18:16-17, but can be as small as just the two persons. He indicates that when a person is won back to the community of disciples "he and the disciple who convinced him (along with others) release his sin on earth, and at the same time it is released in heaven (v. 18). In other words, when they reach an agreement and offer it to the Father in prayer, he infallibly grants their petition (v. 19). For they pray in the name of Jesus who himself is present in their midst (v. 20)." For Thompson, prayer in Mt. 18:19 is prayer for forgiveness.

Although most commentators have taken Mt. 18:19 to be about prayer, some commentators have understood the *πράγματος* to be specifically concerned with a 'dispute'.

Schweizer wrote that

In the present context, the idea is that what the community decides to bind or loose will be ratified by God; "anything" probably refers, as in 1 Corinthians 6:1, to a "dispute" between members of the community. The authority of the community's words is thus the authority they gain through prayer. It is assumed, of course, just as in 7:7-11, that the community prays according to God's will, as Jesus taught his disciples to pray in the Lord's Prayer.²⁴²

Blomberg cites Schweizer and says that *pragma* is a term that is "frequently limited to judicial matters"; accordingly, he thinks that Mt. 18:19 indicates that "actions of Christian discipline, following God's guidelines, have his endorsement."²⁴³ Schweizer thinks that Mt. 18:19 deals with prayer, but it is notable that he thinks that *πράγματος* refers to a dispute. Years later,

242. Schweizer, Eduard, *Matthew*, p. 374.

243. Blomberg, Craig L., *Matthew*, p. 281.

Derrett would take a similar view of πράγματος. Derrett, though, did not think that Mt. 18:19 was about prayer at all. Derrett has the following concluding paragraph:

What, if I am right, is the true meaning of 'When two or three are convened in my name . . .' ? It has nothing to do with prayer, for which Mk 9:29 and Jn 15:7 are sufficient. It means that unofficial dispute-settlers, peacemakers, perform a divine function. The Christian, submitting to Christian discipline, has faith that the arbitrators whom he has partly chosen for himself, supplemented perhaps by one chosen by the Church, will act as colleagues of Christ himself, and therefore he will believe that their solution is his will. The practical result is that he will not run to the state court to have it set aside or rendered otherwise infructuous.²⁴⁴

In line with this new interpretation, he says for πράγματος in Mt. 18:19 that "The word *pragma* really should not be translated as 'thing' as in 'anything'. The English word 'thing' no doubt has a very wide scope. But *pragma* means 'business', 'affair' 'property', and, in particular, 'lawsuit or litigation'."²⁴⁵ For συμφωνήσωσιν in Mt. 18:19, he says, after covering evidence for *πρᾶγμα*,

Correspondingly, *sumphōnein* does not mean merely to be harmonious or united, but implies agreement about a financial matter, such as a price. It also means to agree to a settlement or an accord, to come to terms or to an arrangement. A contract is implied, not mere unanimity (which is *homonoia*). All the words of the group beginning with this verb have these overtones.²⁴⁶

For αἰτήσονται in Mt. 18:19, Derrett thinks that the verb is not indicating prayer directed to 'my Father'. He says that

Aiteisthai can well mean, not to beg, but to pursue a claim. In the picture suggested by the verse the two persons are making claims, presumably of a financial nature, in respect of the same property, claim, possibly, and counter-

244. Derrett, "Where Two or Three", p. 86.

245. Ibid., p. 85.

246. Ibid., pp. 85-86.

claim. At some point they come a settlement of both. This has nothing to do with praying.²⁴⁷

For the word συνηγμένοι in Mt. 18:20, Derrett says that "*Sunēgmenoi*, as frequently in Demosthenes, is a natural word for 'reconciled'", but he thinks that the use of 'three' precludes this option and concludes that *sunēgmenoi* "means 'brought together'. The usual English rendering 'gathered' is too weak. It means that they have been convened for a solemn purpose, namely to act as judge/arbitrators."²⁴⁸ Derrett thus addresses major vocabulary in his new interpretation of Mt. 18:19-20, an interpretation in which prayer is the subject of neither Mt. 18:19 nor Mt. 18:20. Despite this advance in understanding of the text, Derrett still takes the order of events to be from earth to heaven. For him, an agreement is reached on earth, and it gets ratified in heaven. Carson seems favorably disposed to some of Derrett's interpretation.²⁴⁹

After Derrett, Garland would contend that scholars have uncritically applied a Mishnaic saying as if it were a parallel for Mt. 18:20. Garland says that "A reference in the *Mishna 'Abot* 3:2, 6 to the Divine Presence attending scholars who gather to study Torah has been uncritically applied as a parallel for understanding 18:19-20", but he says that "The Rabbinic tradition, however, originally applied to judges judging; and the *Mishna* switched it to Torah scholars because it was compiled when current practice required three judges, not one or two, as a minimum for judging cases (see *Mishna 'Abot* 4:8; *Sanhedrin* 1:1). The earlier tradition is

247. Ibid., p. 86.

248. Ibid., p. 85.

249. Carson, D. A., *Matthew 13-28*, pp. 403-404.

preserved in *Mekilta Bahodesh* 11 (to Exod 20:24)".²⁵⁰ Garland cites Sievers²⁵¹ and concludes that "The saying in Matthew reflects this earlier tradition about two or three judges who gather to arbitrate in a dispute. It affirms that Christ is present to shepherd their decisions".²⁵²

2. A New Proposal for 18:18-20 and the Plan for the Rest of the Study

The preceding survey of scholarly views allows the new proposal of this thesis to be situated clearly in relation to the history of interpretation. As already indicated, this thesis' view of binding and loosing has some similarity with that of Thompson. Binding and loosing have to do with forgiveness of sin or binding the sin to the sinner, but whereas Thompson thinks that binding can occur for each stage of the process of Mt. 18:15-17, this thesis primarily thinks of binding as what occurs after the third step in the process of Mt. 18:15-17 has been reached. Also in contrast to Thompson, and in line with other commentators, the periphrastic future perfects should be taken as indicating that, even if sometimes only on the level of logical order, binding and loosing first occur in heaven and then happen on earth. This thesis differs from other commentators who have attempted to make sense of this heaven-first order. They have appealed

250. Garland, David E., *Reading Matthew*, p. 196.

251. Sievers, Joseph. (1981). "'Where Two or Three.': The Rabbinic Concept of *Shekhinah* and Matt 18,20". In Finkel, Asher & Lawrence Frizzell (Eds.), *Standing before God: Studies on Prayer in Scriptures and in Tradition with Essays In Honor Of John M. Oesterreicher*. (pp. 171-182). New York: Ktav.

252. Garland, David E., *Reading Matthew*, p. 196.

to divine guidance to explain the heaven-first order. What is new in this thesis' interpretation of Mt. 18:18 is the reason it gives for the heaven-first order. In line with Matthew's repeated emphasis on divine influence in human behavior (see second chapter), the heaven-first order of Mt. 18:18 is an expression of Matthew's theological conviction that God works in the sinner of Mt. 18:15 to bring the sinner to repentance, and that when God does not so work in the sinner, the sinner will not actually repent.

This thesis' new interpretation of Mt. 18:19 also builds on the advance made by Derrett in his new proposal for Mt. 18:19. Derrett's appeal to arbitrators was unnecessary, though, and his conclusion that the reference to 'three' precludes *συνηγμένοι* from referring to reconciliation depended on his casting the statements in the mold of arbitration. Such a mold is not needed, and his conclusion does not follow if one does not grant his arbitration premise. Further, Derrett, like others, thinks that the statement of Mt. 18:19 has an earth-first order. This thesis' interpretation of Mt. 18:19 differs from Derrett in that, unshackled from Derrett's arbitration, it takes the verse to be about situations of conflict in general.

The interpretation of this thesis also differs from Derrett and nearly all modern commentators in that it reads the conditional statement of Mt. 18:19 not as a cause-effect statement, but as an information disclosing statement in which the apodosis reveals information about the cause of the event of the protasis. When two persons resolve conflict, the verse indicates that this happened because of God's causative work in one or both of them. In this it is quite similar to the new interpretation of Mt. 18:18. Similarly, this thesis, in contrast to nearly all modern commentators, thinks that Mt. 18:20 is also an information disclosing statement in which

the apodosis gives information about the event of the protasis. Given Nolland's view that Christ is the mediator of God's presence (Mt. 1:22-23),²⁵³ the language of Christ's presence in Mt. 18:20 may continue the passage's emphasis on God's causative role in human behavior, this time in a situation of a conflict resolved for the name of Christ. But Mt. 18:20 may actually be going beyond that. There is some justification for thinking that Mt. 18:20 indicates the same thing for the exalted Christ, though obliquely, that Mt. 18:19 indicates for 'my Father'. On this view, when two persons reconcile for Jesus' name, it would be because the exalted Jesus, and also the Father, have worked in one or more of them. Given that the resurrected, exalted Jesus influences person(s) to such reconciliation, he is truly in their midst.

Much of the remainder of this thesis will be in defense of this proposal. Chapter two lays out a positive case for the new interpretation of Mt. 18:18-20. Chapter three will argue that the periphrastic future perfects of Mt. 18:18 do indeed indicate a heaven-first order. Chapter four critiques alternative views of binding and loosing. Chapter five will present some concluding thoughts.

3. Methodology and Source-Criticism

The current thesis devotes much of its energy towards exegetical considerations that bolster or are relevant to the new interpretation of Mt. 18:18-20. In many cases, these considerations take the final form of Matthew's text as a given and use that final form as a

253. This idea was reached and text of Mt. 1:23 thought of prior to taking cognizance of Nolland's interpretation. See Nolland, John, *Matthew*, pp. 750-751.

control in interpretation. Passages and data from one part of Matthew will be treated as a relevant factors for understanding another part of Matthew.

Examples of this method of interpretation and argument are present in different chapters of the thesis. In the second chapter, Matthew's use of αἰτέω in other parts of his gospel is used as a basis for assessing his use of the word in Mt. 18:19. Also, the second chapter appeals to Matthew's editorial or authorial habit of clear, triadic arrangement in support of the new interpretation of Mt. 18:18-20 put forth in that chapter, and it considers Matthew's emphasis on reconciliation or divine influence in other part(s) of Matthew as relevant supporting evidence for that new interpretation. In the third chapter, Matthew's use of a future passive periphrastic construction in Mt. 10:22 and in Mt. 24:9 is used as one factor in an argument of best explanation of Matthew's use of the periphrastic future perfects in Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18, and his use of πάλιν outside of Mt. 18:19 is used in assessing the πάλιν in Mt. 18:19.

More arguments of this type can be found in the fourth chapter. There, Matthew's characterization of Peter is used in assessing the plausibility of a common interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c, and Matthew's characterization of disciples is used in assessment of the plausibility of common interpretation of Mt. 18:18. The fourth chapter examines certain interpretations of Mt. 18:18 in light of different considerations, some of these considerations include other verse(s) as significant evidence for interpretation of Mt. 18:18. The fourth chapter also uses a criterion of absurdity for interpretation of Mt. 18:18 that is at least partially influenced by other parts of Matthew's gospel. It may be acknowledged that this criterion is subjective, but many would admit that, even if agreement is not always reached about when such an argument is appropriate,

there is sometimes a proper place for an argument that a view is to be rejected because it is absurd. The evaluation of when this argument from absurdity is appropriate for a passage would rightly be affected by other passages in the same text. As with other examples in this thesis that judge one passage in light of others, the fourth chapter considers content from other passages in Matthew's gospel in its use of an argument from absurdity regarding Mt. 18:18.

These arguments that use other passages from the same text take their departure from the final form of some part(s) of Matthew's gospel and allow part(s) of his gospel to influence interpretation of other part(s). Three considerations support this approach. First, whether one chooses one particular view of Matthew's sources or another, it is a legitimate exegetical enterprise to interpret his work in its final form. With the gospel rightly taken as an act of communication, it is appropriate to treat the endorsed content and message of the gospel's main character and of the narrator, both of whom are presented as being reliable from a narrative standpoint, to be consistent and unified such that interpretation of one passage can be constrained by another.

A second reason that gives some justification to this approach is that source-criticism actually does not give much help in the interpretation of Mt. 18:18-20. Accordingly, the results of this thesis are not greatly affected by switching from one view of the synoptic problem to another. Outside of Lk. 17:3b-c, Matthew 18:15-20 is Matthean special material. In comparison to Mark, all of Mt. 18:1-2, 4, 7, 10-35 is Matthean special material. Mt. 18:19-20 has no Lukan or Markan parallel, nor does Mt. 18:23-35. If Mark was written first, the fact that so much of Matthew's material is unique in comparison to Mark does not leave much for source-critical

comparison of Matthew's discourse in comparison to Mark, and nothing substantive for source-critical comparison of Mt. 18:15-20 with Mark. If Luke is compared with Matthew, the three elements of Lk. 17:3b, 3c, 4 would be parallel to Mt. 18:15-17, 18, 21-22. The parallel here between Lk. 17:3c, which is exhortative, and Mt. 18:18, which this thesis thinks could be used for exhortation or as a basis for exhortation, would give some confirmation or support to this thesis' interpretation of Mt. 18:18. Although there is not total unanimity about whether Lk. 15:3-7 and Mt. 18:12-14 have different historical occasions standing behind them (if there is such historical background material), the resolution of this issue would not greatly affect the outcome of this thesis. In short, source-criticism does not have much to offer for this particular thesis.

Third, if it were to be contended, even after the preceding comments, that source-criticism has not received sufficient attention in this thesis at some points, the combined work of B. Ward Powers,²⁵⁴ William Farmer,²⁵⁵ and others²⁵⁶ have been sufficient to demonstrate that Markan priority does not do justice to data of the synoptics and that Mark was written using material of Matthew and Luke. Accordingly, and despite majority opinion among scholars, Mark is of little or no value for source-criticism of Matthew.

254. Powers, B. Ward. (2010). *The Progressive Publication of Matthew: An Explanation of the Writing of the Synoptic Gospels*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group.

255. Cf., among others, Farmer, William R. (1964). *The Synoptic Problem*. New York: Macmillan; Farmer, William R. (1977). "Modern Developments of Griesbach's Hypothesis". *New Testament Studies*, 23, 275-295; Farmer, William R. (1984). *A Position Paper for the Two-Gospel Hypothesis. Paper presented to the 1984 Jerusalem Symposium*.

256. Cf. Dungan, David Laird. (1999). *A History of the Synoptic Problem: The Canon, the Text, the Composition, and the Interpretation of the Gospels* (The Anchor Bible Reference Library). New York: Doubleday; Farmer, William R., Ed., (1983). *New Synoptic Studies*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press.

Though this thesis focuses on final form of Matthew's text, it also makes arguments based on what Matthew could have done as an author. In the third chapter, for example, the argument is made that Matthew's choice of a periphrastic future perfect is best explained by his intention to communicate a heaven-first order of binding and loosing in Mt. 18:18 and Mt. 16:19b-c. Such an argument goes beyond merely what lies in the final form of the text and seeks to explain an author's choices in the writing of some parts of his gospel. This endeavor is one for which source-criticism might be relevant, but source-critical considerations would not negate the argument. If the origin of these two passages was a textual source that Matthew was using in composition of his gospel, Matthew would have been under no obligation to follow the exact wording of his source. This much has to be admitted by many proponents of the two-source theory of synoptic relationships, for the amount of times that Matthew would have changed the wording of his Markan source in that solution to the synoptic problem forces the admission that Matthew would not have felt obligated to follow a source word-for-word. There seems to be no good reason why Matthew, if he was actually writing before Mark and using a textual source, would not have had freedom to use wording that differed from that source. If Markan priority is allowed to grant Matthew authorial freedom with use of his source material, Markan posteriority should be allowed to do so too. Even if Matthew were first and were using a source, it would thus be appropriate to ask why it was that Matthew chose a particular verbal expression in chapter three or ask why he chose certain word(s) in chapter two. Given that Mt. 18:18-20 has no Markan parallel and no significant Lukan parallel, the conclusion that a certain explanation best

accounts for Matthew's choice of a word or of a verbal expression is not materially affected by the disagreement about whether Mark used Matthew or the reverse.

Such a method of argumentation is not in conflict with the procedure of letting some parts of the final form of Matthew's gospel act as controls for interpretation of other parts. Since Matthew's gospel as a whole was the final product of literary communication, it is appropriate to consider some of its parts in light of others, but this does not prevent arguments about why Matthew chose to use one particular verbal expression or word rather than another.

Though other passages from Matthew's gospel are used to inform interpretation of one or more parts of Mt. 18:18-20, it is also true that the exegetical nature of the thesis interprets the text in light of the broader environment in which Matthew's gospel was produced. This is of course necessary in the analysis of different words in Mt. 18:18-20, and no defense is needed here for the use of linguistic data from outside of Matthew in interpreting certain words.

A methodological issue does arise, though, in regard to the weight one puts on linguistic data from within a text in comparison to the weight one puts on linguistic data from outside the text. One example from within this thesis has to do with the use of λύω, the word used for "loosing" in Mt. 5:19 and Mt. 18:18. In Mt. 5:19, "loosing" a command is clearly discouraged, but outside of Matthew, the practice of "loosing" or "binding" specific commands was accepted and encouraged among persons with extended religious training. In this case, this thesis favors the internal evidence of Mt. 5:19 over the external evidence of an accepted practice of "binding" and "loosing". One may grant that it is normal for scholars to use unarticulated assumptions or

practices from outside of a text to inform exegesis of a text, but that is usually acceptable because the text does not specifically address the practice or assumption. But if a text does address an issue with the same or similar vocabulary that in other texts marks a specific practice, then it seems appropriate that the evidence internal to the text be allowed to speak for the text rather than have the other texts put words into the mouth of the author about the propriety (or lack thereof) of that practice.

Such reasoning can be extended more broadly to the principle that evidence internal to the text is to be favored over evidence external to it. Two points may be mentioned in this regard. First, though linguistic usage is somewhat different than a text directly addressing a practice or assumption, this preference for internal evidence helps in explaining why arguments in this thesis focus on the way Matthew uses specific words. How an author uses a word, or uses certain verbal forms, may differ from how others used that word or those verbal forms in the world in which the author lived. If the author gives a sufficiently large body of evidence for that word or those verbal forms, then one can make certain conclusions about how the author understood a word or verbal form from the usage of that word or verbal form by the author. If this thesis seems to pay specific attention to data from within Matthew's gospel, it may be because it is felt that Matthew's gospel does give a sufficiently large data set to make conclusions about what Matthew thought he was doing in using a word or verbal phrase. A case in point in this respect may be found in the second section of the third chapter, which deals with Matthew's choice of the future. That section looks at Matthew's usage of subjunctive clauses and reaches a conclusion

about Mt. 18:18, which contains a subjunctive clause, based on Matthew's usage of the subjunctive outside of Mt. 18:18.

Second, this reasoning can also apply to broader areas of inquiry, including theology, anthropology, and eschatology. In more than one place in this thesis, statement(s) in Matthew's text that deal with one topic are thought to constrain interpretation of a passage, even though there was a spectrum of views in second-temple Judaism regarding that topic. This method in interpretation seems valid given the reasonable assumptions that the Gospel of Matthew was a single act of communication, that a reader should be charitable enough to assume at the outset that an author's act of communication will be coherent, and that, in many ways, Matthew's gospel provides evidence that such charity in interpreting his act of communication is justified. This thesis is proposing a new interpretation of one portion of Matthew's act of communication, Mt. 18:18-20, so it is methodologically justified to allow statements about different topics in his gospel to inform interpretation of Mt. 18:18-20, even if the broader world of second-temple Judaism had varying views about such topics.

This approach to interpretation is also justified in light of the danger of twisting what an author wants to say by conforming it to notions one brings to the text from views existent at the time the author is writing. If historical investigation must give the author the ability to say something unique or different, then his act of communication needs to be interpreted on its own terms. This means that, in interpreting a specific part of the author's act of communication, one

needs to let what the author says about different topics in other parts of that communicative act inform the interpretation of that specific part. Not to do so would be ideology, not proper history.

Some comments about methodology may be appropriate for some of the material in chapter three. That chapter examines the question of how to understand the periphrastic future perfects of Mt. 18:18. The first section of that chapter looks at what options were available to Matthew in his choice of verbal forms or phrases in Mt. 18:18, and avers that, in light of the options available to Matthew, the best explanation of the verbal forms that he did choose is that he intended to convey a heaven-first order. The second section looks at the question of why Matthew chose a future form of εἰμί.

The third section argues against the verbal aspect theory of Stanley Porter in a brief space; the appendix that accompanies this section may need some comment in regard to methodology. That appendix argues at some length, venturing somewhat far into the field of linguistics. This brings to the appendix a sort of theoretical or philosophical argument not normally found in monographs in New Testament studies, but such argument seems necessary in light of the nature of Porter's theory and the specific challenge that he has posed to the interpretation given in this thesis for the periphrastic future perfects of Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18. The author of this thesis is unaware of any previous publication successfully challenging Porter's theory on the theoretical terms he has set for it, and his theory has therefore continued to have credibility that would undermine the interpretation of the periphrastic future perfects set forth in this thesis. A successful challenge will have to engage his view at the theoretical level, for that is where its deficiency lies. The main portion of this thesis sets out some of the core of

this challenge, and that core should be sufficient to point to the deficiency of Porter's thesis. If the reader desires a thorough development of the challenge against Porter, appendix C may be consulted.

II. A New Interpretation of Matthew 18:18-20

This chapter presents positive arguments for this thesis' new interpretation of Mt. 18:18-20 and also provides some negative arguments against other views. Part of the positive argument is contextual. Matthew displays a significant interest in reconciliation prior to Mt. 18:18-20, and his theological emphasis on God's role in causing different types of human action is a prominent feature of different passages prior to Mt. 18:18-20. This belief in divine influence of human behavior is not meant to deny human participation for the same behavior. A third noticeable emphasis is the Son's equality with or similarity to the Father. If Mt. 18:18-20 is emphasizing that the Son would influence party or parties to achieve reconciliation in Mt. 18:20 in the same way that 'my Father' brings about reconciliation in Mt. 18:19, this emphasis would be relevant.

Before expounding the new interpretation of Mt. 18:18-20, this chapter will survey some passages in which Matthew's interest in reconciliation or divine influence is evident. Matthew also has a repeated emphasis on the Son's equality with or similarity to the Father, and such an emphasis would bolster this thesis' interpretation of Mt. 18:20. There is not room in this thesis, though, to give a full presentation of this emphasis. Matthew's emphasis on reconciliation and divine influence make this thesis' new interpretation of Mt. 18:18-20 significantly more

plausible. One such passage that needs special attention is Mt. 18:12-14. After treatment of passages that demonstrate Matthew's interest in reconciliation and his emphasis on divine influence, positive arguments for this thesis' view of Mt. 18:18-20 will be presented.

1. Matthean Emphases Relevant to Interpretation of Mt. 18:18-20

The interpretation of this thesis for Mt. 18:18-20 has at least two features that merit special attention. Mt. 18:19-20 emphasizes reconciliation and Mt. 18:18-20 emphasizes divine influence in human action. Both of these features are repeated emphases of Matthew's gospel. To give significant plausibility to this thesis' interpretation of Mt. 18:18-20 this section will survey evidence in Matthew for these emphases. Such a survey will demonstrate that the new interpretation offered in this thesis is quite in keeping with significant concerns in Matthew's text.

(a) Matthew's Interest in Reconciliation

Matthew's interest in reconciliation is clearly evident in Mt. 5:23-24, where Jesus commends his hearer to leave a gift at the place of the altar if there it is remembered that 'your brother' has something against the hearer. Mt. 6:14-15 also warns that 'your father' will not

forgive a disciple who does not forgive someone else.²⁵⁷ One might also notice that the beatitude of Mt. 5:9, combined with the definition of sonship in Mt. 5:43-48, portrays God as a peacemaker, which would be in line with an interest in reconciliation. That characterization resurfaces in Mt. 18:19. These passages demonstrate that well before Mt. 18:18-20, Matthew's text has already shown an interest in and commendation of reconciliation.

(b) Matthew's Emphasis on Divine Influence in Human Behavior

More prominent in Matthew's thinking is his emphasis on God's causative role in producing different types of human behavior.²⁵⁸ This emphasis is prominent in passages where Matthew refers to God as father. The Father is the one who acts to have his will be done (6:10), his name to be hallowed (6:9) and his reign to be accomplished in the lives of people (6:10). He saves disciples from temptation and delivers from the evil one (6:13). It is the father who works in disciples such that they do good works (5:16). It is the Father who gives the good gift (7:11) of spiritual or ethical provision for loving one's neighbor as oneself (7:12) and for living in accordance with many of the demands in 5:21-7:6.²⁵⁹ The Father gives knowledge of what to say in times of witness and uses his Spirit to speak through his disciples (10:19-20). Pharisees are blind and react poorly to Jesus because they have not been planted by the Father (15:13-14). Like

257. In personal conversation, Dr. Paul Foster raised the idea of Matthew's interest in reconciliation and thought of the gift at the altar passage (and the Mt. 6:15 warning?), and Matthew's interest in reconciliation was accordingly included and emphasized here.

258. Talk of causation here should not be understood exclusively. To say that God causes something is not to deny that humans cause the same thing. Causation is here used as if there can be joint causation, whether or not that is in fact the case.

259. Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C., *Matthew 1-7*. pp. 683-690, especially pp. 685 and 690.

a shepherd searching for a lost sheep who sins and goes astray, it is when the Father finds the sheep that repentance occurs (18:12-14).

In addition to the above passages, there are passages where the term 'father' is not used but that still align with the portrayal of God's causative role in human behavior. In the sermon on the mount, the beatitude in which those who hunger and thirst for righteousness would be filled (5:6) expresses Matthew's conviction of God's causative role in human behavior, as does the command to seek God's kingdom and his righteousness (6:33). To modify τὴν δικαιοσύνην with αὐτοῦ in 6:33 suggests that there is something more than mere righteous behavior in view here; there is a conviction that such behavior comes through God's activity. The passive χορτασθήσονται in 5:6 is a divine passive, and as such suggests that τὴν δικαιοσύνην somehow comes through God's agency. In 9:37-38, Jesus tells his disciples to ask the Lord of the harvest to send workers into the harvest field. The assumption is that God is so able to influence people that they would join the harvest work when they would not otherwise do so.²⁶⁰ Jesus' claim in Mt. 19:26 that what for man is ἀδύνατόν is δυνατά for God is another instance where Matthew's conviction about God's influence in human behavior arises. God so influences a disciple that he is willing to give up his wealth in obedience and to follow the Son.

It is not only the number of passages in which this conviction about the divine influence of the Father is expressed that is striking. The range of behavior in which this influence is felt is

260. For identification of the lord of the harvest with God in Mt. 9:38, see France, R. T., *Matthew NICNT*, p. 374; Evans, Craig A., *Matthew*, p. 213; Hagner, Donald A. (1993). *Matthew 1-13* (Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 33A). Dallas, TX: Word Books, pp. 260-261.

also striking. The Lord spoke through prophets (1:22; 2:15) by his Spirit (22:43-45), including the prophet Isaiah (15:8-9). He gave commands to his people through Moses (15:1-6), and inspired Moses in his writing of Scripture (19:4-6). The Spirit leads Jesus into a wilderness (4:1). Through God's influence, people are filled with righteousness (5:6) do good works (5:16), sanctify God's name (6:9), have his reign done in their lives and do his will (6:10), avoid temptation (6:13; cf. 26:41), are delivered from the evil one (6:13), seek and find or receive his righteousness (6:33), love their neighbor as themselves and obey ethical demands given in the Sermon on the Mount (7:11-12), are sent into the harvest (9:37-38),²⁶¹ speak by the Spirit of 'your father' words given to them (10:19-20), understand the significance of God's work through his Son (11:25), are relieved of their spiritual blindness when they are planted by 'my Father' (15:13-14), repent of sin or submit their lives to the proclamation of the kingdom (16:19; 18:12-14, 18), resolve conflict (18:19), and love their neighbor as themselves, obey God's command, part with possessions, and follow the Son (19:26).

The passages given above are adequate to demonstrate both that divine influence was a prominent part of Matthew's theology and that this feature of his theology comes to the surface again and again prior to Mt. 18. This theology can look for support to the Old Testament itself, both as a general theology²⁶² and as a theology of eschatological outpouring of the Spirit.²⁶³ The

261. France, R. T., *Matthew NICNT*, p. 374.

262. Cf. 1 Sam. 16:7; Psa. 7:10; 15:2; 17:3; 19:14; 24:4; 26:2; 44:21; 51:10, 17; 66:18; 73:1; 86:11; 119:36, 58, 80; 125:4; 139:23; 148:14; Prov. 3:1; 4:21; 6:21; 11:20; 16:1, 5, 9; 17:3; 19:21; 21:1, 2; 24:12; 27:19; Isa. 10:12; 29:13; 57:15; Jer. 3:10, 15; 4:14; 9:26; 11:20; 16:12; 17:5; 17:10; 20:12; 24:7; 29:13; 32:39; Ezek. 11:19; 18:31; 28:2, 5, 17; 36:26; 44:7, 9; Hos. 5:4; 10:2; Joel 2:12, 13; Obad. 3; Mal. 2:2. Cf. also Psalm 118.

263. Cf. Jer. 31:31-34; 32:37-41; Ezek. 36:22-37:14. I have been aided here by work of Preston

new interpretation of Mt. 18:18-20 continues Matthew's emphasis on divine influence in human behavior and accordingly is a very plausible interpretation given what occurs before Mt. 18.

(c) Conclusion

It is clear from the survey of evidence just given that that some features of the new interpretation of Mt. 18:18-20 are not foreign to Matthew's text or his thinking. When this thesis proposes that Mt. 18:18-19 point to God's causative role in repentance and reconciliation, such a proposal stands in line with many passages in Matthew that portray God as causing human behavior. When Mt. 18:20 indicates through language of presence that the Son would do the same, it is continuing a trend of the Son being described in the same way that the father is described. When Mt. 18:19 emphasizes God's role in reconciliation, this picks up Matthew's interest in reconciliation. The new interpretation of Mt. 18:18-20 in this thesis is quite at home in Matthew's gospel.

2. Mt. 18:12-14: 'Your father' in the Parable of the Stray Sheep

One particular passage where Matthew's belief in God's causative role in human behavior needs attention is Mt. 18:12-14. In the parable of the lost sheep in Mt. 18:12-14, 'your father' is characterized as one who pursues a lost sheep, undesirous that a lost sheep should stay lost.

Sprinkle, which pointed me to Old Testament references.

Matthew's emphasis on the divine influence of the father is continued in this passage. But there is a new element in Mt. 18:12-14, in comparison to many of the divine influence passages prior to Mt. 18. Mt. 18:12-14 explicitly calls attention to the role of God in repentance, a role that will God will reprise in Mt. 18:18, and a role that is similar to the role of 'my father' in resolution of conflict in Mt. 18:19. This section will give some argument in favor of the conclusion that the shepherd of the parable is God and that it characterizes God as causing the repentance of a disciple who has sinned.

(a) Who is the Shepherd in Mt. 18:12-14?

Though it is the contention of this thesis that the shepherd of Mt. 18:12-14 is 'your father', not all interpreters have adopted this interpretation. Accordingly, some justification for this equation is needed. Davies and Allison say that "One guesses that the First Evangelist likewise identified the shepherd with Jesus and took the logic of the parable to be this: God (v. 14) approves of the actions of the shepherd Jesus who set out for the lost little ones (vv. 13-14)" and then refers to 9:36, 15:24, 26:31, Lk. 12:32, and Jn 10:1-21 for support.²⁶⁴ Hagner says that "Very probably Matthew and his original readers think of Jesus as the shepherd who goes in search of the stray" and refers to some of the same passages as Davies and Allison.²⁶⁵

Verses 12-14 make no explicit reference to Jesus, and in v. 14, the one application that is made is to 'your father'. The case for identifying Jesus with the shepherd would thus need to lie elsewhere. But of the passages in Matthew cited, one (25:32) merely likens the dividing of

264. Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C., *Matthew 8-18*, pp. 773-774.

265. Hagner, Donald A., *Matthew 14-28*, p. 527

persons to the activity of a shepherd separating sheep and goats, another (26:31) does refer to him as a shepherd, but the third (9:36) only says that people were like a sheep without a shepherd. It does not call Jesus a shepherd, and is poor evidence, if evidence at all, for identifying the shepherd of 18:12-14 with Jesus. France also mentions 2:6, where chief priests and scribes are said to have described the Christ as one who will shepherd (ποιμανεῖ) God's people Israel. One might also appeal to the broader storyline of Matthew, in which Jesus' characterization of his own activity and mission may rightly allow one to subsume much of his activity under the shepherd heading. But this is probably not the perspective of the disciples, nor arguably that of Jesus, at this point in the narrative.

Within Matthew, then, there are two texts from the narrator or Jesus that refer to Jesus as a shepherd, and a third from character(s) in the story who, knowingly or unknowingly, use the word ποιμανεῖ that would be applicable to him. Is this enough to interpret the shepherd in the parable of the lost sheep as another reference to Jesus? In the opinion of the present writer, no. First, it may be noticed that in OT usage, God was characterized as shepherd on more than one occasion (Pss 23; 95:7; Jer 23:1-4; Ezek 34:1-16), so it is not unnatural for him to be so described again. Jer. 23:1-4 describes a flock that is scattered (Jer. 23:2) and that is afraid or terrified (Jer. 23:4). Though in Jer. 23:4 God says that he would place shepherds over his flock, in Jer. 23:3 he says that he would gather the remnant out of countries where he has driven them and would bring them back to their pasture. In this passage, it is God who brings members of a flock to a land of pasture. The situation is the same in Ezek. 34:1-16. In Ezek. 34:11, the Lord says that he will search for his sheep and look after them. In Ezek. 34:12, he says that he will

rescue his sheep from places where they were scattered. In Ezek. 34:13, he says that he would bring his sheep out from nations and gather them from countries. In addition to emphasizing his role in getting sheep and bringing them to his own land, the Ezekiel passage also describes the Lord as one who tends his sheep. In Ezek. 34:12, he says that he would look after his sheep. In Ezek. 34:13, he says that he would pasture his sheep in Israel. He says in Ezek. 34:14 that he would tend his sheep in good pasture and in Ezek. 34:15 that he would tend his sheep. There is a significant OT background for interpreting Mt. 18:12-14 such that the shepherd of the parable is 'your father'.

Second, the context discourages interpreting the shepherd to be Jesus. Such an insertion of him as a shepherd into the discourse would not only be somewhat out of the blue, but the parable is surrounded on the one side by the application to 'your father' in Mt. 18:14 and on the other by the reference to little ones seeing the face of 'my father' in heaven in Mt. 18:10. This context points more to the shepherd of the parable being the father.

Third, this passage serves as a basis of imitation for the prescription in 18:15-17,²⁶⁶ and is not the only case of *imitatio dei* in Matthew. Matthew repeatedly has discourse that encourages imitation of God, and it is natural that such an appeal to what God does again be made a model for what disciples do. In fact, later in the same chapter, the parable of the unmerciful servant will be used for encouraging disciples to have a similar attitude of forgiveness to the forgiving

266. Thompson, W. G., *Matthew's Advice*, p. 187, says that, "Although there are no verbal contacts, other similarities between the parable (vv. 12-13) and the first stipulation (vv. 15a.15b) suggest that the shepherd is a model for the disciples."

attitude of God. Though Matthew does have examples of an *imitatio Christi* (cf. 10:38; 16:24), in both of these cases the call is to take up a cross and follow Jesus. It is a call to suffering or death. There is no clear mention of seeking out a lost disciple. In contrast to this, imitative discourse about the Father in other parts of Matthew is much closer in subject matter, or has the same subject matter, as Mt. 18:12-14. Further, these two examples of imitating Christ depend on equating taking up one's cross with following Jesus. There is much to commend some equation of the two, but if they are separate things, then there is not much *imitatio Christi* in Mt. 10:38 and 16:24.

Fourth, to insist that every use of a metaphor in a text must have the same referent, so that the description of Jesus as shepherd in 26:31 forces one to understand the shepherd of 18:12-14 as a reference to Jesus, is not only unnecessary but contrary to the Matthew's own practice elsewhere. God is described as a βασιλεύς, a king (5:35; 18:21-35; 22:1-14) but the Son of Man is also described as king (25:34). 'My father' functions as a judge (18:23-35), but so does Jesus (25:31-46). God is an οἰκοδεσπότης, a master of a house (20:1, 11; 21:33), but so is Jesus (10:25; in 24:45, Jesus is the ὁ κύριος ἐπὶ τῆς οἰκετείας, the master of a house), and even a disciple might be likened to an οἰκοδεσπότης (24:43). God is described as the κύριος τοῦ θερισμοῦ, the Lord of the harvest (9:38) or as the οἰκοδεσπότης τοῦ καιροῦ τῶν καρπῶν and κύριος τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος (21:33-34, 39), but the Son is portrayed as οἰκοδεσπότης τοῦ θερισμοῦ, lord of the time of harvest (13:27, 30; cf. 13:24-30, 37-42). Given the number of times when a description applies in one text to God and applies in another to Jesus, one might argue that interpreting 18:12-14 as characterizing 'your father' as shepherd would be in keeping with Matthew's tendency. Even if

this is going too far, three characterizations of Jesus as shepherd would not be very compelling evidence when there is so much freedom to use the same description of both the father and the son and when other factors favor equating the shepherd with 'your father'.

Fifth, a narrative consideration favors the shepherd of the parable being the father. In the world of the narrative, the statement to Herod that the Christ would shepherd God's people Israel was not made in the hearing of the disciples, and the shepherd characterizations of 25:32 and 26:31 both occur well after the telling of this parable in the narrative. Though historically the disciples had much more to base understanding on than what is recounted in the gospel, it is still true that the presentation of the disciples as characters in Matthew's story does not give much evidence for the reader of Matthew's gospel to conclude that, judging solely from what is in the gospel prior to Mt. 18, the disciples of the narrative would have understood the shepherd reference in 18:12-14 to be a reference to Jesus. Taken together, the above reasons favor equating the shepherd of the parable with 'your Father'.

(b) God's Causative Role in the Repentance of Mt. 18:12-14

What does the parable say about what 'your father' rescues the sheep from? The plight in view is that of destruction resulting from sin. In 10:6 and 15:24 ἀπόλλυμι is used in its perfect participial form to describe the lost sheep of the house of Israel. There the idea of separation from the shepherd and flock is in view, of not being included with the herd. But more commonly in Matthew ἀπόλλυμι is used to indicate destruction or death (2:13; 8:25; 9:17; 12:14; 21:41;

22:7; 26:52; 27:20); in 5:29-30, the loss (ἀπόληται is used) of the eye and hand from the body would be attended by the death of those things and cessation of their useful function for the body. In other places (10:39, 42; 16:25), the word may be understood in terms of losing possession of something as when one loses an item and cannot find it, the end result being similar to the item's having been destroyed. The word ἀπόλλυμι in Mt. 10:6 and 15:24 is used specifically in description of sheep, and might therefore support the contention that the statement in 18:14 that the Father is not willing that one of these little ones ἀπόληται means that he is not willing that the sheep be lost in the sense of be separated from a flock.

Even if this is granted, it is not appropriate to insist on a complete separation between destruction on the one hand and being lost and separated from the herd on the other. Ezekiel 34 is instructive here. In Ezek. 34:5, the text says that members of the flock were scattered because there was no shepherd and that when they were scattered "they became food for all the wild animals" (according to NRSV; πᾶσι τοῖς θηρίοις τοῦ ἀγροῦ in Ralphs' LXX and הָיָה לְכָל הַחַיָּה בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן in BHS). In Ezek. 34:8, it says that since there was no shepherd, sheep became prey and sheep became food for wild beasts. Destruction and separation were connected. To an extent, then, the distinction between ἀπόλλυμι as separation and ἀπόλλυμι as destruction may be one without much difference. The point here would not necessarily be that Mt. 18:12-14 is intentionally drawing on Ezek. 34, but that Ezek. 34:5, 8 discourages completely separating destruction and separation from a flock.

Moreover, Matthew originally described the sheep's straying with πλανηθῆναι in 18:12 (and uses the same word in v. 12 again and in v. 13) and could have used a different form of the same

word had he wished to emphasize separation. His switch to ἀπόληται in light of its being used in the past to denote death or destruction and after the three occurrences of πλανᾶω suggests an intent to emphasize destruction, judgment, or spiritual death. If one were to contend that πλανηθῇ, which can refer to being deceived,²⁶⁷ does not have to do with the person sinning and that one should therefore not impose onto ἀπόληται in Mt. 18:14 the idea of judgment for sin, it may be responded that the context tells against this. Mt. 18:5-9, 15-17 focus on stumbling or sin. Mt. 18:7-9 makes a dire warning about the punishment awaiting those who sin, and Mt. 18:21-35 emphasizes the punishment of those who do not show the same forgiving spirit as the Father. This destruction in Mt. 18:21-35 is divinely inflicted, and is inflicted for sin. Given such context, the better interpretation for ἀπόληται is that it refers to destruction for sin. The destruction of 18:14 from which Father wishes that sheep be saved is his own divine destruction meted out in response to sin. The parallel in Luke 15:3-7 also supports this view. Putting it in theological terminology, one thus sees both God's justice at work, there being no need for warning about destruction in 18:14 and elsewhere if justice is not in play, and also sees his redemptive purpose in his desire that the sheep not be destroyed.

The parable goes further than just characterizing God as one who desires that a sinner be saved from destruction. It portrays him as actively seeking out the sheep and says that he rejoiced or rejoices (χαίρει) when it is found. Kenneth Bailey makes several points about Luke's parable of the lost sheep that are relevant here. Whether or not a lost sheep parable was uttered

267. Cf. Bauer, W., F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, & F. W. Gingrich. (2000). *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (3 ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press, s. v.

on two different occasions, or adapted by one or both of the evangelists,²⁶⁸ both parables are similar enough in cultural background to allow cultural comments about Luke's parable to inform one's perspective of Matthew's parable. Luke 15:5 says that the shepherd puts the sheep on his shoulders and rejoices. Bailey says that upper Galilee shepherd friends confirm the insight of Stuhlmuehler that "A lost sheep will lie down helplessly and refuse to budge. The shepherd is forced to carry it over a long distance."²⁶⁹ If Bailey is right, the shepherd's finding the sheep is a precursor to a burdensome trek. Of the Lukan parable, Bailey says that "The story does not end with the finding of the sheep. After the sheep is found it must be restored. It is the restoration with its implied burden and expressed joy that is the center of the second stanza and thus the climax of the entire poem."²⁷⁰ In Luke, the shepherd's return to his community is also a cause for rejoicing, as the search for the sheep entailed the danger of the shepherd encountering a wild beast.²⁷¹ The rejoicing may also be due to the sheep's being the property of some other member of the community.²⁷²

Matthew does not mention the shepherd's putting the sheep on his shoulders, nor the trudge that would have been involved in carrying such an animal so far. But such would have been cultural knowledge of some people in Matthew's day, and may have been left out at least partly for that reason. Bailey's point about the shepherd's rejoicing may be inferred. The shepherd

268. See, on this, the remarks of Carson (Carson, D. A., *Matthew 13-28*, p. 400).

269. See Bailey, Kenneth E. (1976). *Poet and Peasant: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, p. 148.

270. See *Ibid.*, p. 148.

271. See *Ibid.*, p. 149.

272. See *Ibid.*, p. 150.

rejoices in spite of the burden he has to carry, and so, too, does God rejoice in the restoration of the sinner in spite of what must be done to do so justly.²⁷³ Even if one were not to grant some of Bailey's assertions, this would not totally remove the core of some of what he says. A shepherd would still need to spend time in search for the sheep, which would involve some effort, and given such work and the danger posed to the sheep, the finding would naturally arouse exultation.

A similar judgment may be made about the connection of repentance with finding the sheep. Matthew lacks Luke's explicit identification of repentance with the sheep being found, but the material for making the connection is at hand. Earlier the link between the ἀπόληται of v. 14 and judgment was indicated, and in Matthew's eyes, judgment is the response to sin and can be averted in repentance. The shepherd's finding and returning the sheep staves off the little one's destruction, and thus implies some sort of repentance. Though perhaps not with Bailey's force, the same emphasis on repentance being a response to God's action may be made. God pursues, and in God's finding the sheep and its return to its proper place is found the sinner's repentance.

This view of repentance was in contrast to the view of much of Judaism. In the application of Luke's parable of the lost sheep, Jesus indicates in v. 7 that in this way, there would be more joy in heaven over one person who repents than over ninety-nine righteous who have not need of repentance. The remark is the basis for Bailey's conclusion about the parable's significance for understanding of repentance. Here is Bailey at length.

273. Bailey maintains that ἐάν must not always mean 'if', but can mean 'when,' such as in John 12:32. In this regard, he also mentions John 14:3; Heb. 3:7; 1 John 2:28. Ibid., pp. 151-152.

For first-century Judaism repentance was a way of bringing in the kingdom. In the preaching of Jesus repentance was a response to the kingdom already come. Bornkamm points out that for the rabbis repentance was a precondition for grace; it was a work by which a righteous man showed himself righteous. All this is clearly silenced in the parable of the Lost Sheep, ... The sheep does nothing to prompt the shepherd to begin his search except to become lost. In the parable the shepherd finds the sheep. Then, in the conclusion to the parable, there is reported joy over "one sinner who repents." Here "being found" is equated with "repentance." [Footnote 57: This new understanding of repentance is expanded in the parable of the Lost Sons, where an older son is also "found" but there is no repentance. Thus, there is more involved than just "being found." The one found must accept his lost condition and his need to be found and restored. One could argue that all this is implied in the parable of the Lost Sheep. ...] Thus the parable of the Lost Sheep sets out a radically new understanding of the nature of repentance.²⁷⁴

Bailey's point seems essentially on target, but one need not rely on him alone. Bailey's thought that much of Judaism did not view repentance as God finding the sinner finds confirmation in Watson's remark that in his book, "it is acknowledged that *divine agency plays a more direct and immediate role in the Pauline 'pattern of religion' than in the Judaism Paul opposes*. There is no suggestion that the two systems hold similar views about the relation of divine grace to human response." Watson also says that when Paul looks to the Jewish community, he sees a soteriology in which "human agency stands in the foreground"; but, according to Watson, "when Paul looks to the Christian community, what he sees is the transformative power of the Spirit, the life of the risen Jesus as a present reality." He then says that Paul "also sees certain practices that fail to reflect the presence of the Spirit," for which, Watson indicates, Paul could respond with the threat of eschatological judgment, but he adds that

274. Ibid., p. 155.

it is still the dynamism of present divine agency that stands in the foreground here. (That is the fundamental difference between Paul and, say, the *Didache*.) To repeat: Paul's representations of divine and human agency within the two communities only look similar at an unhelpfully high level of abstraction. From a more natural perspective, one closer to Paul's own, they look very different.²⁷⁵

The above considerations point to the conclusion that the parable of the lost sheep in Mt. 18:12-14 is a parable in which God as shepherd finds the sheep, which expresses much of the idea that God brings a sinner to repentance. There is a strong element of divine agency in the process of repentance, according to the parable. This stood in comparison to the view of much of Judaism, but it stands in continuity with the conviction, expressed in other passages in Matthew, about God's causative role in human behavior. Here the divine activity is in the area of repentance, while some other passages do not have so clear a focus particularly on repentance. Such an interpretation of the parable's characterization of God is in line with Matthew's emphasis on God's salvific intention and actions (cf. 1:22-23) and Jesus' message about his Father. 'Your father' is not the God of a believing community only. He is the God of sinners outside that community.

One final point is worth making, before moving on. Though Matthew 18:13 says that the shepherd rejoiced more over the one sheep found than over the ninety-nine who did not stray, this should not be taken to mean that there is a preferential love of one being elevated far above any of the others. Bailey quotes Levison, whom Bailey describes as one who grew up in a Middle Eastern village, as saying that "I have never seen in Syria, Palestine or Mesopotamia a

275. All quotes in this paragraph from Watson, Francis. (2007). *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: Beyond the New Perspective* (Revised and Expanded ed.). Grand Rapids & Cambridge: Eerdmans, pp. 15-19.

flock attended by a single person. Two, and even three, shepherds are commonly employed. When one sheep is lost and the shepherd goes to seek it, the other shepherd takes the flock home."²⁷⁶ If it is the case that hearers would have expected there to be more than one shepherd for one hundred sheep, one need not suppose that the shepherd is abandoning the other sheep in some special preference for that sheep over the others. That reading might have some support Gospel of Thomas 107, with its lost sheep being the largest and the one to whom Jesus says that he loves it more than the other ninety-nine, but Thomas came after Luke.²⁷⁷ In Luke, after the shepherd finds the sheep and rejoices, the very next thing that is narrated is his return to home, which would be consistent with other person(s) having been in charge of the sheep after the shepherd departed for the lost one. Matthew is probably to be understood similarly.²⁷⁸

This section has argued for Mt. 18:12-14 describing God's causative role in repentance of a stray sheep. This description provides important context for Mt. 18:18-20. It also serves as an important element in the structure of Matthew's discourse. Such importance will be highlighted later in this chapter.

276. Levison, L. (1926). *The Parables: Their Background and Local Setting*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, p. 152, as quoted by Bailey, Kenneth E., *Poet and Peasant*, p. 149. The reference to Levison's upbringing is footnote thirty-three of *Ibid.*, p. 149.

277. Cf. Gathercole, Simon J. (2012). *The Composition of the Gospel of Thomas: Original Language and Influences* (Society for New Testament Monograph Series Vol. 151). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

278. See Bailey, Kenneth E., *Poet and Peasant*, pp. 148-156, and Bailey's quote from Levison, L., *Parables* on p. 149.

3. Mt. 18:18-20: A New Proposal

This section argues positively for a new interpretation of Mt. 18:18-20 that picks up the emphasis on divine influence from Mt. 18:12-14. This interpretation will be argued at some length below, but it may be stated briefly. Mt. 18:18 indicates that when one person repents, heaven or God brought about such repentance, such that the text can properly say that sin that is loosed on earth has already been loosed in heaven. This has some support in the juxtaposition of Mt. 18:12-14 with 18:15-17 with 18:18. Mt. 18:19 continues in the same train of thought, but moves to the subject of conflict, which can be caused by actions that clearly are sin but might be caused by other things. When two persons in conflict reach a resolution, the divine influence of 'my Father' is a *sine qua non* of this reconciliation. This necessary influence is expressed through the language that 'it will be from my father in heaven'. Mt. 18:20 also deals with a subject of conflict, but in this case, it indicates that such conflict is resolved for the name of the exalted Jesus. Although the exalted Jesus is the mediator of God's presence in Mt. 18:20, it seems that he is also involved in bringing about (or is part of what brings about) such resolution. This is expressed through the language of Jesus being present with disciples. This influence of the Son does not negate the influence of the Father but is added to it; that is why the text has γάρ. Still, the focus on the presence of the exalted Jesus seems better explained with the Son's causative role in reconciliation. What the Father does in Mt. 18:19 is done by the exalted Jesus and the Father in Mt. 18:20. Such characterization of the Father and Son as being in some sense equal finds support in other passages of Matthew.

(a) Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18: A New Proposal

The debate over 18:18 has focused on two questions. One is how to understand the two periphrastic future perfects (ἔσται δεδεμένα ἐν οὐρανῷ and ἔσται λελυμένα ἐν οὐρανῷ), and the other is what is meant by the verbs δέω and λύω in those periphrastic future perfects. A third issue that ought to be in view when interpreting 18:18 is how to understand the verse in light of its having nearly identical wording with 16:19b-c. If the interpretation of this thesis is to be successful, it needs to offer a plausible interpretation of both 16:19b-c and 18:18. The issue of the periphrastic future perfects will be addressed in the next chapter, and the fourth chapter will critique some views of binding and loosing. This chapter will propound what this thesis takes to be the meaning of binding and loosing in Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18.

The binding and loosing statements of Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18 have been the subject of considerable disagreement. In line with some previous views, this thesis contends that in Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18, the meaning of binding and loosing has to do with forgiveness or non-forgiveness of sin. In neither case, though, do the statements of these verses grant Peter or disciples an arbitrary authority to forgive sin or withhold forgiveness of sin. It is true that, in line with linguistic usage of binding and loosing (see below), Peter and the disciples act as judges, but they are judges whose pronouncement of pardon or judgment is in accord with a pre-determined law. In a similar way that disciples in Mt. 10 were instructed to base what they do on the response of people, so too in Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18, the binding and loosing are based on response to Peter's Christological message in 16:19b-c, and on whether a disciple repents of his sin in 18:18. In Mt. 18:15-17, there is no uncertainty about who is in the wrong, and when Mt.

18:18 immediately follows, it is not speaking of making a halakhic judgment about the propriety of a person's behavior. The impropriety is a given. Rather, the binding or loosing is or involves forgiveness of sin or lack thereof. If εἰς σέ was original to Mt. 18:15, then 'loosing' his sin by the offended would be an actual act of forgiving of sin. For others in the disciple community, or if εἰς σέ was not original to Mt. 18:15, 'loosing' the sinner's sin would be the step of treating the sinner as if his sin were forgiven.

Unlike some interpreters, though, the order is not from earth to heaven. Disciples do not bind God in their decision to forgive or not forgive; the periphrastic future perfects tell against this. Neither, though, is it a promise that disciples would be given repeated revelation about different issues that would assure them that their pronouncements about forgiveness are in line with what heaven has already determined. In line with Matthew's repeated emphasis on divine influence in human behavior, which is found even in Mt. 18:12-14, what explains the heaven-first order in Mt. 18:18 is that when a sinner repents, it was God who brought the sinner to repentance. Some justification is needed for the move from a heaven-first order in Mt. 18:18 to the claim that this order is expressive of divine influence in repentance. This following section (see below) will explain some of the reasoning and justification for this move from a heaven-first order in Mt. 18:18 to the claim that this expresses a conviction about divine influence in repentance. In this section, though, it will be assumed that such justification is adequate.

Accordingly, when disciples in a community forgive the repentant sinner on earth, it is true, at least in some sense, that his sin has already been forgiven in heaven or treated as if it were. Further, if there is a difference between the time the sinner repents before God, and the

time he comes to an offended person seeking forgiveness, the loosing of the sin in heaven would also be temporally prior to the offended's loosing the sin from the sinner on earth.

Such a view allows the binding and loosing statement of Mt. 18:18 to be used normatively against the larger group of disciples; it offers another example where what God does serves as a basis for what disciples should do. The statement on loosing in Mt. 18:18, then, can actually be a word of warning against the group's using one sinner's sin against him (and if Lk. 17:3c is parallel, then the exhortative nature of Lk. 17:3 would bolster taking Mt. 18:18 as a word of warning). Mt. 18:18 is not endorsing the majority's decision not to forgive. It is actually a warning against such a decision, or at least a basis for such a warning. Rather than regard themselves superior for not having succumbed to the same sin as the one sinner, members in the larger group, each of whom has been brought back from his or her great sin (18:21-35) by God's own action in them (18:12-14), should act in imitation of their God, welcoming back the repentant sinner, no further strings attached, and no sense of superiority permitted. In this, they would be acknowledging on earth that the sinner, like the tax collector who stood at a distance and yet went home justified before God (Lk. 18:9-14), has already been forgiven by heaven.

At the same time, Mt. 18:18 is a comfort to the sinner. If God has brought him to repentance, then whether the one against whom he sinned or the larger group of disciples embrace(s) him or not, he has the comfort that God has been at work in him and has loosed his sin. Mt. 18:18, rather than giving disciples the power to keep one disciple's sin from being forgiven, actually encourages the one disciple to know that his sin is forgiven regardless of what

other disciples do. Luz thus had it backwards.²⁷⁹ Rather than giving the majority power over the errant member, Mt. 18:18 fortifies the sinner against the majority.

The statement on binding in Mt. 18:18 requires more elaboration. In one sense, it might be said that a sin is unforgiven and bound from the time it is committed and that, since the offended would be present when the sin was committed (at least in some cases), the binding of heaven would occur in some cases around the same time as the binding on earth. But such an understanding does not fit well with binding being an active verb. 'Binding' seems to require some sort of action from heaven and some sort of action from earth. If 'binding' is merely the fact that sin is unforgiven from the time it is committed, then neither heaven nor the offended on earth need to take some concrete action of 'binding' for that fact to be true.

A better definition for binding in Mt. 18:18 is suggested by the immediate context. In Mt. 18:17, for the sinner who refuses to repent of the clear sin, even after three confrontations, Jesus says, "ἔστω σοι ὡςπερ ὁ ἐθνικὸς καὶ ὁ τελώνης", or, 'let the sinner be to you as a pagan or tax collector'. The terseness of such a saying provides little help, though it seems quite unwarranted to say that this phrase denotes that Jews were not to have any physical association with pagans nor let interested pagans sit in on a synagogue service. Jesus was apparently willing to go and heal a Roman centurion's servant and thought that many non-Jews would be in the eschatological kingdom (8:5-13), which, together with the indications of a Gentile mission (24:14; 28:16-20), is some indication that he would not have condoned having no contact with pagans. In the Lukan

279. See chapter one.

version of the story, one even finds elders of the Jews urging Jesus to help given that the Roman centurion loves the Jewish ἔθνος and provided help for building of the synagogue (Lk. 7:1-10). Such a person would be permitted to sit in on a synagogue service. Such willingness to help on Jesus' part plus his evident lack of concern for Pharisaic ritual purity (15:1-20) suggest he would not have discouraged pagans listening to Jewish scripture in a synagogue service. He also had no trouble with going to the region of Tyre and Sidon, where he interacted with a Canaanite woman, and which was a place from which people followed him back into Galilee (15:29-31).

It is better to take the command, ἔστω σοι ὡς περ ὁ ἐθνικὸς καὶ ὁ τελώνης, in 18:17 as a statement about identity. Even if a pagan mingles with Jews or is interested enough to sit in and hear Jewish scripture, he is still an outsider. To the Jews, he is not 'one of us'. Jesus' command in 18:17 is one about definition of the unrepentant sinner in regard to those who have repented of sin. As long as he remains unrepentant in his sin, he, like the typical pagan or tax-collector, remains liable to judgment and eternal punishment (5:29-30; 18:7-9). The disciples 'binding' is a step of definition, moving from treating him as if he were a true child of the Father who, like many members of the community at some point(s) in the past, only needs to repent of his sin, to treating him as if he were a pagan who, absent some future repentance, will face eternal judgment for his sin.²⁸⁰

280. Cf. Nolland, John, *Matthew*, which says in its section on Mt. 18:17 on p. 748 that "The person is to be related to now as an outsider, but not as one who must permanently remain outside. The spirit to be adopted will be like that involved in the love of enemies, discussed in 5:43-48 (see there)."

This is not actually to say that in the end the sinner never will repent and thus will face such judgment. The disciples can not always know whether in some distant future the sinner will repent, and their treating him as if he were a pagan or tax-collector is not actually a statement about his ultimate fate. It is rather a statement that what defines the true people of God is repentance from sin. Jesus associated repentance with the arrival or drawing near of the kingdom (4:17), insisted on cutting off that which causes sin for kingdom entrance (5:29-30; 18:8-9), and defined his true family as those who do his Father's will (12:50). If it is true that the Father works in the true disciple who sins to bring him to repentance, then the sinner's refusal to repent of clear sin even through three confrontations is an indication that God is not working in him to bring him to repentance (or that God stopped doing so) or that he is resisting God's influence towards that end. That is an indication that he is probably not a true disciple at that time. The disciples' decision to treat the sinner as if he were not a true disciple is the binding of the disciple's sin to him, but this is a response to the sinner's continued binding of the sin to himself, his unwillingness to renounce it. The disciples pay him the respect of treating him in accord with how he insists on living.

Mt. 18:15, though, refers to the sinner as 'your brother'. One might contend that, in a similar way that Mt. 18:15 does not give much cause to think that the sinner's action is of uncertain moral propriety, the use of 'brother' in Mt. 18:15 also does not give much cause to think that the sinner is not a true child of God. Such a conclusion, though, is not convincing.²⁸¹ In Mt. 18:15, Jesus is not claiming that disciples know that a brother really is a true brother, nor denying

281. Cf. Garland, David E., *Reading Matthew*, p. 195.

his earlier insistence that one be must judged by his fruit.²⁸² The use of 'brother' is thus not a judgment about the true nature of the one who sins. Rather, it would be how one would regard the sinner if one were to judge him by his own earlier self-designation. Given that Jesus characterizes his disciples as having greatly sinned against God (18:21-35) as having done evil (7:10), and even indicating at the start of the discourse of Matthew 18 that they need to repent if they are to enter the kingdom of heaven, and given that he came to give his life as a ransom for many (20:28) and for forgiveness of sins (26:28), it is not adequate simply to declare that because the brother sinned, he is not a true disciple. The process of Mt. 18:15-17 is thus a process whereby a disciple in the community seeks not only the sinner's repentance, but also knowledge regarding what his true nature is. Disciples seek to better gauge whether the sinner is a true or false disciple.

In a way that is similar to the earthly binding as the step disciples take of treating the sinner as if his sin were unforgiven and as if he were not a true disciple, the heavenly binding is God's step of treating the brother as if he were not a true disciple and as if his sin is unforgiven. In the case of heaven's binding, though, this may find concrete expression in God's not working in the sinner to influence him towards repentance, or, if the sinner resists such influence, the removal of such influence. If God is not working in the sinner to bring to him repentance, even before the process of 18:15-17 is started, then it may rightly be said that a disciple's decision to treat him as a pagan or tax collector, his 'binding' his sin to the sinner, has been preceded by heaven's own binding. The continued refusal of a self-professed "brother" to repent of clear sin is

282. Mt. 7:16-20; 12:33; cf. the Baptist on fruit in 3:8, 10.

an indication that God is not working in him to bring him to repentance, or it might be an indication that the sinner has resisted or is resisting such influence. It seems likely that in most cases, it would be the absence of such influence that would explain the refusal of the "brother" to repent even after the three confrontations. Though the process of Mt. 18:15-17 might reveal to disciples in their limited knowledge whether the disciple is a tree of good or bad fruit (7:16-20; 12:33), his sin is already bound to him in heaven because God is not working in him to bring him to repentance.

One might ask, though, if this would always be the case. Could there be circumstances where God works in the sinner and he simply resists such divine influence? Though it would make sense to say that heaven has 'bound' the sin to the sinner if God is not working in the sinner to bring him to repentance, the language of Mt. 18:15-18 discourages one from thinking that God would be working without cessation in the sinner throughout the process of Mt. 18:15-17 and continuing thereafter. The language of heaven's binding preceding earth's binding would suggest that, if there are cases where the sinner does resist God's influence, God withdraws his influence before disciples take the step of binding his sin to him in Mt. 18:17. In both cases, though, heaven and earth would be treating the sinner in accord with how he treats himself, binding the sin to him that he insists on binding to himself. This does not necessarily mean that the Father might not exercise his influence at a later time, nor that disciples might not encourage the sinner long after the process to repent. Thus, one need not say that the binding of heaven or earth is necessarily the act of consigning the sinner to eternal punishment, though one can say that the persistence in such sin would ultimately lead towards that end. It would seem to indicate, though,

that God would not continue to influence the sinner without interruption if the sinner persisted in sin, but would rather 'bind' the sin to the sinner and withdraw his influence. The idea here is suggestive of grieving the Spirit of God (Eph. 4:30).

This interpretation of binding is not actually focused on granting a majority of disciples a power over one sinner about what is and is not sin. It contends that both the sinner and the majority know that the sinner's action is a sin, even if the sinner claims otherwise, but that the sinner willfully persists in it. Such an assertion about the sinner is similar to Jesus' assertions elsewhere. Matthew's Jesus indicates in many places that he thinks that people know what is right and wrong, but refuse to do what is right or refuse to reject what is wrong.²⁸³ Mt. 18:18 shares such a view. Since a true child of the Father repents of sin, the sinner's persistence in his sin even after the process of Mt. 18:15-17 indicates that he is probably just like a pagan or tax-collector, and therefore is to be treated as such.

The thought here is remarkably close to the thought expressed in Mt. 15:12-14. Jesus is asked if he knew that the Pharisees were offended (15:12) after he denounced their hypocrisy and their having lips that praised the Father but hearts far from him (15:7-9), and his response is to ignore them (15:14). But why is this his response? Because they have not been planted by 'my Father' (15:13), and thus are blind men (15:14). Obviously, the reader of the story is to sympathize with Jesus' words and think that the offense taken by Pharisees was not warranted, and thus that they should have reacted differently. But the reason for them being blind and

283. Cf. Mt. 4:17; 5:11, 37, 39, 45; 6:13; 7:11; 9:4; 12:34-35, 39; 13:38, 41, 49; 15:1-20; 16:4 17:12; 21:28-22:14; 22:18; 23; 24; 26:34

reacting wrongly is that they have not been planted by 'my Father'. Scribes and Pharisees do not repent of their wrong mindset because 'my Father' has not first worked in them, and if he has not worked in them, it might not be worth engaging them about their being offended. That would only be successful if 'my Father' were to work in them or to 'plant' them. This is the same phenomenon seen in the statement of 18:18 that what you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven. Why does the sinner not repent and the offended continue to regard the sin as bound to the sinner? Because 'my Father' has not planted or is not working in the sinner, or, to use the phraseology of 18:18, because what the offended binds to the sinner has already been, and remains, bound to him in heaven. In this respect, the periphrastic future perfect verb form is an adequate verb form to use, for it can express the idea of 18:18, an idea that reiterates what may be gleaned from 18:12-14 and 15:12-14 taken together.

None of the foregoing is intended to deny that one who persists in sin and yet continues to call himself a brother presents a problem to the community. Schlatter was right in one sense. "Die Gemeinde tut nach dieser Regel Jesu nur das, was notwendig geschehen muß, damit sie nicht selber sündige und sich verderbe, sondern ihre Gemeinschaft bewahre und heilsam mache."²⁸⁴ One who seemed to be part of the community and participated in its life, and yet who then sins and persists in the sin, can have a poisoning effect on the community. Continuing to accept his presence and involvement might encourage members of the community in laxity towards sin in their own life, which would present a grave danger to their own souls (5:29-30;

284. Schlatter, Adolf, *Matthäus*, p. 556. My translation: 'The community does according to this rule of Jesus only what it must necessarily do so that it itself does not sin and corrupt itself, but preserves and does what is beneficial for its fellowship.'

18:8-9). Members of the community might therefore treat him in many ways as if he were expelled, but such treatment is not the binding of which Mt. 18:18 speaks. It would be a result of the binding given the brother's continued persistence in sin and in his continued self-designation as a brother. It would be a step of prudence and pastoral concern that is limited by the concern that members of the community not themselves sin and persist in sin. This limitation means that disciples might still carry on an acquaintance or business with the sinner just as they would with pagans or tax-collectors.

But the fact that he earlier claimed to be a disciple would in some cases present a special problem of purity for the community in comparison to pagans or tax-collectors who had never made such a claim. Sometimes, though not necessarily always, wisdom might dictate that he be excluded from some corporate gatherings and activities of disciples. This, though, is a result of binding, even if a quite natural one. It is not the binding itself. The thinking has some similarity to what is expressed elsewhere in the NT (1 Cor. 5:13; Titus 3:10).

Similar to Mt. 18:18, the binding and loosing statement of Mt. 16:19b-c is not about halakhic decisions or interpretation of the law, nor does it grant a power for such things. Peter would preach about the resurrected Christ who gave his blood for the forgiveness of sin (26:28), who gave his life as a ransom for many (20:28), and who would save his people from their sins (1:21). In response to that Christ, men would respond either in hostility (5:11-12) or in acceptance, such that Peter's preaching is the key that opens the door for their entrance to the kingdom (Mt. 16:19a). With some similarity to Mt. 10, their response to that message would determine if their sin was loosed and themselves forgiven, or bound and their sin unforgiven.

While in 18:18 the earthly loosing was an actual forgiving of a brother's sin, the earthly loosing of Peter in 16:19b-c is firstly a causative loosing. Through his preaching does Peter effect the binding or loosing of sin. Like a judge who merely applies the law before him, Peter's pronouncement of judgment or forgiveness is set by the law that man's response to Christ determines his eschatological fate (10:32-33; 25:31-46).

Even here, though, the periphrastic future perfects, and Matthew's repeated emphasis on the divine influence, encourage one to see an affirmation that the positive response to Peter's preaching of the resurrected Christ is itself the result of God's influence in that person's life, and that a negative response is in light of the absence of such influence, or maybe due to resistance to such influence. In 16:19b-c, binding may be in response to resistance of what is known to be true, as with 18:18, or it may also be to heaven's not giving revelation of Jesus' Christological identity to one of Peter's hearers as was given to Peter. Given Matthew's connection of blindness with not being planted by 'my Father', it may be inappropriate entirely to disassociate revelation from moral failure. The divine role in eliciting a positive response to Peter's Christological message connects 16:19b-c to 18:18, and it even allows Mt. 16:19b-c to be used normatively against Peter. He who would later in the gospel ask about how many times to forgive a brother is here told that those to whom the kingdom is opened through his preaching have accepted his message because God worked in them to bring them towards that point. Thus, since God will have brought Peter's hearers to respond positively to Peter's Christological message, Peter should in no way stand in their way or hold over their heads his instrumentality in bringing them to an acceptance of that message. That would be to abuse his role as the rock on which God's church is

built and as he who opens the kingdom to others. In the same way that what God has accepted as clean is the basis for Peter to accept something as clean (Acts 10:9-11:18), God's work in the acceptance of the message by Peter's hearers, and his role in revealing even to Peter Jesus' Christological identity, are grounds for Peter to embrace those who accept his message without lording his instrumentality or historical importance over them as Gentile kings exercise their authority over their subjects (Mt. 20:25-26). Again, as with 18:18, a dominant interpretation affirms the opposite of what the passage is giving. Mt. 16:19b-c, rather than elevating Peter to a position of prominence or authority, is a warning to Peter not to elevate himself, or at least the basis for such a warning.

At the same time, Mt. 16:19b-c is also encouragement for Peter. Failure to win converts through his preaching might not be totally due to some defect on his part. If what he binds through his preaching has already been bound in heaven, his evaluation of his own preaching is discouraged from a mere counting of converts, and thus from discouragement that might otherwise follow if his proclamation is not met with as much success as he would like. If what is bound or loosed on earth is already bound or loosed in heaven, his task is to be faithful in his role as the rock that builds up Jesus' church (16:18) through the key of knowledge (Mt. 16:19a; Lk. 11:52) entrusted to him by revelation (16:17; cf. 28:16-20).

Both these interpretations have to do with divine influence in human behavior, but each is colored by its respective context. In 18:18, disciples bind the sin to the sinner when the sinner insists on binding it to himself, but the absence of that specific context of sin in 16:19 and the homiletical and Christological focus of 16:19 mean that a causative binding and loosing are more

appropriate in 16:19. If Peter's proclamation effects the binding or loosing, and if Peter then declares a person's sin forgiven or not forgiven, such a pronouncement is similar to the pronouncement of a judge whose verdict depends on the application of law. That the pronouncement is not the root cause of the binding or loosing does not detract from this. In Mt. 18:18, disciples act primarily as judges, though even in their affirmation that the sin is indeed sin, they might be seen as messengers or witnesses. But Peter's task in 16:19 is primarily one of a messenger or witness, and his role as judge is dependent on that message as a judge is dependent on pre-existing law.

(i) Justification for the claim that a heaven-first order in Mt. 18:18 indicates divine influence in repentance

The preceding explanation interprets the heaven-first order of the binding and loosing statement in Mt. 18:18 as an indication of God's influence in repentance. Why is this done? Chapter three will argue that there is a heaven-first order in the binding and loosing statements of Mt. 18:18, but the claim that there is a heaven-first order of binding and loosing is not the same as saying that God is active in influencing people to repentance. Even if this thesis is correct in contending that Matthew intended to communicate a heaven-first order in Mt. 18:18, and even if one grants that some explanation for this heaven-first order is needed, one might yet deny that divine influence in repentance is the correct explanation of the heaven-first order. The opening chapter examined other attempt(s) to make sense of the heaven-first order, and not one proposed divine influence in repentance as the solution. On what basis, therefore, does this thesis make the step of moving from a heaven-first order to divine influence in repentance? Some justification is

needed for the claim that the heaven-first order in Mt. 18:18 expresses a Matthean conviction of divine influence in repentance.

Need for justification does not stop there, though. The above explanation of Mt. 18:18 did not attribute to disciples the same influence or power in regard to repentance as was ascribed to divine activity, but Mt 18:18 uses the same words for both God and disciples. Why are disciples not thought to have the same influence in repentance that this thesis attributes to God? If the verse says that both disciples and God bind and loose, and if this verse is interpreted such that a sinner repents or does not repent based on whether or not God looses or binds him, would consistency not demand that the binding and loosing statement for disciples mean the same thing as it does for God? If one is to conclude that the loosing statement indicates God's activity in influencing people to repent, and if Mt. 18:18 also says that humans loose, does that mean that humans somehow influence a sinner to repent or prevent the sinner from repenting? If God's binding a sinner means that the sinner will not repent, must one conclude that Matthew is also saying through the human part of the binding statement in Mt. 18:18 that without human influence, the sinner will not repent? Is this an equivocation at the very heart of this thesis' argument? Since such questioning touches on an important part of the thesis, some justification is needed for why influence in repentance is accorded to God but not to disciples in the same way.

Despite the apparent force of these two concerns, an adequate response may be given both for the move from a heaven-first order to God's influence in repentance and also for why disciples do not share the same or a similar influence in repentance even when the disciples are

also said to bind or loose. A start may be made with the first concern. Granting that the argument for a heaven-first order in the next chapter is sufficient, some explanation is needed for the significance of the heaven-first order. At least one other explanation has been provided for the heaven-first order, and differing explanations have been provided for binding and loosing. This is where the fourth chapter of this thesis is important for the argument of the thesis. If it can be shown that other explanation(s) for the heaven-first order (other than the one presented in this thesis) and other explanations for binding or loosing are inadequate, and if Matthew's emphasis on divine influence in human behavior or in repentance in Mt. 18:12-14 and elsewhere makes the explanation of this thesis for the heaven-first order a quite plausible continuation of Matthean theology, then a simple process of elimination argument or best explanation argument may be made. The heaven-first order needs explanation (as does the binding and loosing statement). Other explanation(s) would be deficient in one way or another, at least more deficient than the explanation provided in this thesis. Chapter four of this thesis supports a claim about the deficiency of other explanation(s) in regard to the heaven-first order (and in regard to binding and loosing). The justification for preferring this thesis' explanation of the significance of a heaven-first order over other explanation(s) depends significantly on how successful is the critique of other view(s) on the significance of the heaven-first order of binding and loosing that is given in chapter four.

There is an additional reason, to be given later in this chapter, for preferring this thesis' explanation of the significance of the heaven-first order over the explanation of others. The proposal of this thesis, in addition to continuing a notable strand of Matthean theology, also does

what other proposals have not succeeded in doing. It aligns Matthew's editorial activity and the structuring of his discourse with his evident penchant for triadic arrangement and organization in other parts of his gospel, including discourses. In other interpretations of some of Mt. 18, Matthew's consistent habit of clear and understandable arrangement of material left him. No such aberration in Matthew's editorial or authorial activity is necessary in the proposal of this thesis. Given these considerations — the deficiencies of other explanation(s) for a heaven-first order of binding and loosing and the editorial and organizational inconsistency in some of Mt. 18 in other interpretation(s) — this thesis' explanation of the heaven-first order is to be preferred over others. The move from a heaven-first order to divine influence in repentance is supported by there being no adequate alternative.

In regard to the question why the same conclusion about divine influence is not made of disciples that is made of God (and in support of the view that one is justified in moving from a heaven-first order to divine influence in repentance), some clarifying comments may be of help. The proposal being advanced in this thesis is not that the loosing taken alone indicates divine influence in repentance. In conformity with the linguistic evidence (see below), loosing is taken to mean forgiving sin or treating someone as being forgiven. This is true both for divine loosing and human loosing, so there is no basis to the charge that there is equivocation in the way that the divine loosing statement is treated in comparison to the human loosing statement. Both refer to forgiveness of sin or treating a person as forgiven.

If this is the case, then why is a conclusion drawn about divine influence in repentance that is not also drawn about human influence? The conclusion of Mt. 18:18 about divine

influence in repentance is an inference drawn in light of five factors: the heaven-first order of binding and loosing, the meaning of loosing and binding, the prevalence of divine influence in human behavior in Matthew's theology, the material preceding Mt. 18:18, and the feature of Matthew's discourse in which the same event or process is viewed from the human level and from the divine level. Of these factors, the one that prevents the same conclusion that is drawn about divine influence from being made about human influence is the heaven-first order.

This heaven-first order raises a question of exegesis for which the inference regarding divine influence gives the answer. Though Mt. 18:18 may have broader application, its coming right after Mt. 18:15-17 is rightly taken to mean that it has specific application to a situation where a disciple confronts the sinner of Mt. 18:15 and the sinner repents upon confrontation. If, in line with linguistic evidence, loosing means to forgive sin or to treat someone as if their sin were forgiven, the exegetical question is why there is any order at all in the binding and loosing statement of Mt. 18:18. If the sinner of Mt. 18:15 repents immediately upon confrontation, God would forgive the sinner right there at the time of repentance, and so too would the disciple who confronted the sinner.²⁸⁵ A statement about one forgiving prior to the other would thus seem odd. It does not seem plausible to say that Matthew was merely intending to indicate that God has faster reflexes than the disciple who confronts the sinner and so happens to forgive the sinner first. Chapter three argues that there is an order of binding and loosing, and that it is a heaven-first order. If Mt. 18:18 is rightly taken to address a situation of the sinner of Mt. 18:15-17

285. That the disciple would forgive on the spot is supported by Jesus' admonition to forgive in Mt. 18:21-22. Cf. also Mt. 6:14-15.

repenting, and if there is this heaven-first order, some explanation is needed for Matthew even positing an order of loosing and binding when both God and the offended disciple would forgive right there at the time of the sinner's confessing and requesting forgiveness.

This exegetical question is posed by the text, and justifies the search for an answer. It is at this point that several factors converge to indicate that the explanation of this thesis is an appropriate inference. If Matthew already has a theology of divine influence in repentance, and if it is such influence that brings about the repentance on which a formal loosing of the sin depends, then the formal extension of forgiveness to the repentant sinner is as much the culmination of something divinely initiated as it is a response to the human repentance. Since the repentance of the sinner is this culmination of divine initiative, the loosing of the sinner's sin on the divine level will always be in some sense prior to the human response of loosing the sin. In this way, the interpretation of loosing on the divine level and human level is the same. Loosing is a response to repentance and is the formal act of forgiving sin or treating the sinner as if his sin were forgiven.

It may be, however, that the worry about equivocation in interpreting heavenly and earthly loosing is ill-founded given Matthew's theology. If Matthew believes that it is divine influence that brings about repentance, then the divine act of influencing towards repentance is doing in substance what the extension of forgiveness in response to repentance does formally. It is not holding the sinner's sin against him; it is treating the sinner as if he had not sinned. Certainly the text of Mt. 18:15-18 encourages such an attitude in disciples, but it needs to be kept in mind that Matthew's theology of divine influence in human behavior is a view that he does not

extend to humans. When he says that a disciple would be given what to say and that the 'Spirit of your father' would speak through a disciple,²⁸⁶ he is envisioning a capacity to influence human behavior, even to the point of putting words in the mouth of a disciple, that he does not think humans have. The same goes for his view that the Lord spoke through a prophet,²⁸⁷ and the idea that the Father has "planted" some and not "planted" others, the latter of whom would be "uprooted".²⁸⁸ These are divine actions that are done or not done "inside" a person, but when done, they have effects on outward behavior. It would be absurd to say that Matthew thought disciples had such capability. If Matthew used "loosing" to describe God's treating the sinner in substance as if his sin were forgiven by influencing the sinner to repent, and if he also used "loosing" for the disciples' formal act of granting forgiveness in response to such repentance, Matthew would therefore have had no concern that a reader would conclude that Matthew thinks disciples could do on the "inside" of a person what Matthew thinks only God does. Since God's activity of influencing towards repentance expresses in substance the same attitude and action conveyed in the formal act of granting forgiveness in response to repentance, there is little difference between "loosing" in the one sense and "loosing" in the other sense. Counting on the obvious fact that his readers would not conclude that Matthew thinks that humans can influence human behavior from the "inside" in the way that God does, Matthew would have had no problem with using "loosing" equivocally, in the one case as a description of the substance of God's repentance-inducing act prior to and culminating in repentance, and in the other as the

286. Mt. 10:19-20.

287. Cf. Mt. 1:22-23; 2:15; see also Mt. 2:17; 3:3; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 24:15; 27:9.

288. Mt. 15:13.

disciples' formal act of extending forgiveness after and in response to repentance. With regard to the proposal of this thesis, a demand for a non-equivocal use of "loosing" accordingly seems to exalt form over substance, and it seems far from clear that Matthew would have had much sympathy for such exaltation. Still, such equivocation is unnecessary as an explanation. The proposal of this thesis still stands if the divine loosing is the formal act of extending forgiveness in response to the human repentance. Even if minor changes would have to be made given the different contexts, the explanation above would provide the core rationale for this thesis' interpretation of the loosing statement of Mt. 16:19b-c.

The binding statements are not as difficult to handle for the proposal of this thesis as the loosing statements, for the binding statements do not pose the problem of equivocation. If binding a person's sin is treating a person as if he is not a true disciple and accordingly as if his sin is indeed bound to him, then God's refusal to influence a person to repentance, or the withdrawal of such influence, would count as binding that person, and so too would the disciple's binding in response to the sinner's refusal to repent. There is no equivocation between these two actions on this definition of binding. Since God's refusal to influence the sinner or his withdrawal of such influence would precede a refusal to repent, and since the disciple's binding would be in response to the refusal to repent, the order of binding would also be a heaven-first order. The binding statements thus present no substantial difficulty to the proposal of this thesis.

(ii) Linguistic evidence of binding and loosing

The foregoing interpretation of Mt. 18:18 and 16:19b-c is supported by linguistic evidence of binding and loosing. Great weight is usually placed upon rabbinic evidence in interpreting the binding and loosing statements of Mt. 16:19 and 18:18. There is no denying that rabbinic evidence uses binding and loosing for halakhic decisions, but non-rabbinic linguistic evidence allows for the interpretation offered in this thesis. To interpret Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18 as dealing with forgiveness and non-forgiveness of sin is compatible with the linguistic evidence of binding and loosing.

Although Jeremias acknowledges that binding and loosing in rabbinic literature "are almost always used in respect of halakhic decisions", he adds that "this special use of the antonyms, which is grounded in the juridical character of Rabb. lit., should not cause us to overlook the fact that originally they are used of the authority of the judge to imprison or to release, to impose or to withhold the ban, and that they then take on the figurative sense of executing the divine judgment or averting it (by intercession)."²⁸⁹ In addition to citing some passages, Jeremias refers to Schlatter. Like Jeremias, Schlatter thinks that binding and loosing deal with the activity of a judge. He cites Josephus' *War* 1:111, 2:28, and 6:412, Josephus' *Antiquities* 18:233, Deuteronomy Rabbah 2:4, Tanchuma 5:56, Babylonian Talmud Berak. 5 b, and Psalm 146:7. Schlatter then says that "Der Sprachgebrauch zeigt deutlich, daß ursprünglich die Formel „Lösen und Binden“ das Handeln des Richters beschreibt. Darum wird die Formel

289. Jeremias, Joachim, κλείς, p. 751.

auch für die Lösung vom Bann gebraucht."²⁹⁰ Schlatter is right that such evidence does clearly show that binding or loosing can deal with the activity of someone acting as a judge. Josephus' *Antiquities* 18:233²⁹¹ and his *War* 1:111²⁹² and 2:28²⁹³ have λύω and δέω, the two key words of Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18, in the very same passage. In Psalm 146:7, the object of λύω is πεπεδημένους. Even with Matthew binding is associated with religious leaders (27:2), the king in the parable of the wedding banquet (22:13), and Herod (14:3); given that rulers acted as judges, one might say that at least in the case of the king of the parable, Matthew himself associates binding with the activity of a judge.

One might grant this usage of λύω and δέω but reply that Mt. 16:19 and 18:18 are clearly not dealing with the physical binding or loosing of a person, and some of the aforementioned occurrences are dealing with physical binding or loosing. The two uses are different. But in Rabbinic evidence, binding and loosing are being used of a non-physical binding or loosing.

290. Schlatter, Adolf, *Matthäus*, p. 511. My translation: 'The linguistic usage clearly shows that the 'binding and loosing' formula originally describes the activity of a judge. Given this, the formula is also used for the release from a ban.'

291. Whiston has "When he had so said, he ordered Agrippa to be bound again (for he had loosed him before), and kept a severer guard over him than formerly, and in that evil condition was Agrippa that night;"

292. Whiston has "Now, Alexandra hearkened to them to an extraordinary degree, as being herself a woman of great piety towards God. But these Pharisees artfully insinuated themselves into her favor by little and little, and became themselves the real administrators of the public affairs; they banished and reduced whom they pleased; they bound and loosed [men] at their pleasure;[Here Whiston has a note that says, "Matt. 16:19; 18:18. Here we have the oldest and most authentic Jewish exposition of binding and loosing, for punishing or absolving men; not for declaring actions lawful or unlawful, as some more modern Jews and Christians vainly pretend."] and, to say all at once, they had the enjoyment of the royal authority, whilst the expenses and the difficulties of it belonged to Alexandra.

293. Whiston has "that he had also complied in all things with the people in the requests they had made to him as their king, and had also dismissed those that had been put into bonds by his father, for most important reasons. Now, after all this, he desires the shadow of that royal authority, whose substance he had already seized to himself, and so hath made Caesar lord, not of things, but of words."

Neither Schlatter nor Jeremias is exhaustive in the evidence they cite, though. There are instances where λύω or δέω are used in regard to a non-physical binding or loosing, and from such evidence, it may be argued that the rabbinic evidence is not the only evidence that uses binding or loosing in a non-physical way.

One reply to such thinking is to point out that most of the evidence for a non-physical binding or loosing that is not of the rabbinic variety does not have both a word for binding and one for loosing in the same passage. It is true that the Mishnah has a wealth of passages where binding and loosing occur together. It is also true that there are not many passages where 'binding' and 'loosing' of the non-rabbinic variety occur together in the same passage. But it does not seem that this difference can be made the basis of a strong argument for interpreting rabbinically the binding and loosing in 16:19b-c and 18:18. The argument would seem to ignore a very obvious implication of the evidence on which it relies. In general, one may consult examples given by Lambert, who says that "Dans la plupart des langues anciennes et modernes; on exprime volontiers le concept de totalité par l'opposition de deux contraires. La force sémantique de ces expressions réside non pas tant dans la spécification des contraires que dans leur opposition."²⁹⁴ Not all have followed his interpretation 16:19 and 18:18, but Lambert does provide ample evidence of the use of opposing pairs that express totality.²⁹⁵ Pertinent for our consideration is the fact that the repeated use of binding and loosing together in rabbinic material

294. Lambert, "Lier-délier", p. 98. My translation: 'In the majority of ancient and modern languages, one willingly expresses the concept of totality by the opposition of two contraries. The semantic force of these expressions lies not so much in the specification of the contraries as in their opposition.'

295. See pp. 92-98 of his article.

strongly encourages one to think that they were viewed as opposites, such that the denial of one meant the affirmation of the other. For much of the extent that one attempts to make the two verbs occurring together an argument for the rabbinic interpretation of 16:19b-c and 18:18 over against an argument for a non-rabbinic interpretation from evidence having only one of the verbs, one has to engage in the inconsistency of accepting the rabbinic usage of words for binding and loosing while denying the rabbinic view of the two verbs as opposites.

If in light of this possible inconsistency, it is admitted that one need have only λύω or only δέω in a passage, the interpretive options for 16:19 and 18:18 need not be confined to rabbinic-like determination of what is permitted and what is forbidden. Binding or loosing was applied to things other than determining what was and was not permitted. Falk discusses rabbinic evidence concerned with dissolution or maintenance of vow(s), and says that "the earliest term for absolution was *hafer*, being derived from the function of the *paterfamilias*. In the second stage the release given by the sage was called *heter*, literally, 'loosening', which was the opposite of *issar*, literally, 'binding,' the biblical term for the vow of prohibition."²⁹⁶ Thompson refers to Aramaic evidence from Pseudo-Jonathan of Numbers 30, and says that "The Aramaic expression 'bind to herself' (*šr l nfsh*) takes an impersonal object, and describes the self-imposed obligation to offer something to God or practice some form of abstinence (vv. 5a.5b.6.7.8.9.10.11.12)".²⁹⁷ Citing Conybeare²⁹⁸ and *b. Šabb.* 81b, Davies and Allison's commentary says that "'Binding' and

296. Falk, "Binding and Loosing", p. 97.

297. Thompson, W. G., *Matthew's Advice*, pp. 192-193.

298. Conybeare, "Christian Demonology"

'loosing' appear as technical terms in many magical texts from the ancient world."²⁹⁹ Hiers cites a range of extrabiblical and biblical texts in connection to the idea of binding or loosing having something to do with evil spirit(s), spirit affliction, or exorcism,³⁰⁰ but at the end of his article, he says that

Matthew expanded the scope of Jesus' sayings authorizing his followers to exorcise demons to include plenary authorization for the church's leaders to resolve whatever problems or issues might arise. The church's leaders could still exorcise demons, but this was now only one area of concern and responsibility in their task of guiding the church in its continuing days or years in the present age.³⁰¹

The LXX uses λύω in multiple passages about forgiveness or pardon of sin. Sir. 28:2 says that if you forgive unrighteousness of your neighbor, then when you ask, your sins 'will be forgiven' (λυθήσονται). In Rahlfs' LXX of Job 42:9, it says that God loosed the sin of Zophar, Bildad, and Eliphaz (ἔλυσεν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν αὐτοῖς) on account of Job. In Isa. 40:2, it says to tell Jerusalem that her sin is 'loosed', or pardoned (λέλυται αὐτῆς ἡ ἁμαρτία).³⁰²

299. Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C., *Matthew 8-18*, p. 637; cf. also Duling, "Binding and Loosing", p. 7.

300. Hiers, "'Binding' and 'Loosing'", pp. 235-246. In Protestant extrabiblical texts, cf. Tob. 3:17; 8:3; Josephus Antiquities 8.2.5 §46; 1 Enoch chaps. 6-9; 10:4, 11-13; chaps. 54-56; 69:28; chap. 88; 90:23-24; Jub. 5:6; 10:7-11; T. Levi 18:10-12; T. Sim. 6:5-6; T. Zeb. 9:8. In biblical texts, cf. Mark 3:27//Mt. 12:29//Lk. 11:21-22; Lk. 13:16; 1 Pet. 3:19-20; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6-7; Rev. 9:14-15; 20:1-3. In addition to citing T. Levi 18:12, Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C., *Matthew 8-18*, p. 635, also cites T. Sol. 1:14. See also Duling, "Binding and Loosing", p. 8, which quotes from Smith, Morton. (1978). *Jesus the Magician*. New York: Harper & Row, p. 127.

301. Hiers, "'Binding' and 'Loosing'", p. 250.

302. Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C., *Matthew 8-18*, p. 636 cites from the Book of Job 42:9-10, but it does not mention Sir. 28:2 or Isa. 40:2 in this connection.

Thompson says that "In a general survey of the Palestinian Targums, A. Diez Macho has suggested that the Aramaic expression *š'ri ūš'baq* ('loose and forgive') may be related to Mt 16,19; 18,18 and these Matthean sayings are correctly interpreted as equivalent to Jn 20,23."³⁰³ Thompson also says, apparently with regard to what is found in Jn. 20:23, that "Three of four correlative verbs appear in the Aramaic version of Gen 4,7: 'If you (Cain) perform your deeds well in this world, it shall be loosed and forgiven (*yešt'ré w'yešt'baq*) you in the world to come. But if you do not perform your deeds well in this world, your sin shall be retained (*n'qîr*) for the day of Judgment.'"³⁰⁴

The evidence just given is adequate to demonstrate that the concept of binding or loosing was not limited only to what was forbidden and what was permitted. It may be admitted that evidence for δέω and λύω having something to do with exorcism, vows, or magic is sufficiently weak, at least in comparison to other proposals, that these are not viable candidates for explaining the binding and loosing of 16:19b-c and 18:18. Still, the varied usage as a whole does detract from or discourage thinking that there was a very widespread view of binding and loosing being only technical terms for halakhic interpretation, and also discourages placing too much confidence in letting rabbinic usage of binding and loosing influence interpretation of 16:19b-c and 18:18.

303. Thompson, W. G., *Matthew's Advice*, p. 192. Thompson cites Macho, Alejandro Díez. (1960). "The Recently Discovered Palestinian Targum: Its Antiquity and Relationship with the Other Targums". In Anderson, G. W. & et al. (Eds.), Congress Volume (Oxford 1959). VTSup 7 (pp. 222-245). Leiden: Brill. , p. 231 specifically, while also giving the page range of pp. 222-245.

304. Thompson, W. G., *Matthew's Advice*, p. 192.

Further, there is a sizeable thread of evidence in which loosing was specifically applied to sin, and some of that evidence comes from Greek biblical material. Given these things, the linguistic history of binding and loosing does not seem to justify the importance that some scholars give it in their interpretation of 16:19b-c or 18:18. Other factors ought to have a greater influence. In light of such evidence, Thompson's reasoning seems appropriate. He wrote, "the fact that the previous regulations include a natural opposition between acceptance and non-acceptance of fraternal correction [...] suggests an association with the opposition between bind and loose."³⁰⁵ It does seem that the natural opposition between acceptance/rejection of correction fits quite well the binding/loosing contrast, and this also fits linguistic evidence that supports binding and loosing dealing with forgiving/not forgiving sin.

One might concede that the linguistic evidence demonstrates the plausibility of the interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18 to be advocated in this thesis, that binding and loosing deal with forgiveness of sin (or lack thereof), and yet still say that the sheer amount of rabbinic usage of binding or loosing as dealing with what is permitted or allowed still favors the consensus interpretation. Such an assertion is suspect. The genre of the Mishnah and the nature of rabbinic concerns are such that their discussion would be centered on what is permitted and what is forbidden. But the number of such uses is a different issue than whether those using such language share the same concern as Jesus. The mindset of the Mishnah is demonstrably and relevantly different than the mindset of Matthew's Jesus, who thought that through him God's kingdom was ushered in (cf. Mt. 12:28) and who saw his death as atoning (cf. Mt. 20:28; 26:28),

305. Ibid., p. 202.

who saw himself as one who came to fulfill the law (5:17-18), who considered his own teaching authoritative (cf. the 'I say to you' statements of 5:21-48), himself a bringer of 'new wine' (Mt. 9:17) whose teaching in the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere was to a great extent very different from many rabbis. Such a perception discourages one from thinking he would have the same preoccupation as Pharisees or later rabbis. Arguments already given are an encouragement to think that the prevalence of rabbinic usage does not warrant that usage being a determinative factor for interpreting Mt. 16:19 and 18:18.

(iii) Sin as a neuter pronoun

The fact that both Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18 have neuter relative pronouns and not masculine pronouns is no objection to interpreting these passages as dealing with sin. If sin is being bound to or loosed from a sinner, the neuter pronoun is a better choice than a masculine or feminine relative pronoun. It is not an adequate objection to say that because ἁμαρτίας ('sins') is a feminine noun, references to the concept of sin must use a feminine pronoun. In addition to James Barr's discussion arguing against the occurrence of a grammatical gender form necessarily implying a gendered concept,³⁰⁶ a point may be made even from within Matthew. It is true that Mt. 18:18 is preceded by ἁμαρτήση in 18:15 and followed by ἁμαρτήσῃ in 18:21, and that one finds the feminine accusative plural τὰς ἁμαρτίας in 3:6, feminine genitive plural τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν in 1:21 and ἁμαρτιῶν in 26:28, and the feminine nominative plural αἱ ἁμαρτίαι in 9:2, 5. But that

306. See Barr, James. (1961). *The Semantics of Biblical Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 39-40.

ἁμαρτήση and ἁμαρτήσῃ are cognate with the feminine accusative plural ἁμαρτίας does not necessitate that the neuter relative pronouns in 18:18 must be feminine if they are referring to sins. There is in 6:12 the neuter accusative plural τὰ ὀφειλήματα, 'debts', a word which stands for sins, and the neuter accusative plural τὰ παραπτώματα in 6:14, 15. These refer to the same thing as ἁμαρτίας, but are neuter nouns. A concept is not limited to one gender, and the relative neuter pronouns of the nearly identical sayings of Mt. 16:19 and 18:18 may therefore refer to sins or behavior that is sinful.

This conclusion holds whether or not Carson's claim that "Greek often uses the neuter of people for classes or categories rather than individuals" justifies his interpretation of the relative pronouns as referring to people.³⁰⁷ In the footnote following his claim that "Neuter forms are occasionally used for generality or abstraction", Nolland cites as examples Mt. 19:4; Mk. 10:6; Lk. 2:23; Gal. 3:28; Rev. 12:5.³⁰⁸ Büchsel gives other examples where a neuter pronoun refers to person(s): Jn. 6:39; 10:29; 17:2, 24.³⁰⁹ Such examples might not provide sufficient support for taking the relative pronouns in Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18 as referring to persons and not things. But this does not matter. Even if the relative pronouns refer to things, the things are bound to or loosed from people.

Though the relative pronouns do not provide a substantive objection to the idea of binding or loosing persons with their sins, it is more troublesome for the view that binding or

307. Carson, D. A., *Matthew 13-28*, pp. 372-373. Carson provides no examples in this part of his commentary in justification of his claim, though.

308. Nolland, John, *Matthew*, p. 681.

309. Büchsel, F., δέω (λύω), p. 61.

loosing have to do with excommunication. If 'binding' is the excommunication of a person, and not based on the binding of a person's sin to himself, then the interpreter would need to give some account of why neuter pronouns were used. If the reply is that one binds the person, then the weakness of the linguistic evidence for using neuter pronouns of persons is relevant, and the excommunication interpretation looks less plausible. The excommunication interpretation seems less plausible in light of the neuter pronouns.³¹⁰

Even if it were the case that the neuter pronoun gave rise to an adequate objection to this thesis' view of binding and loosing, one point could still be made. Thompson refers to the plural relative pronouns and asks "Do these pronouns refer to persons or things, to sinners or their sins?"³¹¹ France says, "there, as here, the objects of both verbs will be expressed in the neuter, not the masculine; it is things, issues, which are being tied or untied, not people as such."³¹² Powell says, "Both 16 19 and 18 18 envision the binding and loosing of laws, not of people, though as 18 18 makes clear, determination of the extent to which certain laws are binding for the community inevitably affects determination of membership in the community".³¹³ Nolland says, "it is more likely that *something* rather than *someone* is being bound or loosed."³¹⁴ None of these comments is persuasive. To speak of either binding or loosing things or people is a false dichotomy.³¹⁵ Taking a cue from Chesterton's observation that "If the apple hit Newton's nose,

310. Argyle, A. W., *Matthew*, p. 142.

311. Thompson, W. G., *Matthew's Advice*, p. 189.

312. France, R. T., *Matthew NICNT*, p. 626. Cf. also *Ibid.*, p. 696.

313. Powell, M. A. (1995). "Do and Keep What Moses Says (Matthew 23:2-7)". *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 114, 419-435, p. 434.

314. Nolland, John, *Matthew*, p. 681.

315. Cf. Morris, Leon, *Matthew*, p. 426.

Newton's nose hit the apple",³¹⁶ one might observe that if a thing is bound or loosed in Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18, it is bound to or loosed from a person. If something is bound, it must be bound to something or someone else. If it is loosed, it must be loosed from something or someone other than itself. Even if it is a thing that is being bound or loosed in Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18, it is being bound or loosed to or from a person. If a thing is bound or loosed, and thus is referenced with a neuter noun, there is no requirement that the thing or person to which or from which it is bound or loosed lack sexual or grammatical gender.³¹⁷

Further, Mt. 5:19 speaks of loosing a commandment. The object of λύω is μίαν τῶν ἐντολῶν τούτων τῶν ἐλαχίστων, which is not a person, but it is clear that the action of loosing such commandment(s) would be from person(s). Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18 are doing the same thing with sin. The neuter relative pronouns simply are not barriers to thinking that the binding or loosing of Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18 results in persons being bound or loosed. But even if the neuter relative pronouns were significant, this would not be a problem for the view that Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18 have to do with sin, as it does not depend on man being the main referent. Schlatter himself seems to recognize this or something not too far from it when he says that "ὁ ἐὰν und ὅσα ἐὰν 18, 18, nicht οὗς ἐὰν, wird gesagt, weil das Urteil des Apostels das Verhalten des Menschen trifft."³¹⁸

316. Chesterton, Gilbert Keith. (1986). *The Collected Works of G. K. Chesterton, Vol. 1: Heretics, Orthodoxy, the Blatchford Controversies* (Collected Works of G. K. Chesterton). San Francisco: Ignatius Press

317. On this reasoning, one might reply that the neuter pronouns are not much of an objection to binding as excommunication, but it seems less natural to think of binding excommunication to a sinner than binding his sin to him.

318. Schlatter, Adolf, *Matthäus*, p. 513. My translation: 'ὁ ἐὰν and ὅσα ἐὰν (18:18), not οὗς ἐὰν, is

(iv) The plural relative pronouns of Mt. 18:18

One might contend that the plural relative pronouns of Mt. 18:18 are a barrier to the interpretation of binding and loosing offered in this thesis, that the pronouns being plural requires a corporate activity and prevents the individualistic interpretation of binding and loosing offered here. This is not a valid objection. A speaker addressing a group of persons but intending to say something that applies to each person individually has a choice whether to use singular or plural nouns. A singular noun of address could risk giving the impression that what is said does not apply to all hearers. A plural noun of address avoids that risk. Since plural nouns can be and often are used with a distributive intent, as applying to each member of the listening group individually, the plural noun need not be interpreted only from a collective standpoint. The plural relative pronouns in Mt. 18:18 are not a barrier to the interpretation of this thesis.

(b) Mt. 18:19: A New Proposal

The traditional reading of Mt. 18:19 is that it deals with two people agreeing about some issue for or of prayer. On this view, for the protasis, ἐὰν δύο συμφωνήσωσιν is read as 'if two agree' and περὶ παντὸς πράγματος οὗ ἐὰν αἰτήσωνται would be interpreted to mean 'about any matter about which they ask', with 'my Father' being the one asked. The γενήσεται αὐτοῖς παρὰ

said, because the judgment of the apostle meets the behavior of the man.'

τοῦ πατρός μου τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς in the apodosis would be taken to mean 'it will be done for you by my father in heaven', with the third person future deponent γενήσεται read as a response of 'my father' to that which is asked. Thus, 18:19 would be an assurance that 'my father' would respond to the prayer of two who are agreed in what they ask. Derrett rightly rejects this interpretation. In his notable article dealing with interpretation of 18:19, Derrett says that "The traditional translation is utterly absurd. There is no reason to suppose that the prayers of two persons will be granted" and then offers the hypothetical case of three Rhodesian cases praying for the defeat of government forces and two for the defeat of liberation forces. Obviously both groups would not get what they want.³¹⁹

This thesis avoids such absurdity. It proposes a new interpretation of 18:19 in which Matthew's Jesus is asserting that when two parties in conflict resolve their disagreement, they will have done so because 'my Father' acted in them to bring them towards that resolution. Though the case for this new interpretation can and will be justified apart from reference to Mt. 5:9, this new proposal continues the characterization of God as peacemaker in 5:9. The argument for this interpretation of 18:19 has two parts. First, it must be demonstrated on linguistic grounds that this alternative interpretation is consistent with the text of 18:19. Elements of two phrases in the verse (περὶ παντὸς πράγματος οὗ ἐὰν αἰτήσωνται and γενήσεται αὐτοῖς παρὰ τοῦ πατρός μου τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς) need some discussion, and the verb συμφωνήσωσιν is malleable enough to admit different views. Second, it would need to be shown how this interpretation fits its context.

319. Derrett, "Where Two or Three", p. 84. Nolland's remark (Nolland, John, *Matthew*, p. 749) that "Presumably the agreement between the two is meant to exclude inappropriate requests" would rightly not satisfy Derrett.

The traditional interpretation of 18:19 bases itself on four interpretative positions that are not required by the text, one of which even seems to go against the text. These four positions mainly coincide with four key words in 18:19. Each one of these words is capable of a different interpretation that aligns with the alternative proposal of this thesis for 18:19. It is thus necessary to consider those four words.

(i) γενήσεται αὐτοῖς παρὰ τοῦ πατρός μου

The standard interpretation of 18:19 assumes that the subject of the third person γενήσεται is the request that two make of the father, but this is not necessary. An alternative explanation is that the subject of the γενήσεται is the δύο συμφωνήσωσιν ἐξ ὑμῶν or ἐὰν δύο συμφωνήσωσιν ἐξ ὑμῶν. In that case, the γενήσεται, rather than indicating a response on the part of 'my father' to a request, is explaining at least part of the cause of the agreement, indicating that it was the father who brought the two persons to agreement. This is the interpretative move about which the author of this thesis is not aware of any contemporary scholar having made, and yet it is a legitimate move to make.

In support of this interpretation, some comments on or related to the phrase αὐτοῖς παρὰ τοῦ πατρός μου are relevant. Neither αὐτοῖς nor παρὰ presents any substantive objection to this interpretation. The dative αὐτοῖς is a dative of interest, which is common.³²⁰ That αὐτοῖς is plural is also no problem. If in some cases, God influences both parties to a conflict to give up some

320. Cf. Wallace, Daniel B. (1996). *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, pp. 142-144.

demands and thus achieve reconciliation, then the plural αὐτοῖς would be appropriate. The reconciliation came to both parties through God's working in each party. But the plural αὐτοῖς would still be appropriate even if he worked in only one party such that it gave up its demands in the conflict and by that relinquishment achieved reconciliation. The reconciliation would still be a reconciliation of both parties, and even though he would not have worked in one party to influence it to give up some of its demand, that party would still benefit from having its demand satisfied. Either way, the plural αὐτοῖς would be appropriate. The use of a genitive noun after παρά can indicate the source or origin of something.³²¹ That is exactly what is happening with παρὰ τοῦ πατρός μου in Mt. 18:19.

The bold interpretive move that requires some defense is taking the apodosis of Mt. 18:19 as giving information about what brought about the event of the protasis. In defense of this interpretation, several linguistic facts are worth consideration. First, not all conditional statements are cause and effect conditional statements. Wallace lists three types of conditional sentences: cause-effect, evidence-inference, and equivalence.³²² For the evidence-inference type, he says that "the speaker infers something (the apodosis) from some evidence. That is, he makes an induction about the *implications* that a piece of evidence suggests"; he then gives as an example sentence "If she has a ring on her left hand, then she's married.". He then tells the reader to "Notice that the protasis is not the *cause* of the apodosis. ... often, though not always, the

321. Cf. Bauer, W., F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, & F. W. Gingrich, *BDAG*, s. v.

322. See Wallace, Daniel B., *Greek Grammar Beyond Basics*, pp. 682-683 and Wallace, Dan B. (2000). *The Basics of New Testament Syntax: An Introductory Greek Grammar*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, pp. 304-305.

ground-inference condition will semantically be the *converse* of the cause-effect condition" and points to Rom. 8:17 and 1 Cor. 15:44 for examples.³²³ This is similar to what is being proposed for 18:19, though a look at the scripture index of Wallace's grammar reveals no mention there of Mt. 18:19 (and no mention of Mt. 16:19 or 18:18).³²⁴ But while Wallace's two examples are inferential, it is possible for apodoses in conditional statements to disclose information that would allow for an inference or to disclose information about what brought about the event of the protasis.

One can think of different examples. If one person says to another, "If you receive a package tomorrow, it will be from Rick", or "If Sally's mother changes your baby's diaper, it will be from the goodness of her heart" the apodosis is giving information, disclosing something about the protasis, something that is logically or temporally prior to the action of the protasis. The statement "it will be from Rick" is indicative of the package being sent by Rick before the other receives it. In the "package" example sentence, there is a specific word in the protasis that can function as an antecedent. The word 'package' in the protasis is the 'it' in the apodosis. But it is not always necessary to have an object as an antecedent. Sometimes a verbal action can be the antecedent of a pronoun. The common use of an infinitive as a substantive is evidence of a verbal idea being used as a substantive. With an infinitive, though, there still would be a word in the protasis to which one can point as the antecedent of something in the apodosis.

323. Wallace, Daniel B., *Greek Grammar Beyond Basics*, p. 683 and Wallace, Dan B., *Basics of NT Syntax*, p. 305.

324. Wallace, Daniel B., *Greek Grammar Beyond Basics*, p. 801.

Can there be an antecedent that is not just one word, but an event described by a string of words? There can be. To insist that there must be a single word in the protasis that acts as the antecedent of something in the apodosis is unjustified. This is shown by the example above, "If Sally's mom changes your baby's diaper, it will be from the goodness of her heart". There is no one word in the protasis of this sentence that is the antecedent of the 'it' in the apodosis, and yet it is a perfectly valid way of stating that what is in the apodosis brings about (or is involved in doing about) the event of the protasis. In form, and ignoring the 'again' in Mt. 18:19, this 'Sally' sentence is the same as the statement of Mt. 18:19. One could object that the apodosis in Mt. 18:19 is not disclosing information about the cause of the protasis because there is not just one word that is the antecedent of the γενήσεται in the apodosis. But that would be exactly the same as saying that the Sally sentence is not disclosing information about the cause of her mom changing a diaper because the 'it' in the Sally sentence does not have just one word as its antecedent. That is not even a plausible argument. In both sentences, the antecedent is the action described by multiple words in the protasis, and the apodosis expresses information about the cause of the event of the protasis. If the interpretation offered in this thesis for Mt. 18:19 is to be rejected, it should not be for the claim that the wording of Mt. 18:19 prevents its apodosis from expressing information about the cause of the event of the protasis. That claim is simply false. The fact that every known modern and ancient interpreter has ignored this possibility is no argument against its validity. There is a real danger of the history of interpretation of Mt. 18:19 prejudicing the interpreter against an interpretive option that is grammatically and linguistically

viable, yet such prejudice would have nothing to do with sound exegesis. It would be mere social influence or peer pressure, and would have no place but to be rejected.

Mt. 18:19 enables a disciple to view his reconciliation with a brother as a sign of God's presence with him. In this, he may be encouraged to give praise to the Father, but it also discourages him from taking pride in the sacrifice he makes to bring about reconciliation and from resentment if the other party to the conflict or those outside it do not praise or acknowledge him for making such a sacrifice. Such an emphasis in Mt. 18:19 is opposite to what nearly all commentators have thought of the verse. Rather than encouraging a group of disciples that 'my Father' would give to them what they desire, Mt. 18:19 is encouraging the one disciple that the Father is with him in abandoning his own desire for the sake of peace (if it was a case where only that one disciple sacrificed to bring about reconciliation). In this, Mt. 18:19 recalls the beatitude that peacemakers will be called sons of God (5:9) and the shepherd of 18:12-14, who embarks on a search that he would otherwise not undertake.

At the same time, the statement might also be used as an indictment of a community in conflict. If it is God who brings conflicting parties to resolution, then the presence of conflict in a community may signal that some of its members have rejected the divine influence that would have brought peace, in which case a proper response for such community members would be repentance. Thus, in a similar way that in Mt. 18:18 imitation of God, whose causative activity brings about the repentance of the sinner of 18:15-17, requires members in the community to embrace a repentant sinner and thus promote unity in the community, Mt. 18:19 encourages unity in the disciple community by encouraging member(s) in conflict to repent. The unity and

repentance that are encouraged in Mt. 18:19 continue the emphasis on unity and repentance in 18:15-18. This gives some justification for relabeling the discourse of Mt. 18 as the repentance discourse, and Mt. 18:19 joins other passages in Matthew where God's activity is the basis for how the disciple should act.

Another relevant fact is that most conditional statements do not have as their subject matter a divine being causing some human action. To cite as evidence for the traditional interpretation the normal use of conditional statements as being of the cause-effect type, or as being ones in which the protasis is logically or temporally subsequent to the apodosis, is thus begging the question. Porter says that "Cadbury is correct in emphasizing the importance of the conditional or conditional-like statement for determining temporal implicature. The 3d class conditional —usually with the subjunctive and *ἐάν* or its equivalent in the protasis and almost any verb in the apodosis— posits a hypothetical situation and specifies its logical fulfillment."³²⁵ This is fine as a description of some conditional statements, but notice what Porter says next. "An internal logical order is all that can be posited for the conditional or conditional-like statement apart from temporal deictic indicators. Jesus in essence states, «if something might be bound (subjunctive) upon the earth, then the consequence is a state of boundness in heaven, and

325. Porter, "Vague Verbs", p. 161. It is not clear to this author exactly what of Cadbury Porter was referring to in this passage, if he was doing so. In his note 39, he says to see Koppers, Bertha Theodora. (1959). *Negative Conditional Sentences in Greek and Some Other Indo-European Languages*. The Hague: N. V. Drij. Pier Westerbaan, especially 91 and says to confer Boyer, J. L. (1982). "Third (and Fourth) Class Conditionals". *Grace Theological Journal*, 3, 163-175, pp. 163-175 and ch. 6 of Porter, Stanley E. (1989). *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament, with Reference to Tense and Mood*. New York: Peter Lang.

if something might be loosed (subjunctive) on earth, then the consequence is a state of loosedness in heaven». "³²⁶

Note what Porter does here. He observes that a 3rd class conditional³²⁷ is used to express the idea of situation and consequence, and then says that 'all that can be posited' is an 'internal logical order. He is making the error of moving from description that a conditional is used to express a logical order, to a limiting statement that this this logical order is all that can be posited. That simply does not follow. If Porter would deny that he is doing this, then he would have to admit that the text allows for both interpretations, that the wording permits the heavenly loosing or binding as preceding the earthly binding, and the reverse. But in this case, why would the conditionals even be thought relevant?

It seems that he implicitly denies a very obvious truth about language, or ignores the fact that Matthew's theology does include divine influence in human behavior, where God's action precedes human action, at least on the level of logical order. It is unwarranted simply to ignore the possibility that a conditional statement might express this causative activity when Matthew emphasizes it as much as he does prior to Mt. 18. Such theology also means that this new interpretation of Mt. of 16:19b-c and 18:18-20 is not an *ad hoc* interpretation of these verses. The view that God works in humans to accomplish some purpose of his is sometimes clearly portrayed, or sometimes not so clearly, in different parts of the Gospel of Matthew prior to

326. Porter, "Vague Verbs", p. 161.

327. Wallace (Wallace, Daniel B., *Greek Grammar Beyond Basics*, p. 696) says of a third class condition that "The structure of the protasis involves the particle *ἐάν* followed by a *subjunctive* mood in any tense. Both the particle (a combination of *εἰ* and the particle *άν*) and the subjunctive give the condition a sense of contingency. The apodosis can have any tense and mood."

16:19.³²⁸ This is supported by the complimentary view that the devil or demonic forces can affect human behavior, which is portrayed, whether clearly or not, in different places (see 5:37, 38; 6:13; 13:38; 15:13-14, different exorcism accounts, and possibly 5:39). This trend gives a good measure of plausibility to the assertion 18:18-19 is another example of Matthew or his Jesus asserting God's action in or through man. Porter's assertion about conditionals is consequently otiose. He is assuming from common usage of conditional statements the very feature that Matthew's characterization of God suggests needs proving for Matthew's own conditional statements in Mt. 18:18-19. If Mt. 18:18-19 is about God's acting in or through humans, then the great majority of conditional statements in which God is not mentioned in the apodosis or protasis are irrelevant.

Another relevant linguistic fact is that a statement about a divine being acting in a human to bring about some action would be uninformative if that statement were to be in the protasis. If an author were to write, "If God influences a human to do some action, then the human will do that action", this statement would be tautologous, and thus uninformative, and thus unnecessary. But if the author puts the human action in the protasis and the assertion about divine origin in the apodosis, writing "If a person does some action, then God has acted to influence that person to do that action", this statement would be informative. It would tell us the author's view that God had some involvement with respect to the person's doing some action. Thus, given the subject matter of 18:18-19, far from Porter's thought that information about the cause would need to be

328. Cf. 1:22-23; 2:5-6, 15, 17-18, 23; 3:3; 4:1-2; 5:6, 13-16; 6:9-10, 13; 7:7-12; 10:19-20; 15:13-14; cf. after 18:12-14, which is after 16:19 but in the near vicinity of 18:18-20.

in the protasis, the assertion that God has influenced some person to do some action would best be put in the apodosis. Matthew's use of γενήσεται and his mention of the Father in the apodosis is just what one would expect if the goal were to express God's causative role in reconciliation.

This brings us to another linguistic fact that is important for this discussion. Even if one were to grant the two preceding points, the verb γενήσεται is still a simple future indicative verb. If Matthew were wanting to emphasize the divine origin of two persons reaching a resolution to conflict, one might contend, whether rightly or wrongly, that it would have been better for him to use a future perfect form and that his choice of a simple future form suggests that the traditional interpretation better fits his choice of verb.

Such an argument depends on both forms being available to Matthew, but outside of Hebrews 8:11 and Jeremiah 38:34, there is no occurrence of a non-periphrastic future perfect indicative form in NA27 or Rahlfs' LXX. Moreover, the word that occurs in both Hebrews 8:11 and LXX Jeremiah 38:34 is εἰδήσουσίν. In the NT, this is a *F₁δ root verb in the future and aorist indicative, but an *οἰδ root verb in the present indicative. But in both the LXX and NT, οἶδα is a defective verb, having one form for the present and perfect indicative, one form for the aorist and pluperfect indicative, and only one form for the future and future perfect. The present indicative form uses the *οἰδ root and the present/perfect indicative form and future/future perfect indicative form use the *F₁δ root. In speaking of one form for two different indicatives, this is not meant to indicate that one form actually was used synchronically by many speakers for both functions. There was probably a development with some *F₁δ root verbs where the pluperfect form was originally used as a pluperfect indicative but came to be used simply as an aorist

indicative, and where the future perfect form was used as a perfect indicative but came to be used simply as a future indicative. The same development probably occurred with *οἶδ root verb. Mounce treats εἰδήσω, which has ε vocalic "reduplication" marker, as a future indicative but in his footnote has "Reduplicated to form the future (since it probably is an old future perfect)".³²⁹ He treats ἤδειν, which has an augment of the pluperfect ε vocalic "reduplication" marker, as an aorist and remarks that it "Actually is an augmented pluperfect that functions as an aorist."³³⁰ Of οἶδα, which he treats as a present indicative, he says that it "is a second perfect that through time became used as a present."³³¹ Such evidence finds confirmation even within the Accordance Bible program, which classifies the εἰδήσουσίν of Jeremiah 38:34 as a future perfect indicative and the εἰδήσουσίν of Heb. 8:11 as a future indicative.³³²

Given the defective nature of εἰδήσουσίν, it would be methodologically suspect to argue from εἰδήσουσίν occurring in Heb. 8:11 and LXX Jeremiah 38:34, and from there being no non-periphrastic future perfects outside of those verbs in NA27 or Rahlfs' LXX, that we should expect to see a future perfect in Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18-19 if the order in these verses were from heaven to earth. The peculiarity of the verb οἶδα makes it such that Heb. 8:11 cannot be used as good evidence to argue that Matthew thought it a viable and normal linguistic option to use a non-periphrastic future perfect form of λύω, δέω, or γίνομαι in 16:19b-c, 18:18, or 18:19. Citing

329. Mounce, William D. (1994). *The Morphology of Biblical Greek: A Companion to the Basics of Biblical Greek and Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan

330. Ibid., p. 263.

331. Ibid., p. 263.

332. At least, this seems the case if the LXX Jeremiah passage was sufficiently earlier than Hebrews.

Turner and Zerwick, Carson says that they point out that "where finite perfects have some force other than the normal perfect in the NT, they tend to be in well-known stereotyped forms: *oída* ('I know,' not 'I have known'); *pepoitha* ('I am persuaded'); *hestēka* ('I stand') Similar is the periphrastic future perfect in Hebrews 2:13: although *esomai pepoithōs* means 'I will put my trust' (NIV), not 'I will have put my trust,' this participle commonly takes the perfect form with present meaning."³³³ Turner and Moulton's volume says in regard to a perfect that its state "had been arrived at by some previous activity, but the state arrived at was represented by the perfect as so permanent that the perfect can be said from long before the NT period to have present meaning" and then mentions as "examples of this present perfect" ἔστηκα, οἶδα, πέποιθα, and others. Turner and Moulton's volume then says that "They have in fact become independent presents, each one divorced from its own present stem."³³⁴ The verb οἶδα thus shares with a limited set of other verbs a feature not true shared by a far greater set of verbs in the language. Particularly, much of the peculiarity of οἶδα and a limited set of verbs is not found in the three relevant verbs (λύω, δέω, or γίνομαι) found in Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18-19.

Outside of the limited set of verbs of which οἶδα is part, the non-periphrastic future perfect is not found in the main text of NA27 and Rahlfs' LXX; the preference was to use periphrastic future perfects. The rarity of the future perfect discourages the expectation of finding a future perfect of γίνομαι in Mt. 18:19, and of finding a future perfect of λύω or δέω in Mt. 18:18. In addition to that, the rarity of periphrastic future perfects also discourages expectation of

333. Carson, D. A., *Matthew 13-28*, p. 372.

334. Turner, Nigel, & J. H. Moulton. (1963). *A Grammar of New Testament Greek: Volume III Syntax*. London and New York: T & T Clark International, pp. 81-82.

finding a periphrastic future perfect of γίνομαι in Mt. 18:19. Future periphrastics occurs at least ten times in the NT, at least twelve if one counts occurrences in parallel passages in synoptic material as different occurrences.³³⁵ Four of these twelve are in Mt. 16:19 and 18:18. Four of them are in the statements "ἔσεσθε μισούμενοι ὑπὸ πάντων διὰ τὸ ὄνομά μου" (Mt. 10:22; Mk. 13:13; Lk. 21:17) or "ἔσεσθε μισούμενοι ὑπὸ πάντων διὰ τὸ ὄνομά μου" (Mt. 24:9). Three others are in Luke (Lk. 1:20; 5:10; 21:24), and the last of the twelve in Heb. 2:13, where the use of οἶδα explains the perfect form. That is all the future periphrastics in the NT, and outside of Heb. 2:13, which uses a verb with stereotyped forms, none of the twelve are periphrastic future perfects except for those in Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18.³³⁶ The absence of the non-periphrastic future perfect in NA27 and Rahlfs' LXX, outside of occurrence(s) that have verb(s) with special characteristics, encourages one to take periphrastic future perfect of verbs lacking those characteristics, verbs which are found in Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18, as if they were simple future perfects. Also, from this evidence, one would not expect to find a periphrastic future perfect form or a simple future perfect form of γίνομαι in Mt. 18:19, and it would seem a weak objection (if any objection at all) that we do not see a future perfect form of γίνομαι in that verse.

Still, it might be said that a periphrastic future perfect form of γίνομαι in Mt. 18:19 would have been a possibility for Matthew. What should be said if the advocate of the traditional

335. Mt. 16:19b-c(2x); 18:18 (2x); 24:9; Mt. 10:22/Mk. 13:13/Lk. 21:17; Lk. 1:20; Lk. 5:10; 21:24; Heb. 2:13. This list does not include Lk. 12:52, nor Lk. 17:35. If Lk. 12:52 is a periphrastic, which is questionable, then there would be at least eleven or thirteen future periphrastics in the New Testament. Lk. 17:35 does not seem to have a periphrastic in light of the wording of Mt. 17:34.

336. If Lk. 12:52 were included, it would be an example of a periphrastic future perfect, but it is not clear that Lk. 12:52 contains a future periphrastic.

interpretation were to argue that a future perfect periphrastic in 18:19 was available to Matthew, and that, since we don't find the periphrastic future perfect there, this would give some support to the claim that Matthew's language does not favor the view of this thesis that in Mt. 18:19 God brings two persons in conflict to resolution? This brings us to an issue that poses some difficulty of assessment. If it was possible but not necessary to use a future perfect to express the idea that God brings conflicting parties to resolution, and if that was the idea Matthew was wanting to express, how likely is it that Matthew would have chosen to use γίνομαι in a future periphrastic construction, rather than the simple future indicative?

Some help in addressing this question may be obtained from comparing the number of times γίνομαι occurs in the future indicative with how much it occurs in a periphrastic construction. There are twelve occurrences of the future of γίνομαι in NA27, and three in Rahlfs' LXX. Eleven of the twelve in the NT are in the indicative³³⁷, and one of the three in Rahlfs' LXX is in the indicative.³³⁸ Compare this number of future indicatives of γίνομαι to how much (or little) the periphrastic construction with γίνομαι occurs in the main text of Rahlfs' LXX and NA27. In all of the main text of NA27 and Rahlfs' LXX, there are five periphrastic constructions with γίνομαι.³³⁹ Four use a present participle of γίνομαι (Gen. 18:18; 1 Kgs. 13:32; Neh. 5:18;

337. γενήσεται: Mt. 18:19; 21:21; Lk. 8:17; Jn. 4:14; 15:7; 16:20; 1 Cor. 3:13; 4:5; 15:54; γενήσεσθε in Jn. 8:33; γενήσονται in Jn. 10:16. The one non-indicative is the future participle γενησόμενον in 1 Cor. 15:37.

338. The one indicative is the γενήσεται in Gen. 17:17. The two others are future participles (γενησόμενον in Eccl. 1:9 and γενησομένων in Eccl. 1:11).

339. In the εἰσιν ἱερεῖς γεγονότες of Heb. 7:20, the perfect participle is separated from the εἰσιν by the noun it modifies, and it would thus be questionable to assert that this is a periphrastic perfect and not a case of the perfect participle functioning adjectivally for the ἱερεῖς. If one were to count this as a perfect periphrastic, there would be six periphrastics of γίνομαι in Rahlfs' LXX and NA 27, though still only two

Eccl. 8:11), and one uses a perfect participle of γίνομαι (Heb. 7:23). Only two of these five are future periphrastics (Gen. 18:18; 1 Kgs. 13:32), and one is a perfect periphrastic of γίνομαι (Heb. 7:23).³⁴⁰ It appears that authors preferred to use the future indicative of γίνομαι when referring to the future rather than a future periphrastic of γίνομαι, and this may suggest that to expect Matthew to break from this norm would be unnecessary if a future indicative was adequate to express the point he wished to make.

Mt. 21:21 may initially appear to provide evidence that Matthew agrees with this tendency to use the future form of γίνομαι. There he uses the exact same form of γίνομαι as in 18:19, and the γενήσεται in 21:21 is in response to the disciple commanding τῷ ὄρει that it be thrown or cast into τὴν θάλασσαν. But there is a relevant difference between Mt. 21:21 and 18:19 in the alternative interpretation of 18:19. The γενήσεται is a response to the disciple's action in 21:21. In 18:19, the γενήσεται is used for indicating that the event of the protasis was brought about by the father. The γενήσεται in Mt. 18:19 is therefore used not as a response to the disciples' agreement, but for indicating the temporal or logical precursor for that agreement. If this is so, then, while the γενήσεται in 21:21 may be evidence that γίνομαι may be used to refer to something coming about or being caused to happen, it does not provide a parallel in which a future form of γίνομαι in the apodosis is used for explaining the origin of an action in the

occurrences of the future periphrastic of γίνομαι in Rahlfs' LXX and NA27.

340. If Heb. 7:20 has a perfect periphrastic, then there would be a second example of a perfect periphrastic of γίνομαι.

protasis. Such a parallel is not necessary to have a successful argument for the alternative explanation of 18:19, though it would be of some help.

What needs to be considered with the preference for the future indicative of γίνομαι is the prevalence of the perfect participle in the NT. The periphrastic future perfect of γίνομαι would have been an option for Matthew. The use of the perfect participle of γίνομαι in a periphrastic construction in Heb. 7:23 gives some plausibility to this claim. If Heb. 7:20 also has a periphrastic perfect, which seems questionable, this would give further plausibility. Even with the example(s) of Heb. 7, the prevalent usage of the perfect participle seems to weigh against thinking that Matthew would have preferred a periphrastic future perfect of γίνομαι over a simple future indicative. The perfect participle of γίνομαι is found around fourteen times in the New Testament,³⁴¹ and it is found around thirty-six times in Rahlfs' LXX.³⁴² In these fifty occurrences in the NA27 and Rahlfs' LXX, twenty-five are substantival³⁴³ twenty-one are adjectival,³⁴⁴ two are substantival or adjectival (there is some uncertainty about classification),³⁴⁵ one is in a periphrastic construction (Heb. 7:23), and one is in a periphrastic construction or is adjectival (Heb. 7:20). Out of the fifty occurrences of the perfect participle of γίνομαι, not more than two

341. Cf. Mk. 5:14; Lk. 2:15; 8:34, 35, 56; 24:12; Acts 4:21; 5:7; 13:12; Jn. 2:9; Gal. 3:17; 1 Tim. 5:9; Heb. 7:20, 23; James 3:9.

342. 1 Sam. 4:16; 10:11; 2 Kgs. 23:24; Neh. 3:16; Esth. 4:4, 7, Judith 15:1, 5; 1 Mac. 4:20, 35; 2 Mac. 2:14; 3:9; 4:1; 5:11, 15; 9:3; 10:12, 21; 11:1, 13; 12:5, 42 (2x); 13:9; 3 Mac. 5:50; 7:8; 4 Mac. 12:13; 17:11, 21; Psal. 86:6; Eccl. 1:9; Wis. 19:18; Sir. 44:9; Jer. 35:8 (LXX; EV 28:8); Ezek. 22:13; 46:23.

343. Cf. Mk. 5:14; Lk. 2:15; 8:34, 35, 56; 24:12; Acts 4:21; 5:7; 1 Sam. 4:16; 10:11; Esth. 4:4, 7; Judith 15:1, 5; 1 Mac. 4:20; 2 Mac. 5:11; 9:3; 10:21; 11:1; 12:42; 13:9; 3 Mac. 7:8; 4 Mac. 12:13; Eccl. 1:9; Wis. 19:18.

344. Cf. Jn. 2:9; Gal. 3:17; 1 Tim. 5:9; James 3:9; 2 Kgs. 23:24; 1 Mac. 4:35; 2 Mac. 2:14; 3:9; 4:1; 5:15; 10:12; 11:13; 12:5, 42; 3 Mac. 5:50; 4 Mac. 17:11; Jer. 35:8 (LXX; EV 28:8); Ezek. 22:13; 46:23; Neh. 3:16; 4 Mac. 17:21.

345. Sir. 44:9; Psalm 86:6 LXX (EV 87:6).

would be in any type of periphrastic construction. The fact that there are five periphrastic constructions using a present or perfect participle of γίνομαι (two of which are future periphrastics) and yet fifty uses of the perfect participle of γίνομαι makes the only one or two examples of a periphrastic future perfect of γίνομαι seem conspicuous. It was a possible and available construction, but only one author of the LXX and NT literature has been found to use it. Comparing this evidence to the twelve uses of the future indicative of γίνομαι in Rahlfs' LXX and NA27 suggests the conclusion that Greek authors preferred the future indicative over a periphrastic future perfect. At the least, the evidence surveyed here does not support any strong argument that Matthew would have preferred a periphrastic future perfect of γίνομαι over a simple future indicative of γίνομαι if both were adequate to his purpose. The evidence demonstrates that the periphrastic future perfect of γίνομαι probably would have been a possible choice for Matthew, but it does not demonstrate much more for the present issue.

There are two more arguments that may favor the interpretation of this thesis. One is that it would be less natural and more cumbersome to use a periphrastic future perfect of γίνομαι in Mt. 18:19. The simple future can do the same thing as the future perfect in a conditional statement whose apodosis expresses information about the cause of the event of the protasis. The form of 18:19 is similar to many conditional sentences in English for which we would recognize that the simple future in the apodosis is indicating some information about the event of the protasis. The statement, "If you receive a package, it will be from Rick (or you will receive it, or it will come, from Rick)" has a simple future in the apodosis. The apodosis expresses the same thought of the protasis (the "it will be" or "you will receive it" expresses the thought of "you

receive a package"), but adds a qualifier ("from Rick") that, in providing new information, is the key to the entire conditional statement. The 'Sally' sentence ('If Sally's mother changes your baby's diaper, it will be from the goodness of her heart') uses a simple future in an apodosis that gives information about the cause of the event of the protasis. As these examples show, the verb in the apodosis can be a copular verb (which would be similar to or same as the γίνομαι of 18:19) or a repetition of or synonym of the verb in the protasis. But in both cases the purpose of the apodosis, and of the entire conditional sentence, is to give some new explanatory information about the thought of the protasis. This is exactly what is happening in 18:19, and the fact that Matthew could have used a periphrastic future perfect does not detract from the legitimacy of a simple future being used to express the idea. Were we to consider the example English sentence above, it would be cumbersome and less preferable to use an English perfect in the apodosis. It is understood that the purpose of the statement is to give the new information about the thought of the protasis, the information that a package would come "from Rick", and the simple future is the better verb form to use in this situation.

One factor that may have influenced Matthew to use choose a simple future in Mt. 18:19, and not a future perfect or periphrastic future perfect, was avoidance of confusion. In the sentence, "If you receive a package, it will be from Rick (or you will receive it, or it will come, from Rick)", the event of the apodosis and the event of the protasis are one and the same event, so an English future perfect would not be the most appropriate. The simple future is most suited to the author's attempt to impart information about the event of the protasis. But the use of a future perfect in some sentences might create confusion because of its implication of order. Since

there can never be order with only one thing, the use of a perfect might create confusion as to whether one part of a statement (the apodosis) is referring to the same event as another part of the sentence (the protasis) and, accordingly, whether the entire statement is really an information disclosing statement about the cause of the event of the protasis. Since the Greek perfect usually indicates an antecedent event (see chapter three), Matthew may have avoided the use of a periphrastic future perfect in a conscious or unconscious understanding that the perfect can sometimes have potential for creating confusion about the type of statement that a statement is. This issue may be relevant to Matthew's choice of the future in Mt. 18:19.

If it is objected that it is inappropriate to take these example English sentences as relevant to understanding a Greek sentence, several things may be said. First, it is not clear that this objection is valid on its face. Without too much effort, one could construct a number of sentences in Greek that function in just the same way as the package sentence and Sally sentence above.

Sentence #1 (English and Greek):

If Peter changes the garment of the baby, it will be from the goodness of his heart.

ἐὰν ὁ Πέτρος ἀλλάσῃ τὸ ἱμάτιον τοῦ βρέφους, γενήσεται παρὰ τῆς ἀγαθωσύνης τῆς καρδίας αὐτοῦ (This is the form of Mt. 18:19. An alternate form is εἰ ὁ Πέτρος ἀλλάσσει τὸ ἱμάτιον τοῦ βρέφους, γενήσεται παρὰ τῆς ἀγαθωσύνης τῆς καρδίας αὐτοῦ)

Sentence #2 (English and Greek):

If you receive the gift, it will be from me.

ἐὰν σύ λάβῃς τὸ δῶρόν, γενήσεται παρὰ ἐμοῦ (This is the form of Mt. 18:19. An alternate form is εἰ σύ λαμβάνεις τὸ δῶρόν, γενήσεται παρὰ ἐμοῦ)

Both of these are adequate Greek sentences and are comparable to Mt. 18:19 (and also comparable to the Sally sentence and package sentence above). Each Greek sentence also has an

apodosis that expresses information about the cause of the event of the protasis. Such examples demonstrate that Greek is comparable to English in its ability to have a conditional statement in which the apodosis expresses information about the cause of the event of the protasis.

If it is then objected, not that it is impossible in Greek for an apodosis to express information about the cause of the event of the protasis, but that the lack or absence of good examples elsewhere should discourage this interpretation of Mt. 18:19, three things may be said. First, this is not a significant objection. Although an interpreter may be dependent on examples of words being used in some way to argue for a certain meaning of a particular occurrence of that word, such is not the case for a Greek construction, or, more specifically, not for the Greek construction under consideration here. Second, Mt. 18:19 is a very broad statement about causation. There are many effects that can be achieved by different causes, a fact which deters persons from making the same type of broad statement of causation for those effects as is found in Mt. 18:19. We would not expect there to be many statements of the type found in Mt. 18:19. One place where one would find such statements would be in theological statements. Third, when one does look at theological statements in the Old and New Testament about divine influence in human behavior, the diversity of ways that one can express that influence is remarkable.³⁴⁶ The form of the conditional statement of Mt. 18:19 is not the only means of expressing divine influence in human behavior, but such influence certainly is an idea prevalent

346. Cf. here some of the Old Testament divine causation passages given earlier and some of the following: Mt. 5:16; 6:9-13; 10:19-20; 13:37-39; 19:23-26; 15:13-14; Jn. 3:3-8; 4:10; 6:44; 7:29; 8:42-44, 47; 10:29-30; 14:26; 15:2-5, 8, 21; 16:8-11, 13; 17:6-7, 11, 14-15, 20-21, 23 Phil. 2:13; Eph. 2:10; 1 Jn. 2:29; 3:6, 9-10; 4:7, 12, 15; 5:1, 5, 18.

in the New Testament. It is not the idea that is not common, but the particular way of expressing it in Mt. 18:19 that is uncommon in NT and OT literature.

Fourth, even with all of these factors, there seems to be at least one example with a construction similar to Mt. 18:19. In 1 Jn. 4:12, it says that if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. The statement of God's abiding is to be taken as an indication of what was logically prior to loving one another. Loving one another did not cause God to abide in persons; rather, it was his abiding that produced such love. The statement that his love is perfected, which uses a present perfect periphrastic, should be taken similarly. Though it is a present periphrastic perfect and not a future one, the fact that the statement of his love's being perfected should be taken as logically prior to the loving one another means that the present perfect periphrastic has a perfect force. The apodosis gives information about the logical cause of the protasis, even if both protasis and apodosis occur temporally at the same time.³⁴⁷ Given the preceding considerations and this example, it is clear that the construction of Mt. 18:19 does allow for the apodosis to give information about cause of the event of the protasis.

The simple γενήσεται is also reflective of the author's attempt to reiterate the thought of the protasis. If his purpose is to impart some new information about the event of the protasis, then he does not need to repeat the apodosis, in the same way that in the 'Sally' example sentence above, the speaker need only say 'it will be', with 'it' designating the event of the protasis. The

347. 1 Jn. 4:15 appears to be what Wallace would call an evidence-inference conditional sentence, though he does not list 1 Jn. 4:15 in his section on that type of conditional sentence (See Wallace, Daniel B., *Greek Grammar Beyond Basics*, pp. 682-683). If, though, the author was thinking of God's living in a person and that person's living in God as the cause of the acknowledgement that Jesus is the Son of God, then 1 Jn. 4:15 would probably be another example.

same thing might be said in regard to the traditional interpretation, though. This consideration thus does not favor one interpretation over the other.

The fact that the γενήσεται is followed by παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς μου τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς sets this usage of γενήσεται apart from the γενήσεται in Mt. 21:21. It allows the conditional statement of 18:19 to be interpreted in the same way as the statement above about receiving a package, one whose purpose is to impart some information about the event of the protasis. Such is not the case in 21:21, and thus it is appropriate to treat the γενήσεται in 21:21 as a response to or consequence of a logically or temporally prior action while treating the γενήσεται in 18:19 as part of a clause giving information about the cause of the event of the protasis.

This interpretation of 18:19 also continues a pattern of discourse in Matthew where Jesus moves from talking about one event or state of affairs on the divine level to talking about the same event or state of affairs on the human level, or vice-versa. In 10:20, Jesus says that it would not be the disciple speaking, but the spirit of 'your Father' speaking through the disciple. In 15:1-14, Jesus first decries religious leaders for their hypocrisy and then says that they have not been planted by 'my Father'. Mt. 18:12-14 describes God's activity in an erring disciple coming to repentance, and 18:15-17 describes what happens on the human level in a process that seeks to bring an erring disciple to repentance. Mt. 18:19 follows in the path set by these verses.

(ii) αἰτήσωνται

The second part of the traditional interpretation of 18:19 that is not required by the text is the view that αἰτήσωνται has to do with prayer. This is not necessary. If the subject of γενήσεται

is the event of the protasis, and if the *παρὰ τοῦ πατρός μου τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς* is instrumental, expressing the means by which the event comes about, then the action of agreement must also be logically subsequent to the *γενήσεται παρὰ τοῦ πατρός μου*. In that case, it would not make the best sense to interpret *ἐὰν αἰτήσωνται* as referring to prayer, for that would involve the Father answering the prayer logically prior to its being asked or causing disciples to agree on what to pray about. The former option is implausible if not absurd, and the latter implausible.

This section contends that the *αἰτήσωνται* is being used to express the asking or demanding that parties in conflict do with respect to each other, but it might be contended that the application of just one verb (*αἰτήσωνται*) to two persons requires that the two persons are doing the same thing. This is true, but the 'thing' may be the kind of activity in which they are engaged. The use of just one verb does not require that the objects of the asking or demanding of each person are the same. It is enough that both parties in the conflict are engaged in the same activity of asking or demanding. That is all that is needed in order to apply the one verb *αἰτήσωνται* to both parties to the conflict. If one person is demanding one thing from another person, and if the other person is demanding another thing from the one person, it is linguistically acceptable to use just the one verb *αἰτήσωνται* of both persons.

But can *αἰτέω* be used of asking or demanding? The verb *αἰτέω* can mean to ask in prayer, but it need not do so. BDAG lists 'demand' as a possible meaning for *αἰτέω*,³⁴⁸ and Preisigke's own work in literature outside the New Testament supports this possibility.³⁴⁹ In many

348. Bauer, W., F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, & F. W. Gingrich, *BDAG*. s. v.

349. See Preisigke, Friedrich. (1925). *Wörterbuch der griechischen Papyrusurkunden, mit Einschluss*

cases, there is not much difference between 'ask' and 'demand'. Derrett appeals to support outside the New Testament,³⁵⁰ and argues that it can also refer to making a demand for payment. He says that "*Aiteisthai* can well mean, not to beg, but to pursue a claim. In the picture suggested by the verse two persons are making claims, presumably of a financial nature, in respect of the same property, claim, possibly, and counter-claim. At some point they come to a settlement of both. This has nothing to do with praying."³⁵¹

One need not go so far as Derrett in interpreting the αἰτέω in 18:19 as two person making claims "presumably of a financial nature", but he is correct in seeing that the verse does not require the Father as an object of the αἰτήσονται.³⁵² Support for this may be found from Mt. 14:7, where the ὃ ἐὰν αἰτήσῃται has the same construction to the οὗ ἐὰν αἰτήσονται in 18:19 except for the verb in 14:7 being singular and the relative pronoun in 14:7 being in the accusative case. Both have a relative pronoun + ἐὰν + aorist middle subjunctive of αἰτέω, but the situation described in 14:7 was a situation in which one person, the daughter of Herodias, asks or demands from another person, King Herod. This suggests the possibility that person(s) is or are the object(s) of αἰτήσονται in Mt. 18:19.

That αἰτήσονται in Mt. 18:19 is speaking of human(s) asking or demanding from other human(s), and not from God, is further supported by Matthew's general usage of αἰτέω. The verb

der griechischen Inschriften, Aufschriften, Ostraka, Mumienschilder, usw. aus Ägypten (1). Berlin: Selbstverl. der Erben, s. v., columns 36-37.

350. He cites Preisigke, Friedrich. (1915). *Fachwörter des öffentlichen Verwaltungsdienstes Ägyptens*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, p. 6.

351. Derrett, "Where Two or Three", p. 86.

352. Although neither Derrett nor Carson advocate the particular interpretation of 18:19 in this thesis, the writing of both was important in influencing the author of this thesis towards his present position.

αἰτέω occurs thirteen times in Matthew outside of Mt. 18:19.³⁵³ Of these thirteen, the understood object of the verb in eight occurrences³⁵⁴ is a human person, and in only five³⁵⁵ is this object God. But these five merit examination. In Mt. 21:22, Jesus' words include "αἰτήσητε ἐν τῇ προσευχῇ". The αἰτήσητε is qualified by ἐν τῇ προσευχῇ. Apparently, Matthew may not have thought the object of αἰτήσητε so obvious that the qualifier 'in prayer' was not needed (whether or not he used Mark as a source). Mt. 18:19 does not have the qualifier "ἐν τῇ προσευχῇ". In 6:8, Jesus says that 'your Father knows what you need before you ask him (πρὸ τοῦ ὑμᾶς αἰτῆσαι αὐτόν). Here the αἰτῆσαι is being used for prayer. But this passage has several features that Mt. 18:19 lacks. Mt. 6:8 is continuing on from Mt. 6:5-7, where ὅταν προσεύχησθε (Mt. 6:5) is used for introducing the subject of prayer and where προσεύχομαι (Mt. 6:7) continues the focus on that subject. Prayer is already the subject of the discourse when one comes to Mt. 6:8. That is certainly not true of Mt. 18:19, and Mt. 18:19 also does not have προσεύχομαι, nor in any verse immediately preceding it. These facts, together with the reference to 'your Father' and the masculine accusative αὐτόν in Mt. 6:8, give a clarity to the object of αἰτῆσαι in Mt. 6:8 that is absent in Mt. 18:19.

The other three examples are in Mt. 7:7, 8, 11. In these verses, Matthew's use of αἰτέω for prayer is explainable by Matthew's practice of coupling αἰτέω with λαμβάνω, δίδωμι, or a compound of δίδωμι (Mt. 7:7, 8, 11), or by this practice and rhetorical considerations (Mt. 7:7, 8). Mt. 18:19 lacks the rhetorical considerations, and his practice of coupling αἰτέω with

353. Mt. 5:42; 6:8; 7:7, 8, 9, 10, 11; 14:7; 20:20, 22; 21:22; 27:20, 58.

354. Mt. 5:42; 7:9, 10; 14:7; 20:20, 22; 27:20, 58.

355. Mt. 6:8; 7:7, 8, 11; 21:22.

λαμβάνω, δίδωμι, or a compound of δίδωμι would actually lead one to expect a different word than γενήσεται in Mt. 18:19. Matthew's practice of coupling αἰτέω with λαμβάνω, δίδωμι, or a compound of δίδωμι will be examined below. For now, one may note that, given the connection, Matthew's three uses of δίδωμι or a compound of δίδωμι would have encouraged him to select αἰτέω as the paired verb in Mt. 7:7, 8, 11. Rhetorically, the pairing of verbs is a notable feature of Mt. 7:7-11, the passage in which all these last three examples are found. Matthew employs two sets of three brief aphorisms, each having a set of paired verbs. The first is in Mt. 7:7 (Αἰτεῖτε/δοθήσεται, ζητεῖτε/εὕρήσετε, κρούετε/κρούετε). The second set is in Mt. 7:8 (αἰτῶν/λαμβάνει, ζητῶν/εὕρισκει, κρούοντι/ἀνοιγήσεται). It should be obvious that Matthew's rhetoric is driving his choice of αἰτέω in Mt. 7:7-8. Such rhetoric continues in Mt. 7:11. After speaking of evil persons knowing how to give (διδόναι) good gifts or things (ἀγαθά) to children, Matthew then moves to the issue of the Father giving (δώσει) to those who ask (αἰτοῦσιν), once again using the same αἰτέω/δίδωμι pair that he used in Mt. 7:7. Rhetorical considerations are driving Matthew's choice of αἰτέω in Mt. 7:7-11, and those rhetorical considerations are absent in Mt. 18:19.

This survey of Matthew's use of αἰτέω demonstrates one thing. In Matthew's general usage of αἰτέω, in eight of his thirteen usages of αἰτέω outside of Mt. 18:19, αἰτέω is not about prayer, and the contextual factors that have αἰτέω being about prayer in the other five usages are absent in Mt. 18:19. There is no compelling reason to think that αἰτέω in Mt. 18:19 refers to prayer. Matthew's majority practice is to use αἰτέω of human person(s) asking or demanding from other human person(s).

It is even less likely that αἰτέω in Mt. 18:19 is about prayer in light of the fact that Matthew had a word other than αἰτέω that he normally used for prayer. Fifteen times³⁵⁶ Matthew uses προσεύχομαι to refer to prayer that is directed towards God, not to a human person, and twice he uses the noun προσευχή³⁵⁷. That is more than the fourteen total uses of αἰτέω. Not only, then, would we be asked to think that Matthew went against his usual practice of using αἰτέω with a human person as its object, and instead used it with God as its object, but we are to think that he did this when he had his own word that he specifically used for prayer, a word which he used more times in his gospel than a word, αἰτέω, whose total occurrences have only a minority with God as their object. The linguistic evidence strongly discourages taking αἰτέω in Mt. 18:19 to be about prayer.

The linguistic plight of the usual interpretation of Mt. 18:19 is actually more desperate than this, though. Mt. 18:20 connects itself to Mt. 18:19 with γάρ, and in light of this, many commentators have viewed Mt. 18:20 as envisaging a situation of disciples gathered together in prayer. But Mt. 18:20 does not use αἰτέω nor προσεύχομαι. Thus, though it was Matthew's custom to use προσεύχομαι for prayer, or to use αἰτέω for prayer in a minority of cases and with contextual help, he does not use either in a passage where communal prayer was supposedly in mind, nor does the statement in the second part of Mt. 18:20 speak of answer to prayer. To say that he is there with those who have gathered together in his name does not use λαμβάνω, δίδωμι or a compound of δίδωμι, a cluster of verbs that he normally associates with response to prayer

356. Mt. 5:44; 6:5 (2x), 6 (2x), 7, 9; 14:23; 19:13; 24:20; 26:36, 39, 41, 42, 44.

357. Mt. 21:13, 22.

(see below), nor does it even address the idea of response. It speaks of presence, not response. The interpreter has to link presence to response himself.

In light of this evidence, great weight would need to be put upon context to salvage traditional interpretation of Mt. 18:19, but at this point, there is not much context to which the usual interpretation of Mt. 18:19-20 can appeal. Mt. 18:21 introduces a new section. The discussion of Mt. 18:18 above and chapter three show that Mt. 18:18 cannot help the usual interpretation. As demonstrated in this section, the linguistic evidence of Matthew discourages taking the protasis and apodosis of Mt. 18:19 as the usual interpretation does. At the least, the argument of this section would make an appeal to Mt. 18:19 for the usual interpretation of Mt. 18:20 an appeal from one faltering hypothesis to another.

Another argument presents itself in relation to the usual interpretation of Mt. 18:19. Outside of Mt. 18:19, Matthew usually pairs αἰτέω with a cluster of verbs (λαμβάνω, δίδωμι or a compound of δίδωμι), and never with γίνομαι, so the usual interpretation must again envision him breaking with his normal use of language. In Mt. 7:7-8, Matthew treats λαμβάνω as basically the same as δίδωμι in Mt. 7:7-8, and so we may with some justification treat his usual practice of coupling αἰτέω with λαμβάνω, with δίδωμι or with a compound of δίδωμι as exhibiting a single pattern. Of Matthew's thirteen uses of αἰτέω outside of Mt. 18:19, consider how many are coupled with λαμβάνω, δίδωμι or a compound of δίδωμι. Seeking is coupled with finding, knocking with opening, and asking (Αἰτεῖτε, 7:7; αἰτῶν, 7:8) with receiving (λαμβάνει, 7:8) or something being given (δοθήσεται, 7:7). A similar coupling of αἰτέω with δίδωμι is found in 5:42 and 14:7, and of αἰτέω with λαμβάνω in 21:22. In 7:9 and also in 7:10, αἰτήσῃ is

coupled with ἐπιδώσει, a compound of δίδωμι. In 7:11, αἰτοῦσιν is coupled with δώσει. In 27:58, ἡτήσατο is coupled with ἀποδοθῆναι, another compound of δίδωμι. This accounts for nine of the thirteen occurrences of αἰτέω outside of Mt. 18:19. In two of them, αἰτέω is coupled with λαμβάνω, and in seven with δίδωμι or a compound of δίδωμι. In none of these cases does Matthew couple αἰτέω, a verb in the protasis of Mt. 18:19, with the verb of the apodosis in Mt. 18:19, γίνομαι. This weighs against interpreting the "γενήσεται αὐτοῖς παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς μου τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς" in Mt. 18:19 as indicating God's response to prayer. If Matthew were thinking of response to prayer in Mt. 18:19, he would have continued the trend set in these nine examples and, instead of using γίνομαι in the apodosis of Mt. 18:19, would have used λαμβάνω, δίδωμι or a compound of δίδωμι. This is significant evidence against the traditional view of Mt. 18:19 being about response to prayer, a view that requires Matthew to break from his usual practice.

The other four occurrences of αἰτέω outside of 18:19 do not do much to counteract this conclusion. If the αἰτέω of 27:20 is to be coupled with a verb, it would be the verb for releasing Barabbas in 27:26, but there is at least five verses between the two verbs, which would make this at best a weak counter-example to Matthew's usual practice of pairing αἰτέω with λαμβάνω, δίδωμι, or a compound of δίδωμι. The occurrences in Mt. 20:20, 22 present no challenge to Matthew's usual practice, since there is no coupling with another verb as there is with many of the other occurrences of αἰτέω. That leaves only the occurrence of αἰτέω in 6:8. The statement in this verse that the Father knows what is needed before one asks him is in contrast to the statement in 6:7 that ἔθνηκοί (pagans or Gentiles) think they will be heard (εἰσακουσθήσονται) because of their many words. But even here, coupling the αἰτέω in 6:8 with the

εἰσακουσθήσονται in 6:7 might be misguided. The full text of 6:7 in NA27 is this:

"Προσευχόμενοι δὲ μὴ βατταλογήσητε ὥσπερ οἱ ἔθνη, δοκοῦσιν γὰρ ὅτι ἐν τῇ πολυλογίᾳ αὐτῶν εἰσακουσθήσονται."³⁵⁸ Given the present participle preceding the command, and the connecting γὰρ, it seems better to couple the εἰσακουσθήσονται with the Προσευχόμενοι than with αἰτέω, if it is to be connected with one of the two.

Nine of Matthew's thirteen uses of αἰτέω outside of Mt. 18:19, close to 70%, have αἰτέω coupled with λαμβάνω, δίδωμι, or a compound of δίδωμι, and none of the other four occurrences of αἰτέω contradict this pattern of association. The usual interpretation of Mt. 18:19, which thinks of the γενήσεται as a response to the αἰτήσονται, asks us to see Matthew in this one case of Mt. 18:19 breaking off from his normal usage of αἰτέω by coupling it with γίνομαι and not λαμβάνω, δίδωμι, or a compound of δίδωμι. The interpretation of this thesis, that the apodosis of Mt. 18:19 is giving information about the event of the protasis, does not ask us to see a break from Matthew's normal usage, because in this thesis the γενήσεται is not a response to and fulfillment of the αἰτήσονται (conceived of as prayer). So in this thesis, Matthew's use of γίνομαι in Mt. 18:19 was not a departure from his normal pattern of coupling αἰτέω with λαμβάνω, δίδωμι, or a compound of δίδωμι. In this, the view of this thesis is to be preferred over the usual interpretation.

Yet another argument presents itself against traditional interpretation of Mt. 18:19. It assumes that αἰτήσονται is directed towards a third party, and would accordingly interpret the

358. NRSV: "When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words."

middle form to be indicating that the petitioners are asking that third party in regard to themselves, what Wallace would describe as an indirect middle.³⁵⁹ But this at once points to the deficiency of interpreting 18:19 as a promise about the Father granting a request for 'anything' on which two agree, for not all prayers are for oneself. Many prayers are for others with no focus on oneself, and the language of Mt. 18:19 is wide enough to encompass many such prayers. The middle form of αἰτήσονται in 18:19 counts against traditional interpretation of Mt. 18:19.

But the middle form, and its use as an indirect middle or indirect reflexive, does fit comfortably with the idea that objects of the αἰτήσονται, rather than being a third party, are the two parties themselves. They each ask, or more likely demand, of the other what each desires in their conflict, and each one does this with his own benefit in mind. When 18:19 has "ἐὰν δύο συμφωνήσωσιν ἐξ ὑμῶν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς περὶ παντὸς πράγματος οὗ ἐὰν αἰτήσονται", the initial state of the two parties is them each demanding something from the other with respect to the πράγματος οὗ ἐὰν αἰτήσονται, but the demanding ceases and/or finds some fulfillment when they agree (συμφωνήσωσιν). And what was the reason that a solution to their conflict was reached? Because the Father worked in one or both of them to bring reconciliation (γενήσεται αὐτοῖς παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς μου τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς). This is a natural use of the verb αἰτέω, and does not require that one go as far as Derrett does in his advocacy of a different interpretation of 18:19. The δύο are not asking the Father about something he will grant, but one or both of them

359. Wallace, Dan B., *Basics of NT Syntax*, p. 184.

is receiving from the Father that which brings one or both of them towards reconciliation and towards a cessation of the conflict.

To put it this way, though, invites the question why Mt. 18:19 does not contain the reciprocal pronoun ἀλλήλων. If the two parties in conflict are demanding from each other, would it not be sensible to include the pronoun that would indicate this textually? Matthew is no stranger to the use of such a pronoun. He uses it twice in 24:10 and once in 25:32. Initially, this consideration might seem strong, but it is not determinative. In none of the cases where a form of ἀλλήλων occurs in Matthew (Mt. 24:10 and 25:32) is it coupled with αἰτέω, and the verb αἰτέω is a double object verb, a verb that can have the person to whom one makes a request be in the accusative case, but also a verb for which the thing requested can be in the accusative case. In the τῷ αἰτοῦντί σε δός of Mt. 5:42, the σε, an accusative singular pronoun, indicates the person of whom someone asks or demands. In other verses, a masculine accusative object of αἰτέω indicates the person asked. In 6:8 αὐτόν is the masculine accusative object of αἰτῆσαι, and indicates the person asked, not the thing requested. In 7:9, the masculine accusative ὃν is the object of αἰτήσῃ, and indicates the person who is asked. A similar observation applies for τοῖς αἰτοῦσιν αὐτόν in 7:11.

But an examination of uses of αἰτέω when it has an object in Matthew also demonstrates that these objects indicating the person of whom one asks or demands are actually in the minority. It is more common for the object of αἰτέω to indicate the thing that is requested, and here there is usually a neuter pronoun or a noun whose grammatical gender is already determined. In 14:7, the neuter relative pronoun ὃ is the object of αἰτήσῃται, and indicates not

who the daughter of Herodias would ask or of whom she would make a demand, but what she would ask for or what she would demand. In 20:20, the neuter accusative τι is the object of αἰτοῦσά, indicating what was asked for, not of whom it was asked. In 20:22, the neuter τί is the object of αἰτεῖσθε, indicating the thing that was requested. In 21:22, the neuter plural ὅσα is the object of αἰτήσητε, indicating what would be demanded or requested, not of whom it would be demanded or requested. In other instances, one has a definite noun in the accusative, not a relative pronoun, that is the object of the verb, and in these cases the noun is what was asked for or demanded. In 27:58 it is τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ. In 27:20 it is τὸν Βαραββᾶν.

Such evidence demonstrates that it was the norm for Matthew to think of the thing that a person asked for or demanded when using an object with αἰτέω. This is relevant for assessing 18:19, where there is no object at all given in the text. The οὗ is genitive, not accusative, indicating that they ask or demand not to acquire πράγματος, but with respect to πράγματος or the issue of πράγματος. Matthew's more commonly naming the thing asked for or demanded suggests that the object(s) of αἰτῶνται would have been more prominent in Matthew's mind than the person(s) to whom the verbal action(s) was or were directed. This would explain why Matthew did not use the reciprocal pronoun ἀλλήλων. If in his use of αἰτέω in Mt. 18:19 he was thinking of the things that the two persons in conflict were demanding or requesting, and if it were already a given that it was these two persons who were in conflict, writing ἀλλήλων was unnecessary. Matthew very often does not indicate the person to whom a request or demand is made, and the absence of ἀλλήλων in Mt. 18:19 is accordingly not a significant objection.

This interpretation and evidence obviates the objection that France raises when he says of Derrett's proposal that "The chief drawback of this bold reinterpretation is that it hardly does justice to the language of asking and receiving from God."³⁶⁰ On the interpretation in this thesis, no justice needs to be done to language of asking and receiving from God, because he is not the object of αἰτήσονται. The human parties are the unstated objects of αἰτήσονται, and the other unstated objects are the things asked for or demanded by each party to the conflict. The verb αἰτέω may be used in situations where two parties are seeking something from each other in the case of conflict,³⁶¹ and that is exactly what is happening in Mt. 18:19.

This also avoids an objection that Davies and Allison direct towards Derrett's interpretation of Mt. 18:19-20. Davies and Allison ask or say in regard to Derrett, "is it not more natural to identify the 'two or three' of v. 20 with the 'two' of v. 19, as commentators throughout the ages have done?"³⁶² In the interpretation of this thesis, two or three disciples resolving their dispute for the sake of Christ (Mt. 18:20) would still be disciples resolving their conflict (Mt. 18:19), and so, if the objection works against Derrett, it does not work against the proposal of this thesis. Davies and Allison's objection in regard to taking matters before the church also does not apply to the interpretation of this thesis. To the extent that the scope of Mt. 18:18 is determined by Mt. 18:15-17 (if it is so determined), it is dealing with a situation where members

360. France, R. T., *Matthew NICNT*, pp. 695-696, fn. 4.

361. See Preisigke, Friedrich. (1927). *Wörterbuch der griechischen Papyrusurkunden, mit Einschluss der griechischen Inschriften, Aufschriften, Ostraka, Mumienschilder, usw. aus Ägypten*. Berlin: , s.v. #2 and #3 (column 37). See also the discussion in Derrett, "Where Two or Three", pp. 85-86, and Carson, D. A., *Matthew 13-28*, pp. 403-404.

362. Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C., *Matthew 8-18*, p. 788.

in the disciple community are agreed that the sinner of Mt. 18:15 really did sin. They are not uncertain about whether the sinner's action was morally wrong. Mt. 18:19-20 are dealing with situations of conflict, situations that could include clear sin but need not do so. The interpretation of Mt. 18:19-20 in this thesis does not have parties to a conflict taking their conflict before judges. Thus, Davies and Allison's objection to Derrett does not even apply to the interpretation of this thesis. It is not necessary to go as far as Derrett in imagining the arbitration of third party or third parties. The αἰτῶνται may be read simply as an expression of two parties in conflict demanding different things from each other. When two persons in conflict resolve their conflict, this will be the result of God's activity in one or both of them to bring one or both of them towards that resolution.

(iii) συμφωνήσωσιν **and** πράγματος

The corollary of the interpretation proposed above is that συμφωνήσωσιν in Mt. 18:19 is not about the two agreeing on what to ask of the Father in prayer, but the two coming to an agreement in their own conflict.³⁶³ There is nothing in συμφωνήσωσιν that requires it be about prayer and not about a matter of conflict. It can be used for either. Within just Josephus, one can look at *War* 1:1, where ἀσύμφωνα as part of the phrase ἀσύμφωνα διηγήματα means 'disagreeing', and at *Contra Apion* 1:38, where ἀσυμφώνων is used as part of the phrase ἀσυμφώνων καὶ μαχομένων, which modifies βιβλίων. In this context, ἀσυμφώνων is used to

363. See Bauer, W., F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, & F. W. Gingrich, *BDAG*, s. v. and Preisigke, Friedrich. (1927). *Wörterbuch der griechischen Papyrusurkunden, mit Einschluss der griechischen Inschriften, Aufschriften, Ostraka, Mumienschilder, usw. aus Ägypten* (2). Berlin: Selbstverl. der Erben, s. v., columns 518-519.

indicate disagreement among books. Neither of these two occurrences are about prayer; removing the alpha-privative would not necessarily require that agreement would have to be about an item of prayer.

A fourth part of the traditional interpretation of 18:19 that is not required by the text is that *πράγματος* is an issue of prayer. Although understanding *πράγματος* as 'thing' or 'matter' would fit with the alternative proposal being advanced here, there is some justification linguistically to think that *πράγματος* is being used to refer to conflict or a situation of conflict. While the word itself can mean 'thing', an understanding that would include conflict though not necessarily exclude some other things, *πράγματος* was used to refer to a matter of contention or a dispute or something of a lawsuit.³⁶⁴ An example of this comes from 1 Cor. 6:1, where *πᾶγμα* is used to refer to an interpersonal grievance or dispute which would be handled through a legal claim. Though Richardson³⁶⁵ and Bernard³⁶⁶ have attempted to connect 1 Cor. 6:1-11 to what comes before it, Fee convincingly argues that 1 Cor. 6:1 is the beginning of a section focused on a different subject.³⁶⁷ Even if one were to grant that 1 Cor. 6:1-6 continues the sexual focus of 1 Cor. 5 into a juridical matter,³⁶⁸ and is not diverging from that sexual focus and digressing into a

364. Bauer, W., F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, & F. W. Gingrich, *BDAG*, s. v. See the references cited there.

365. Richardson, Peter. (1983). "Judgment in Sexual Matters in 1 Corinthians 6:1-11". *Novum Testamentum*, 25.1, 37-58

366. Bernard, J. H. (1907). "The Connexion Between the Fifth and Sixth Chapters of 1 Corinthians". *The Expositor*, 7.3, 433-443

367. Fee, Gordon D. (1987). *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (The New International Commentary on the New Testament). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, p. 228 argues that there is a new subject in 6:1-11. Cf. Fitzmyer, Joseph A. (2008). *First Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (The Anchor Yale Bible Vol. 32). New Haven and London: Yale University Press, p. 248.

368. Horsley, Richard. (1998). *1 Corinthians* (Abingdon New Testament Commentaries). Nashville: Abingdon Press, p. 86 says that the context "suggests that the case had to do with marital relations,

juridicial area,³⁶⁹ the sexual connotation for *πρᾶγμα* would come from the context, with *πρᾶγμα* indicating that what is being talked about is matter of contention or dispute. One may also look to the use of *πράγματος* in 1 Clem. 1:1. Preisigke's work also demonstrates that *πρᾶγμα* could be used in regard to having a claim on something of another.³⁷⁰ This evidence supports the possibility of using *πράγματος* for a situation of conflict.

Another argument is that there is some evidence to think that Matthew would not have used *παντός* or *πράγματος* if he were wanting to make a statement about prayer. Given Matthew's use in Mt. 14:7 of the construction, 'accusative relative pronoun + *ἐάν* + a verb form of *αἰτέω*' in a statement encouraging the daughter of Herodias to ask for any one of a wide variety of things, why did Matthew not use the same construction in Mt. 18:19, when in Mt. 18:19 Matthew's Jesus is supposedly encouraging disciples to have freedom to ask jointly for any one of a wide variety of things? Certainly the construction in Mt. 14:7 is simpler and shorter than the phrase in Mt. 18:19, and the two are so far apart that the rhetorical convention of saying the same thing in different words is not a factor. The *περὶ οὗ γέγραπται* of Mt. 11:10 shows that Matthew was willing to use *περί* followed by a relative pronoun and then by a verb pertaining to that pronoun. Why then in Mt. 18:19 did Matthew include *παντὸς πράγματος* and not simply write *περὶ οὗ ἐάν*

perhaps in some economic way such as inheritance." Fitzmyer, Joseph A., *1 Corinthians*, p. 251 says that a difficulty of the pericope comes from Paul not mentioning the reasons for "haling others into pagan courts" and then says that it is "possible that some of the terms used" in the pericope "are to be understood of sexual misconduct and that the lawsuits involved some sexual problem. ... The question, however, will always remain highly speculative."

369. Keener, Craig S. (2005). *1-2 Corinthians* (The New Cambridge Bible Commentary). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, p. 52 thinks there is a digression.

370. See Preisigke, Friedrich, *Wörterbuch Vol. 2*, s. v., columns 349-350, section b, subsection c.

αιτήσονται, if his aim was to make a statement that many types of prayer would be answered? If Mt. 14:7 demonstrates that Matthew thought a very broad range of items could be encompassed by the simple ὁ ἐὰν αἰτησῇται, then it is significantly less plausible to reply that Matthew included παντός πράγματος in Mt. 18:19 because of a felt need to indicate the breadth of items for which Mt. 18:19 would be applicable. According to Mt. 11:10 and 14:7, he could have achieved a breadth of reference with the simpler περὶ οὗ ἐὰν αἰτήσονται. On the traditional interpretation, not only is πράγματος not needed in light of Mt. 14:7, but neither is παντός. A better explanation for πράγματος is that Matthew included πράγματος because he wanted to specify to what he was referring, and given that the word πράγματος is associated with conflict, that was an appropriate word to use. A better explanation for παντός is that Jesus uses it to stress the breadth of conflict situations where God influences one disciple (or more than one) to give up demand(s) of other(s) and achieve peace. This new interpretation of Mt. 18:19 gives a fully convincing explanation for Matthew's use of παντός and his use of πράγματος; the traditional interpretation does neither.

(iv) Conclusion

The preceding discussion has demonstrated that the alternative interpretation of 18:19 is defensible linguistically, and in different ways is to be preferred over the usual interpretation. The language of Mt. 18:19 is compatible with the interpretation of Mt. 18:19 that when two persons come to a resolution in their conflict, this happens because the causative activity of 'my

Father' brings one or both of them towards that resolution of conflict. The result of this demonstration is that, at least linguistically, there are two plausible interpretations of 18:19, the alternative proposal advanced in this thesis and the traditional interpretation, though if one were to judge solely from what has been covered already, the traditional interpretation seems less plausible than the proposal of this thesis.

(c) Mt. 18:20: A New Proposal

With the new interpretation of Mt. 18:19 comes a new interpretation of Mt. 18:20. This section provides a defense of this interpretation of Mt. 18:20 in light of the language of Mt. 18:20. It will be contended that what Mt. 18:19 ascribes to God, Mt. 18:20 ascribes to Jesus and to God. Whereas in Mt. 18:19, God works in disciples to bring one or both of them to reconciliation, in 18:20 the risen Jesus and God work in disciple(s) to bring reconciliation for the sake of Christ.

(i) δύο ἢ τρεῖς συνηγμένοι

A key word in Mt. 18:20 is συνηγμένοι. Although typical usage of this word has to do with gathering together, BDAG gives the following in its second entry for συνάγω: "2. to effect renewed relations, *bring together, reconcile*, ext. of 1 (Demosth. et al.; Herodian 3, 13, 5; 4, 3, 4;

9) μαχομένους συναγαγών B 19:12.³⁷¹ In light of this, there is some plausibility to taking συνηγμένοι in Mt. 18:20 as referring to reconciliation. This interpretation is even more plausible in light of the fact that πράγματος, which is in the immediately preceding verse, can be used in situations of conflict, and that confrontation is a central part of Mt. 18:15-17.

Mt. 18:19 mentions two persons agreeing about something, but Mt. 18:20 mentions 'two or three'. Such a willingness to go from 'two' to 'two or three' is easily accommodated on the view that Mt. 18:19 deals with prayer, and that Mt. 18:20 deals with a Christian gathering, whether for prayer or for something else. Is it so easily accommodated on the new interpretation of this verse? Does it make sense to speak of three parties in conflict coming together? Mt. 18:15 envisions a situation where one brother goes to someone who sinned. It has two parties. Mt. 18:19 has two parties. In neither verse is there a situation of three persons in conflict. Is this a problem for the new interpretation?

While it might seem a problem, some considerations mitigate the consideration's apparent force, if not remove it altogether. In Mt. 18:15-17, it is not true that only two parties, and not more than two, are always involved. The second stage of the process involves one or two others, and there is no hint that the one or two others are unsure of who is in the right. It is assumed in the passage that such persons would side with the person who confronted the sinner. It is thus true that there may be two parties in opposition to the sinner, and if the sinner repents, then the two would be reconciled with the one. In the first stage, two persons would be reconciled, and in

371. Bauer, W., F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, & F. W. Gingrich, *BDAG*, s. v.

the second stage, three or four would be reconciled. This might prompt the question why Mt.

18:20 mentions only two or three, and not two, three, or four. Consider here the words of

Derrett.

Sunēgmenoi, as frequently in Demosthenes, is a natural word for 'reconciled'. It looks as if it says that Christ himself is with those who have allowed themselves to be reconciled for his sake, in his name. But the word 'three' shows that we are not entitled to understand the word in this sense, for all disputes are visualized, for legal purposes, as between two parties, whatever the truth of the matter. And if one were to be pedantic and imagine that several co-heirs are suing a debtor of the estate of the deceased, so that one can have a plurality of plaintiffs, I reply that at that rate the word 'three' is equally inappropriate. Therefore *sunēgmenoi* means 'brought together'.³⁷²

Notice how important Derrett's legal interpretation of this passage is to his rejection of the view that *συνηγμένοι* means 'reconciled' and to his conclusion that *συνηγμένοι* means 'brought together'. He says that "all disputes are visualized, for legal purposes, as between two parties". If it is unnecessary to think of Mt. 18:19 as necessarily being a case of legal dispute, and if Mt. 18:19 need not refer to judges of arbitration, one may also say for Mt. 18:20 that it does not require a legal dispute, legal procedure, or arbiters. Since his objection to *συνηγμένοι* indicating reconciliation depends on casting Mt. 18:20 in the mold of legal arbitration or legal procedure or dispute, his objection thus falls to the ground

In light of this, the interpretive possibility that *συνηγμένοι* means 'reconciled' remains open. Such reconciliation does not require that Christ works in each and every party to the

372. Derrett, "Where Two or Three", p. 85.

conflict. In Mt. 18:19, God did not necessarily work in both parties to the conflict; neither do he and the exalted Christ have to work in both parties in Mt. 18:20. In Mt. 18:19, as long as God works in one of the parties to influence it to make some concession that brings reconciliation, it may rightly be said that the reconciliation was from God. The same goes for the causative work of the exalted Jesus and the Father in disciple(s) in conflict in Mt. 18:20. Given that the conflict need not be viewed in legal terms, the parties to the conflict might therefore include one disciple on one side and many disciples on the other. If there was one disciple on one side of a conflict with a plurality of disciples on another, then his changing his mind and resolving the conflict would result in all of the disciples being *συνηγμένοι*, that is, reconciled.

While putting aside Derrett's legal objection still leaves unanswered why 'two or three' are the numbers mentioned, and not also other 'four' or other numbers, several things are worth bearing in mind. First, whether the number is two and not four, or four and not three, or seven and not five, or something else, is not actually central to the claim that Jesus is making. The claim he is making is about the source of reconciliation, and the number of people reconciled is secondary, if anything at all. Focusing on his not mentioning all the possibilities as to how many were reconciled would be to focus on something that is not the main point. Second, though Mt. 18:20 includes situations to which Mt. 18:15-17 applies, it is not bound by strictures of Mt. 18:15-17. Mt. 18:20 continues the thought of Mt. 18:19 in being about conflict, which can include sin but need not do so. In that, it is similar to Mt. 18:15-17 in that it can refer to cases envisioned by Mt. 18:15-17, but it is also different in that it can include situations of conflict to which the focus on sin of Mt. 18:15-17 does not apply. That difference ought to provide a

warning to pressing one's interpretation of Mt. 18:20 entirely into the mold of Mt. 18:15-17.

Third, whether or not Mt. 18:20 should be bound by the numbers of Mt. 18:15-17, it would still be rhetorically cumbersome to mention all of the possibilities. Mt. 18:15-17 includes situations where a sinner is confronted not only by one, two, or three persons, but also in front of an ἐκκλησία. If we are to demand that Mt. 18:20 insist on lining up its numbers with those of Mt. 18:15-17, what language would one recommend when the numbers of Mt. 18:15-17 could include tens of people? εἷς, δύο, τρεῖς, τέσσαρες, ἢ πᾶς? Matthew and his Jesus had more rhetorical sense than that. Davies and Allison's commentary says that "'Two or three' presumably means, as in v. 16, 'two or more'".³⁷³ If this statement is on target, and if Mt. 18:20 is about conflict, then the phrase 'two or three' is not much of a problem. Fourth, although Mt. 18:20 includes situations of conflict other than those to which Mt. 18:15-17 applies, it may be that mentioning 'two or three' gives some expression to the conviction that the process of Mt. 18:15-17 was one that would not normally go beyond the involvement of two or three persons. Did Matthew's Jesus expect that in most cases the brother confronted with his sin would repent at the first stage, when it was just between the two people, or the second stage, which in some cases might involve only three persons? If so, it could be that the language of Mt. 18:20 gives expression to some of that conviction.

373. Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C., *Matthew 8-18*, p. 789.

(ii) εἰς τὸ ἐμὸν ὄνομα

The phrase εἰς τὸ ἐμὸν ὄνομα qualifies the statement of Mt. 18:20. Jesus says that he would be in their midst not simply whenever disciples reconcile, but when disciples reconcile in his name. This passage is portrayed as a pre-Easter saying, but it seems to apply to a post-easter time.³⁷⁴ The phrase εἰς τὸ ἐμὸν ὄνομα can express the purpose for which something was done.³⁷⁵ Thompson refers to Rev. 16:14 and 20:7-8, both places where συνάγω + εἰς + τὸν πόλεμον express gathering for the purpose of war. Thompson says that "The participle designates a gathering of disciples, and the prepositional phrase must explain the reason for the gathering, since the adverbs (*hou . . . ekei*) indicate the place. In other words, two or three disciples gather together to invoke the name of Jesus (...)." ³⁷⁶ While this thesis does not take on board Thompson's interpretation of συνηγμένοι nor his interpretation of the purpose of gathering, he is right to see that εἰς τὸ ἐμὸν ὄνομα is being used to express purpose. Jesus is indicating that when two disciples reconcile for the purpose of his name, presumably in some cases so that his name would avoid disrepute that would come from such conflict, he would be in their midst. The idea here is in the same constellation as Paul in 1 Cor. 6:6, where he notices that one went or goes to law against another, and this in front of unbelievers. Evidently, Paul thought it even worse that one would go to law in front of unbelievers. Similarly, Jesus is commending in Mt. 18:20 that his name avoid dishonor by its not being associated with conflict of believers. The concern for unity seen in this new interpretation of Mt. 18:20 finds continuity with Jesus' words in Jn. 17:20-23,

374. Ibid., p. 790; Cf. France, R. T., *Matthew NICNT*, pp. 697-698.

375. Cf. Hartman, Lars. (1974). "Into the Name of Jesus". *New Testament Studies*, 20, 432-440, p. 440.

376. Thompson, W. G., *Matthew's Advice*, p. 198

where Jesus links his disciples being unified to the idea that those in the world would know that the Father sent the Son and loved disciples.

Further confirmation of this view of εἰς τὸ ἐμὸν ὄνομα may be found in the use of the phrase even within Matthew. The construction "εἰς + ὄνομα + Genitive Noun" occurs three times in Mt. 10:41-42, and in each case, the genitive noun gives the reason for which one receives a righteous man or prophet (10:41) or gives a cup of cold water to a disciple (10:42). In its section on Mt. 10:41, Davies and Allison's commentary says that "εἰς ὄνομα is a Semitism meaning 'because he is' (cf. *lēšēm* and the Greek idiom, εἰς λόγον). It makes the reward depend not upon the deed itself but its intention."³⁷⁷ In the three statements in Mt. 10:41-42, the genitive noun in the "εἰς + ὄνομα + genitive noun" construction has already been preceded by a noun having the same referent, but the first two statements use the same word both times. In these two cases, the repetition of the noun is not necessary to identify the person. Matthew might have used αὐτοῦ instead of δικαίου or προφήτου. That he did not use αὐτοῦ in place of δικαίου or προφήτου supports Davies and Allison's contention that the "εἰς + ὄνομα + genitive noun" is indicating the reason why someone receives a prophet or righteous man or gives a cup of cold water. This is similar to what the εἰς τὸ ἐμὸν ὄνομα phrase is doing in Mt. 18:20. The phrase in Mt. 18:20 is specifying the purpose for which disciples reconcile.

This assertion might raise the question why the phrase in Mt. 18:20 does not specify some quality about Jesus as is done for the righteous man and prophet in Mt. 10:41-42. Mt. 10:41

377. Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C., *Matthew 8-18*, pp. 226-227.

indicates that a person who receives a righteous man because he is righteous man would receive a reward. What is it about Jesus that would influence disciples to reconcile? Mt. 18:20 does not say, but it does not need to say. Jesus frequently does not give just one specific quality for following him. To Matthew he simply says, 'Follow me' (9:9). He says that if anyone would come after him, that person must take up his cross and follow Jesus (16:24); there is no specific feature in this verse that is given as the reason. It is enough that the person followed is Jesus. Even 10:42 says that a person who gives a cup of cold water to someone because he is a disciple of Jesus, that person would have a reward. No explanation is given for why Jesus is chosen. Receiving someone simply because he is a disciple of Jesus is adequate reason for doing something. In light of this, if Mt. 18:20 is continuing with the subject of conflict from Mt. 18:19, then the εἰς τὸ ἐμὸν ὄνομα phrase does not need to specify a single quality about Jesus. It is enough to refer to himself with ἐμὸν or ἐμὸν ὄνομα.

One might also look to Mt. 25:31-46. There Jesus says that what one did for one of the least of 'these brothers of mine', one did for him. But the King gives no specific reason why they would have done something for a brother of Jesus. It is sufficient simply that an act was done because someone was a follower of Christ. This passage also confirms the reading of Mt. 18:20. Those who reconcile for the name of Christ (18:20) are also those who help the sick, naked, hungry, thirsty, in prison, and lacking adequate clothing because such persons are associated with him (25:34-40), and those who give a cup of cold water to a 'little one' because that one is associated with him (10:42). Matthew has a theme of things being done for people or for peace for the sake of the Son. In 25:31-46, one helps sick, naked, hungry, thirsty, inadequately clothed,

or imprisoned followers of Jesus because they are his followers. In 18:20, one concedes one's demands to another for his sake. The same sentiment underlies both passages.

This understanding of εἰς τὸ ἐμὸν ὄνομα is consistent with previous understanding of the phrase, but adds something to it. After noting Thompson's idea that disciples gather to invoke the name of Jesus, Davies and Allison's commentary says that "Most commentators seem rather to assume that 'gathered in my name' simply refers to act of coming together as Christians: 'For where two or three are gathered with reference to me'".³⁷⁸ According to this thesis, although the understanding of συνηγμένοι is different from other commentators, it is true that disciples in conflict reach reconciliation 'with to reference to Jesus', but the reconciliation is purposeful. They reconcile for his sake, and, like the person who receives disciple for Jesus' sake or because the disciple is a follower of Jesus (10:42), they act similarly to those who receive a righteous man or prophet for his being a righteous man or prophet (10:41).

Given the foregoing discussion, Mt. 18:20 envisions a future time when disciples reconcile for the sake of the exalted Christ. It affirms that in cases of conflict, which may include clear sin but need not do so, Christ works in one or more of them to bring them to reconciliation. Given that Mt. 18:19 has just affirmed the same thing for God, Christ here steps into God's place, or joins him. It thus adds one more example where Matthew characterizes Jesus as being in some sense equal to God. If Mt. 28:18 depicts Jesus as the Danielic Son of Man who has received authority from the Father,³⁷⁹ Mt. 18:20 is in one sense similar, though it adumbrates the

378. Ibid., p. 789.

379. Cf. Pennington, Jonathan T., *Heaven and Earth*, p. 289.

expansion of divine influence in human behavior from the Father (or Father and Spirit) to the Father and Son (or Father Son and Spirit). Mt. 18:19 paves some of the way for the Trinitarian formula of Mt. 28:19.

(iii) ἐκεῖ εἰμι ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν

It should be evident that the new interpretation of the phrase ἐκεῖ εἰμι ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν is underdetermined by its language; the phrase allows for more than one interpretation. The text says that Jesus would be in the midst of disciples. It does not explicitly say that he would have influenced the two or three to be reconciled. In response, it may be said:

- 1) that such language does not exclude the new interpretation,
- 2) that the language of the conditional statement of Mt. 18:20 is open to the same interpretation as the conditional statement of Mt. 18:19,
- 3) that a statement about Christological presence seems appropriate for expressing a conviction about the source of two or three being reconciled,
- 4) that this propriety is strengthened further by consideration of rhetorical style,
- 5) that it fits with the rest of the repentance discourse, and
- 6) that the traditional interpretation may be in some tension with Mt. 28:20.

Unpacking some of this statement may be in order. The two part-statement of Mt. 18:20 is similar in form to the two-part statement of Mt. 18:19. In Mt. 18:19, the second part gave information about the first part. The same may be thought of Mt. 18:20. Saying that he is in the midst of disciples when two or three reconcile is not meant to indicate that Christ is responding to their reconciling, it points to the cause of the reconciliation. The examples of two-part

statements of this sort that were given in regard to Mt. 18:19 may be used again for Mt. 18:20. The form of the statement is no barrier to the new interpretation of Mt. 18:20.

Neither is the statement about Christ's presence a barrier. There is a natural connection between action and presence. Many commentators have not been content to stop at presence. They interpret his presence to mean something. Robinson, for example, thought of presence ensuring guidance. There is much to commend making some type of connection between presence and action. In Mt. 18:19, to affirm that God brought two persons in conflict to resolution assumes that he is present. Considered from the opposite perspective, to affirm that God is present or that Christ is present would not be of much help unless that presence translated into action or its potential. If such presence did not imply some action or potential for it, the words about Christ's presence in Mt. 18:20 and 28:20 do not give much comfort to disciples. It would merely indicate that disciples have a heavenly spectator. The action might involve God's knowledge or Christ's knowledge of wrongdoing, wrongdoing which would later be taken into account in a time of final judgment (cf. Mt. 10:26-33), but if Mt. 18:20 and 28:20 do include this action of future judgment, that is not all that is included. The comfort of divine presence in Mt. 18:20 and 28:20 implies some action or potential of action from the one who is present. The question is what that action would be. In the case of Mt. 18:20, the context provides a ready answer for this. Christ's presence among disciples results in reconciliation in his name. When they reconcile for the sake of his name, he is among them, for he was involved in causing the reconciliation. To say that this is reading into the text something not there invites the counter-claim that the inference drawn in this interpretation is called for by the text, and the claim that

not to make a connection between divine or Christological presence and action or potential for action is to make the saying unnecessary and useless.

Not only is the language of presence appropriate if Mt. 18:20 is arising from the conviction that Christ would bring two or three towards reconciliation, but it is desirable rhetorically. Four times in 18:12-20 does the focus of divine or Christological influence in human behavior arise, and each time different language is used. In 18:12-14, the parable of the lost sheep is used. In 18:18, the imagery of binding and loosing is used. In 18:19, the saying that 'it will be from my Father' is used, and here in 18:20, the language of presence is used. This is a hallmark of good writing. If one expresses the same idea repeatedly in writing or speech, rhetorically it is more desirable to do so with different language, and that is exactly what Mt. 18:12-20 does.

Four more comments are in order before moving on. First, Davies and Allison say that "The mention of 'two or three' troubled early Christian solitaries and was used against them (cf. Ignatius, *Eph.* 5, long recension). Is not Christ also present with one?"³⁸⁰ No such concern arises on this new interpretation of the text, since the focus is on reconciliation, which requires by definition more than one party. A second comment may be made utilizing the words of David Garland. He writes, "Why does the church need to be assured that Christ is in the midst of two or three who pray? In 28:20, the risen Christ promises the disciples that he will be with them at all times whether they are praying or not."³⁸¹ Not many commentators raise this point. One might

380. Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C., *Matthew 8-18*, pp. 790-791.

381. Garland, David E., *Reading Matthew*, p. 196.

contend that Mt. 28:20 is merely general, and that to promise his presence in Mt. 18:20 to even just two would clear away uncertainty stemming from the question whether the general promise of presence in Mt. 28:20 is found among as few as two persons. But that is debatable, and such a corporate reading of Mt. 28:20 seems less plausible than a reading that is also individualistic. Given that lesser plausibility, there seems to be some redundancy if Mt. 18:20 is promising nothing more than presence. Third, with this new interpretation of Mt. 18:20, there is now the necessary resources to interpret the whole of the repentance discourse of Mt. 18 in a coherent manner. That task is picked up in what follows.

Another comment returns us to Garland's earlier observation. He contended that the original tradition behind Mishnaic material was preserved in *Mekilta Bahodesh* 11 (to Exod 20:24), and that the promise of divine presence with judges was switched to Torah scholars. If he is right in this contention, then there is an interesting contrast between the characterization of God in Jewish material and Jesus' characterization of God. Jews would have spoken of the divine presence among judges of a dispute that has erupted and been so serious as to need judicial intervention. Jesus speaks of divine influence that ends a dispute and keeps it from escalating to the point of needing judges. That is a remarkable contrast in characterization of God.

(iv) γάρ

Though many scholars do not explicitly discuss why Mt. 18:20 has a connecting γάρ,³⁸² France offers a ready explanation. "The saying is linked to v. 19 with a 'for,' which indicates that

382. Cf. Hagner, Donald A., *Matthew 14-28*, pp. 529-531, 533-534; Carson, D. A., *Matthew 13-28*, pp. 402-404; Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C., *Matthew 8-18*, p. 789.

this is the basis for expecting united prayer to be answered: it is not just the prayer of the two who agree, but also that of Jesus who is 'among them' because they have come together 'in his name,' that is, as his disciples representing him (cf. on v. 5, and cf. 10:40-42)."³⁸³ France adds that "While Jesus is on earth his disciples are his brothers and sisters (12:49-50), but even when he is no longer on earth he remains spiritually present as the focus of their unity."³⁸⁴ France is similar to Thompson, who says that "The final proverbial statement explains the previous saying about agreement in prayer. The object of the agreement and petition will be granted by the Father in heaven because (*gar*) Jesus himself is in the midst of two or three disciples gathered together in his name."³⁸⁵

Traditional interpretation of Mt. 18:19-20 thus has some explanation for the γάρ. Because Jesus would be present among his disciples who gather in his name, their prayer would be answered. On the new interpretation, it is the Father in Mt. 18:19 who would bring one or both parties in a conflict towards resolution. In 18:20, the Son and the Father bring about reconciliation. Also, Mt. 18:19 deals with conflict resolution on a general level, whereas Mt. 18:20 speaks of resolution of conflict for the sake of Jesus' name. How would one explain these two different statements in light of the conjunction γάρ? Why would the Son and Father's bringing one or both parties in a conflict to resolution for the sake of the Son's name be

383. France, R. T., *Matthew NICNT*, p. 698.

384. *Ibid.*, p. 698.

385. Thompson, W. G., *Matthew's Advice*, p. 196.

connected by a γάρ to the statement about the Father bringing one or both parties in a conflict to resolution?

An answer may be found by starting with Mt. 1:22-23. At this juncture, one need not resolve the debate whether this passage is saying that Jesus is God. If it does say that Jesus is God, it would be quite plausible to then argue that where Jesus is, God the Father is also. Such, at least, is the conviction of John's Gospel (cf. Jn. 8:29; 10:28-30, 36; 17:11, 21-22). But even if one does not grant this and subsequently claims that calling Jesus 'God with us' is only an indication that Jesus is a sign of God's presence with his people, it is then a natural step to claim that the risen Christ's presence among his disciples in Mt. 18:20 implies God's presence also. The γάρ would reflect the conviction of Mt. 1:22-23 on either interpretation of Mt. 1:22-23. When the risen Christ works in his disciples to bring them to a resolution of conflict for his name's sake, it is not only Jesus who is working. His Father is working in his disciples also. The γάρ can thus function as an explanatory conjunction. Mt. 18:19 speaks generally of God's role in conflict resolution, while Mt. 18:20 deals with a specific case of his involvement. A move from general to specific, or from specific to the general, is a known use of γάρ.³⁸⁶ Mt. 18:20 may be a special case of Mt. 18:19, but it still is founded on the conviction of God's causative role in reconciliation.

386. Cf. Bauer, W., F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, & F. W. Gingrich, *BDAG*, s. v., 1.d. There it is claimed that in Mk. 7:10; Lk. 12:52; Rom. 7:2; and 1 Cor. 12:8, "the general is confirmed by the specific" and that in Mt. 7:8; 13:12; 22:14; Mk. 4:22, 25, "the specific by the general".

The γύρ also makes Mt. 18:20 an ever higher Christological statement than in the traditional interpretation of Mt. 18:20. Mt. 18:20 is not only a claim that Jesus would be with his disciples. It goes with the claim that where Jesus is God is. It is grounded in the conviction that when Jesus works in disciples, God does too. Still further, it is not just that God is working when Jesus does. He works in disciples so that they would resolve conflict for the sake of the name of Jesus. God is an active participant in seeking that the name of the risen Christ avoid dishonor. Such a thought is not far from 'the spirit of your Father' speaking through a disciple in the disciple's witness to the exalted Christ (10:19-20).³⁸⁷

(d) The Triad of Triads Structure of the Repentance Discourse of Mt. 18

Maybe one of the greatest deficiencies of the traditional interpretation of Mt. 18:18, and of 18:18-20, is that it creates a text that is disjointed and lacking unity. While 18:12-14 characterizes 'your Father' as one like a shepherd not willing that a sheep be destroyed, Mt. 18:18-20 are supposedly justifying the community in its expulsion of the sinner of 18:15-17, with 18:21-35 then taking up the importance of forgiving a brother. Luz remarks that "Verses 15-18 fit awkwardly in the context. Verses 12-14 spoke of the shepherd who searches for the lost sheep, and the following text (vv. 21-22) is going to say that one should forgive seventy-seven times. Yet the subject of our text is exclusion from the church—excommunication. Verses 19-20 appear to have no connection either to vv. 15-18 or to vv. 21-22."³⁸⁸ Luz is not alone in this type

387. After the approach taken in this section was developed, it was found that Nolland takes the same or a similar approach. See Nolland, John, *Matthew*, pp. 745, 750-751.

388. Luz, Ulrich, *Matthew 8-20*, p. 450.

of assessment for some of the material in Mt. 18:15-20, and other commentators see the disjointedness as a basis to conclude that Matthew has brought together separate traditions.³⁸⁹

Rightly or wrongly, one might argue that the text just ought to be accepted as disjointed, and that to insist on its unity is to impose our own desire for coherence and comprehensibility on a text that does not have it. The problem with such thinking is that Matthew elsewhere demonstrates quite an aptitude for coherence and unity and comprehensibility in his discourse material, in non-discourse material and even in the structure of his gospel. His genealogy is triadic (a triad of names in 1:1, three segments of genealogical material in 1:2-16, and a triadic summary in 1:17). All of his other discourses prior to Mt. 28—the righteousness discourse/sermon on the mount, the mission discourse, parables discourse, the woes discourse, and the eschatological discourse—have triad of triads structure.³⁹⁰ Much of the material in his section on deeds of the kingdom in Mt. 8-9 is structured in triads. Matthew gives abundant evidence in most parts of his gospel outside of Mt. 18 that he organizes material in triads, and he often has clearly discernible structures.

Much or all of this makes traditional assessments of the structure of Mt. 18 seem out of place. Davies and Allison's commentary is not alone in finding six different sections in it, though it refers to Hill and Meier finding five sections, and to Trilling proposing four sections.³⁹¹ On traditional interpretations of the structure of Mt. 18, much of Matthew's penchant in all his other

389. Cf. France, R. T., *Matthew NICNT*, pp. 695-696; Nolland, John, *Matthew*, p. 749; Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C., *Matthew 8-18*, p. 787; Green, F. W., *Matthew*, p. 214.

390. Research and writing providing some justification for this claim have already been undertaken, but have not been published.

391. Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C., *Matthew 8-18*, p. 750.

discourses for organizing his material into triads seems to have left him when he wrote some of Mt. 18. The advantage of this thesis' new proposal for Mt. 18:18-20 is that it enables one to discern in the discourse of Mt. 18 a clear triadic structure.³⁹² It is composed of a triad (18:3-10, 12-20, 21-35) of triads, with one element of each of the three triads itself being composed of a triad. Further, as with some of the sections in the discourse of Mt. 13, the first two triads of the discourse of Mt. 18 each have an *inclusio*, with the first and third parts of each mirroring each other. The outer sections of the main triad also form an *inclusio*. The first section (18:3-10) focuses on the eternal fate of the proud and humble, and the third section (18:21-35) focuses on the eternal fate of the forgiving and unforgiving. The focus of each on eternal fate of the individual forms an *inclusio* on the factor that determines what that fate is, whether or not one repents. Repentance, the central focus of the middle section of the discourse (18:12-20), transforms the proud and unforgiving to be humble and forgiving, switching their eternal fate from eternal punishment (18:6-9, 18:35) to eternal glory (18:4-5, 35). Much of this can be seen in the accompanying chart that groups the triads visually. This section explains the structure of the repentance discourse in light of the new interpretation of Mt. 18:18-20 and explains its flow of thought from the vantage point of its triadic structure.

The second triad of the repentance discourse has a symmetrical A B A' structure. In the second triad, its first (18:12-14) and third (18:18-20) elements emphasize the divine role in

392. Although Mt. 18:21 has narrative and Peter's words, but no words of Jesus, this thesis treats that verse as if it were part of the "discourse". If "discourse" is only to have words of a speaker, one could easily omit Mt. 18:21 and treat the third section of the discourse as starting in Mt. 18:22. That would be cumbersome, though, and for simplicity's sake, "discourse" will be used as if the narrative and the words of Peter can be and are included. The structure of the repentance discourse is not affected by this.

human repentance from sin, though the third element also focuses on the Father's role in the resolution of conflict (18:19) and the role of God and the role of Christ in the resolution of conflict for the sake of Christ (18:20). These three verses together form a triad that constitute the third element of the second triad of the discourse. The middle element of the second triad (18:15-17) focuses on the human role in repentance.

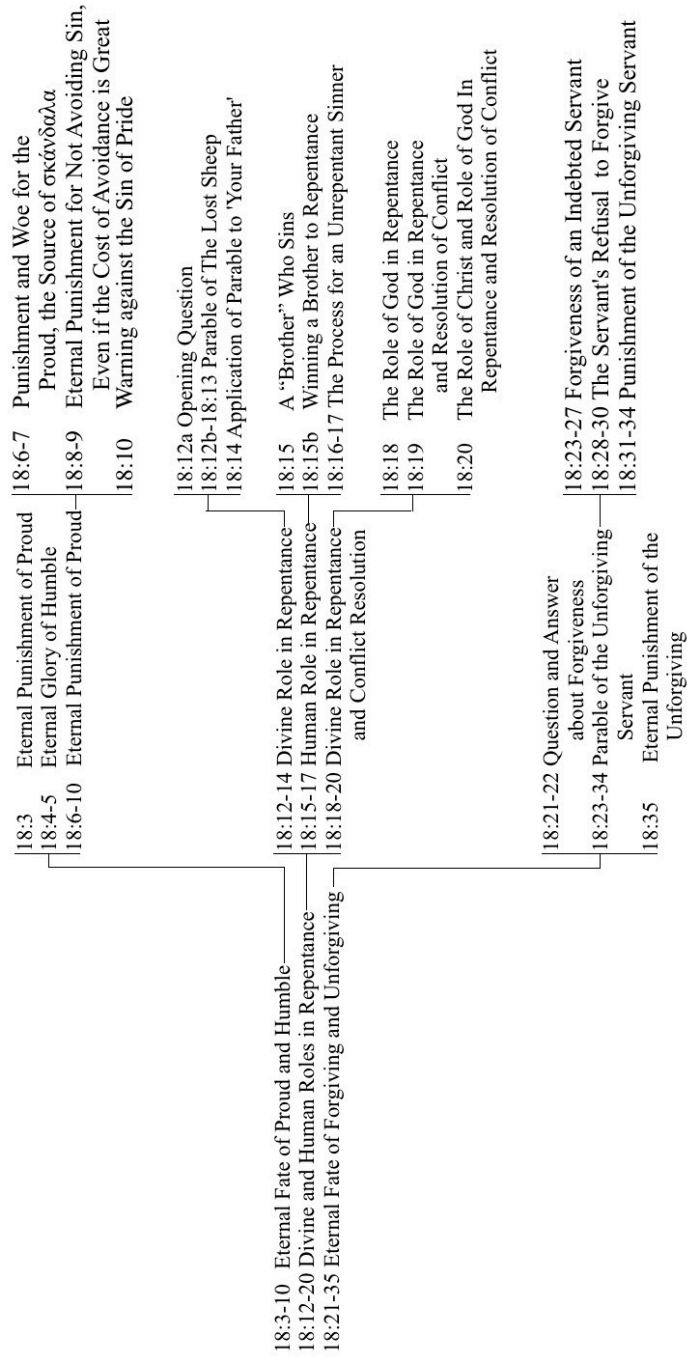
The first triad also has a symmetrical A B A' structure. The first element of the first triad (18:3) indicates by negation of kingdom entrance that one preoccupied with greatness will suffer eternal punishment, and the third element (18:6-10) indicates through positive description that such a person will suffer that punishment. The middle element of the triad (18:4-5) encourages humility, which is necessary to avoid such punishment and enter the eschatological kingdom. As with the second triad (18:12-20), the third element (Mt. 18:6-10) of this first triad (18:3-10) is composed itself of a triad (Mt. 18:6-7, 8-9, 10). The first part of this sub-triad (18:6-7), by its description of a punishment worse than drowning in the sea for the one who σκανδαλίση (18:6) and its pronouncement of woe on the one through whom σκάνδαλον comes (18:7), looks to the eternal punishment to come on one who σκανδαλίση. The second part of this sub-triad (18:8-9) describes the choice of σκάνδαλον: avoid it even at great cost or face eternal punishment. The third part of this sub-triad (18:10) caps the sub-triad with a warning against that which can cause σκάνδαλον, the attitude that despises a little one, the very same attitude that the first element (18:3) of the first triad (18:3-10) warned would prevent kingdom entrance.

The third triad (18:21-35) does not have the symmetrical A B A' pattern of the first two triads. The first part (18:21-22) of the third triad (18:21-35) has Peter's question about

forgiveness and Jesus' answer. The second element (18:23-34) of the third triad (18:21-35), which tells the parable of the unforgiving servant, gives the theological basis for Jesus' reply to Peter in the first part (18:21-22) of the third triad. The disciple is to imitate God's lavish forgiveness in his own life. The third part (18:35) of the third triad (18:21-35) indicates that the consequence for not doing so is eternal punishment.

This structure has three clear focii. The first triad (18:3-10) focuses on the pride/humility issue, encouraging humility and encouraging repentance from pride and its preoccupation with greatness lest one face eternal punishment. The second triad (18:12-20) focuses on divine and human causes of repentance from sin, and also on the divine influence in resolution of conflict (18:19) and the divine and Christological role in resolution of conflict for the sake of Christ (18:20). The third triad (18:21-35) focuses on the demand for forgiveness of others and the eternal punishment for failure to extend it. Such focii clearly warrant a renaming of the discourse. The first triad (18:3-10) focuses on the need to repent of an attitude of pride. The second triad (18:12-20) focuses on the divine and human roles in repentance from sin, and also from the first triad's sin of pride. The focus on forgiveness in the third triad (18:21-35) is sparked by what happens in repentance from sin, even from the sin of pride. 'The Community Discourse' is a somewhat misleading description of Matthew's fourth discourse. Mt. 18 truly is a repentance discourse.

The Triad of Triads Structure of the Repentance Discourse of Matthew 18



(i) The second triad (Mt. 18:12-20)

Before considering the significance of this rereading of the discourse of Mt. 18, some additional comments are worth making about aspects of each of the three triads. The first has to do with the continuity that this posits between the discourse of Mt. 18 and Matthew's language of imitation prior to Mt. 18, his characterization of divine influence in human behavior, and his habit of describing things from both the divine perspective and the human perspective. Mt. 18:18 is a concrete expression of and continuation of the thought in 18:12-14 that repentance from sin is of divine origin. When a brother repents of his sin, this was from heaven; it was the activity of heaven that brought him towards that place of repentance. Given that conflict may sometimes arise from sin, Mt. 18:19-20 may sometimes also share in this characterization.

The middle triad also continues Matthew's imitative discourse. Coming as it does just before 18:15-17, Mt. 18:12-14 also serves, at least implicitly, as a basis for the imitative discourse of 18:15-17. Even this much is recognized by Davies and Allison's commentary when it says that "One is to seek reconciliation by bringing the wrongdoer to penitence. In other words, the offended brother is to imitate the shepherd of vv. 10-14 and go after the one stray sheep (cf. Thompson, p. 187).",³⁹³ though it takes the shepherd of the parable to be Jesus.³⁹⁴ Mt. 18:12-14 views repentance from the perspective of what happens on the divine level, and 18:15-17 views repentance from the perspective of what happens on the human level. Mt. 18:18 returns to the view of repentance from the perspective of what happens on the divine level, and thus

393. Ibid., p. 782.

394. Ibid., pp. 773-774.

sandwiches 18:15-17 between two characterizations of God that express one basic idea. God seeks out the lost and brings them to repentance, and with similar attitude the disciple should work to bring the one who sinned against him or her to repentance. Mt. 18:12-18, then, builds upon the encouragement to humility that was found in the first triad. Whereas one concerned with personal greatness would not seek out one who sinned, the heavenly shepherd himself, and those who humble themselves like him, would seek out a sinner with an eye towards his repentance.

The move from the divine role in repentance from sin (18:12-14) to the human role (18:15-17) and back to the divine role (18:18) is in continuity with Matthean practice. Mt. 5:39 may move from divine level description (τῷ πονηρῷ) to human level description. In Mt. 10:18-19, disciples are told not to worry about what they would say, for it would be 'the spirit of your Father' speaking through them. In the parable of the weeds and its explanation, it is the Son who sows the good seed, and the evil one who sowed weeds. In Mt. 15:1-15, Jesus moves from denunciation of what religious leaders do or do not do to the statement that such persons have not been planted by the Father. The move from description of what happens on the divine level to what happens on the human level, or vice versa, is found in different places before Mt. 18. Mt. 18:12-18 continues this notable and repeated feature of Matthean discourse. It does so on top of its continued emphasis on divine influence in human behavior.

This interpretation of the middle triad also sees no place for Mt. 18:18 dealing with an action of uncertain moral propriety, nor does it have 18:18 give the majority a power over a minority. Rather, Mt. 18:18 addresses, if only implicitly, the very sensible question of what

should be done when the sinner of Mt. 18:15-17 repents. If Mt. 18:18 is saying that heaven has brought the sinner to repentance, then Mt. 18:18 answers this question. Disciples should do as God has done and embrace the repentant sinner.

Davies and Allison say, "We take v. 18 to follow v. 17 closely. It does not apply to the actions described in vv. 15 and 16".³⁹⁵ This seems an odd comment to make. Mt. 18:15-17 presumably has four outcomes. The sinner repents after the first confrontation, after the second, after the third, or continues to hold fast to his sin, even after the sin's being brought before the ἐκκλησία. The passage is tightly constructed, and even if one were to want to make a comment about one of the first three outcomes, literarily it would be quite appropriate to wait until the description of the process is completed before commenting on different parts of it. Had Matthew's goal been to remark on what should happen in three of four possible outcomes of Mt. 18:15-17, that is, had his goal been to say what disciples should do if the sinner repents, the place for him to put such a remark would be right where he has Mt. 18:18. It accordingly seems odd, given that Strack-Billerbeck had only one example of binding and loosing dealing with a ban, that Davies and Allison's commentary would opt for Mt. 18:18 dealing with only one of the four outcomes, the one in which the sinner does not repent and in which the ban would be thought appropriate, and not the other three where the sinner repents.

Davies and Allison's position is even harder to endorse given that Mt. 18:15-17 gives no hint of the action of Mt. 18:15 being of uncertain moral propriety. Mt. 18:15 simply speaks of a

395. Ibid., p. 787.

brother sinning. There is not a hint of moral uncertainty in that; that the action is a sin is a given from the start of the process' description. But this cuts off another avenue for interpreting Mt. 18:18. If Mt. 18:15-17 has no uncertainty about the moral propriety of the sinner's action, then there is no need in Mt. 18:18 for some halakhic decision about the propriety of his action. The language of Mt. 18:15-17 discourages taking 18:18 as dealing with halakhic decisions, and as dealing with a ban or excommunication. This thesis provides a sensible alternative to this.

If God's action in Mt. 18:12-14 is the basis for the action of disciple(s) in Mt. 18:15-17, there is an additional consideration. In Mt. 18:12-14, the shepherd finds the sheep and is successful in its restoration. If the heavenly shepherd works in a sinner to bring him to repentance (18:12-14), one would expect that he would meet with similar success in a situation where one of his children obediently seeks the restoration of a brother from sin (18:15-17), in which case an excommunication or ban (18:18) would be unnecessary. Would it be more in keeping with this to interpret 18:18 as an extension of the shepherd's success? There is some attractiveness to this idea, but the process of Mt. 18:15-17 is also a process wherein one seeks to discern the true nature of a "brother". If the church is a *corpus mixtum* with some true "brothers" and some false ones, one might not be wise to judge too confidently just from such reasoning about how to think of the question of what situation Mt. 18:18 was primarily aimed at.

The new interpretation of Mt. 18:18 discourages members of the community from a sense of pride or superiority in regard to the repentant sinner. If his coming back from his sin happened from divine influence, so too is the majority's avoidance of sin due to God's work, and also its repentance from past sin (Mt. 7:11; 18:21-35). In both cases, for righteous members of the

community or the repentant sinner, each comes to the righteousness required for kingdom entrance through God's work. Members in the majority thus have no cause to deem themselves superior to the repentant sinner. Similarly, Mt. 18:19 discourages a member who concedes his demand in a conflict for the sake of peace from holding a grudge against the other party in the conflict. By emphasizing that the conflict's resolution comes from God's work in the person, the verse suggests that the continuation of the conflict may be due to the resistance of one or both parties to God's influence, and thus encourages each side to self-examination and consideration of whether the satisfaction of its demand is worth the loss of peace or harmony. If one party does drop its demand in the conflict for the sake for peace, Mt. 18:19 encourages him to view his concession as a submission to God's leading. Because he ultimately views his concession as an offering to God, he is discouraged from personal enmity towards the party with whom he was in conflict. Thus, the new interpretation of Mt. 18:18-20 encourages peace, humility, and absence of ill will in the community, even in situations of conflict. In this, the second triad continues the emphasis of the first triad's admonition to humility, and counteracts the attitude that sparked the discourse. It is also consistent with different statements of Jesus in the Gospel of John (Jn. 13:12-15, 34-35; 15:12-13; 17:11, 20-23).

Although the binding and loosing statement in Mt. 18:18 expresses Matthew's conviction that it is God who works in the sinner to bring him to repentance, there may also be a temporal element in the loosing of sin. As some who have confronted another person about some sin know, sometimes a person does not immediately repent upon confrontation. But, after some time and some reflection, the wrongdoer comes around and admits his or her wrong. It would

certainly be reasonable to think that the process of Mt. 18:15-17 would in some cases allow the sinner ample down time between the first and second confrontation and between the second and third confrontation in which he could ponder his action. Were he to change his mind in such down time and repent, his sin would be forgiven in that time of repentance before God, and there would be a temporal lag between heaven's loosing of the sin and disciples loosing it on earth. In such a case, it is quite sensible to use a periphrastic future perfect to state that what disciples loose from the offender has already been loosed from the offender in heaven. A pronounced temporal lag is not necessary though. Sometimes a person does repent immediately upon confrontation. In such a case, the order of loosing sin from heaven to earth is at least a logical order. If God works in the sinner at the time of confrontation to bring him to repentance, then the offender's loosing of the sin in response to the sinner's repentance follows, at least on the level of logical order, from God's having acted first.

One more comment is in order. No great difficulty for the interpretation of this thesis is posed from the question whether εἰς σέ was in the original text of Mt. 18:15 or not. If εἰς σέ was original, then a disciple would be able to actually forgive a sin that was committed against him or her. If it was not original, then the explanation for Mt. 18:18 would not be affected.

(ii) The third triad (Mt. 18:21-35)

In regard to understanding the third triad (18:21-35), one may notice one thing that the second triad does not do. It does not answer the question of how far God's patience extends. The parable of the lost sheep describes only one instance of a shepherd seeking out a lost sheep. But

what if the sheep gets lost everyday? Will the shepherd search for a sheep that strays daily? Mt. 18:12-20 describes God's willingness to seek out a sinner once, but it does not answer the question of how far his patience extends, or how many times the shepherd will venture out in search of the same sheep. The second triad thus sets up the question that the third triad addresses. How many times should a disciple forgive? Given that Mt. 18:12-20 makes God the reference point for the disciple's attitude towards a sinner, and that in the third triad Jesus answers Peter by again making God's action towards the sinner the basis for the disciple's willingness to forgive many times, Peter's question in 18:21 might be as much, or more, a question about God or God's patience than a reflection of Petrine aversion to forgiving many times (if Peter even had such an aversion). Peter might have been implicitly asking a question that would naturally arise from the second triad. How great is God's patience and forgiveness? If Peter is to imitate the heavenly shepherd's pursuit of a sinner, how many times would the shepherd venture forth for the same sheep?

Jesus' response in 18:21-35 is to continue the imitative discourse of the second triad (18:12-20). He does so specifically by describing how great God's forgiveness is to the disciple, and uses this for his exhortation that a brother should be forgiven far more than up to seven times. Particularly noticeable is that 18:21-35, like 18:18, has its own counterpart to the binding and loosing of 18:18. The sinner who comes to Peter in repentance (18:21) has already been forgiven by the Father, and thus his sin has already been loosed in heaven (18:18). Peter therefore should loose his sin on earth (18:22). But if Peter does not do so, if he refuses to

forgive the sinner, then his own sin will be bound to him (18:35) by the Father, who would do to Peter what the king had done to the unforgiving servant.

In Mt. 18:12-35, there are at least three examples of imitative discourse. Mt. 18:12-14 serves as the basis for the prescription in 18:15-17. If εἰς σέ is original to Mt. 18:15, the heavenly loosing that has already occurred in 18:18 when the offender comes to the offended for forgiveness carries with it the idea that the offended should be willing to loose sin if the offender comes to him seeking forgiveness. If the sinner's continued refusal to repent is an indication that God is not working in him to bring him to repentance or has withdrawn his influence, then the binding of the sin to the sinner in heaven is followed by disciples binding the sinner's sin to him on earth. These examples of imitative discourse in 18:12-17 and 18:18 then lead towards Peter's question of 18:21 about how far the disciple's forgiveness is to go. In his response to Peter, Jesus focuses again on God's own example, this time on how far God's forgiveness has been extended to the disciple. The second and third triads are thoroughly theological.

The characterization of the disciple as being like the servant who owed such a huge amount discourages Peter from using a brother's sin against him for Peter's own advantage. In respect to God, Peter and the repentant sinner would both be in the same position and ought to treat each other accordingly. There is no room for pride or for the disciple using the repentant sinner's sin to deem himself superior to the sinner. This third triad, like the second triad, encourages humility and discourages pride. The second triad does so by indicating that repentance comes from God. The third triad does it by holding up to Peter, to the repentant

sinner, and to Matthew's typical reader the great sin that each would have already committed against God.

(iii) The first triad (Mt. 18:3-10) and a new proposal for Mt. 18:10

The graph of the structure of the repentance discourse describes the first (18:3) and third (18:6-10) elements of the first triad with the phrase "Eternal punishment of Proud". Mt. 18:3, though, only says that if disciples do not change and become like little children, they would not enter the kingdom or reign of heaven. This is described with "Eternal punishment of Proud" because in Matthew not entering the kingdom and eternal punishment are two sides of the same coin (13:24-30, 37-43, 47-50; 25:31-46). Denying that someone enters one is an effective affirmation of his entering the other. The description of the triadic third element of the first triad with "Eternal Punishment of Proud" is based on the sensible assumption that, even if σκάνδαλα (18:7) can come in response to different sins, and even if the pronouncement of woe and condemnation in 18:6-7 is applicable to many sins, the sin that is particularly in view with such pronouncement and condemnation in 18:6-7 is the sin of preoccupation with greatness (18:1), the sin of pride, against which Jesus speaks in 18:3 and whose opposite, humility, he encourages in 18:4-5. Since 18:3 talks of not entering the kingdom, which entails eternal punishment, and since 18:6-7 pronounces eternal punishment through its description of a punishment worse than forced drowning and its pronouncement of woe, one is encouraged to think of the two verses sandwiched by 18:3 and 18:6-7 as dealing with eternal glory.

The examination of 18:4-5 supports this idea. Mt. 18:4 speaks of being the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, which would naturally involve being in the eschatological kingdom. Similarly, those who receive the Son (18:4-5) are part of or enter the eschatological kingdom (cf. 10:32-33, 42; 25:31-46; cf. also 19:29).

Mt. 18:6-7, though is part of a larger unit. Part of the incentive for thinking that these two verses have pride particularly in view comes not only from what is before these verses, but also from how they function in the triadic unit of which they are part (Mt. 18:6-10). The first two verses of this unit tell of eschatological punishment and woe for those who cause σκάνδαλα. Mt. 18:7-9 tell of the fact that one must cut oneself off from what σκανδαλίζει or face eternal punishment. Mt. 18:10 focuses on one specific area where this fact is applicable, the area of pride. It warns against the sin of despising a little one, an action that is a hallmark of a proud heart concerned with greatness. The sin of 18:10 is one of the sins that Mt. 18:7-9 covers, and a sin that, being one of the σκάνδαλα or a source of it (18:6-7), merits Jesus' declaration of punishment and woe (18:6-7). The "Ὁς δ' ἂν σκανδαλίσῃ ἓνα τῶν μικρῶν τούτων τῶν πιστευόντων εἰς ἐμέ" in 18:6 should be seen as an outflow or result of a prideful person despising a little one (18:10), treating a little one as having lesser value or with lack of respect, or doing something similar that would cause or lead to σκάνδαλον, maybe causing the 'little one' to feel slighted or wronged, in response to which the 'little one' might be tempted to retaliate or do wrong. Given these considerations, this thesis' description of the first triad (18:3-10) is defensible from the text of the triad itself.

One may notice the general direction of thinking in all three triads of the discourse. In both the second and third triad, God's character or activity dictates how the disciple should act. In the first triad, Jesus commends humility and denounces pride, but this is not only the demand of Jesus. The sub-triad of the third element (18:6-10) is completed by a warning not to look down on one of these little ones (18:10), and the reason given for not doing this has to do with the Father. The angels of the little ones see the face of the Father. With many commentators, one might take the statement about the angels of little ones always seeing the face of 'my father' in heaven as an indication of the importance or value of little ones to 'my Father',³⁹⁶ which would be an indication that 'my Father' does not endorse the attitude of one who would despise such a little one. One might see in this another example of imitative discourse. Since such a little one is important to the Father, the little one should be important to the disciple.

But it also seems that there is an unstated assumption in Mt. 18:10. The warning against despising a little one is given because 'my Father' would judge a person who does such a thing. Interpreting Mt. 18:10 with such an assumption makes rhetorical sense of the text. It appropriately follows from the second part of the sub-triad (18:8-9), which describes in plain language that the disciple must avoid sin even if at great cost, or face eternal punishment. Coming right after the description of this choice, Mt. 18:10 encourages the disciple not to embrace the sin of preoccupation with greatness, the sin in which a little one would be despised,

396. Cf. Hagner, Donald A., *Matthew 14-28*, p. 525; France, R. T., *Matthew NICNT*, p. 687; Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C., *Matthew 8-18*, p. 770; Luz, Ulrich, *Matthew 8-20*, p. 443 refers to "God's special concern for the little ones, for the humble and despised"; Witherington, III, Ben, *Matthew*, pp. 347-348.

through its assumption that the Father will judge those who embrace such an attitude of pride, or would give his consent to such judgment.

The demand for humility is accordingly not only Jesus' demand. It is the demand of 'my Father'. With this one arrives at the conclusion that every triad of the repentance discourse makes God's action, character, or demand its reference point. In the first triad, it is his demand for humility to which the disciple responds. In the second triad, it is his pursuit of the lost sheep that the disciple imitates. In the third triad, it is his great patience and great forgiveness that the disciple imitates. In every triad, it is the disciple who responds to God. The direction of the whole discourse is thus quite incongruent with at least one traditional interpretation of Mt. 18:18, which asks us to believe that disciples bind God, that he responds to their dictate or action rather than the reverse. Further, it is notable that refusal to submit to God's demand in the first triad and refusal to imitate him in the third both lead to eternal punishment. The message from such sections is clear. Only those who imitate or obey 'my Father' shall have eternal glory, only those who are true sons of the Father (5:48).

Although 18:8-9 and 18:10 have a coherent place in the repentance discourse, it is appropriate that these two parts of the third member (18:6-10) of the first triad (18:3-10) come just before the second triad. Mt. 18:8-9 indicates that the disciple's attitude towards sin in his own life should be one willing to go to great lengths to avoid sin. Shortly thereafter, in 18:12-17, the implicit imitative discourse encourages the disciple to extend this attitude towards others, being willing to go to great lengths with an aim of an errant sinner coming back from his own sin. Mt. 18:10 speaks against the attitude of pride that would despise a little one, and thus

continues the emphasis of the first triad on discouraging preoccupation with greatness and encouraging humility. At the same time, by indicating the importance that a little one has to 'my father' in heaven whose face angels see, Mt. 18:10 leads into the parabolic description of how important even a little one as errant sheep is to the father. Mt. 18:8-9 and 18:10 thus act as appropriate final elements of the first triad and an appropriate lead-in to the second triad.

This dual function of Mt. 18:10, as an ending of the first triad and yet as an appropriate lead-in towards the second might account for why the manuscript of Codex Sinaiticus begins a new unit with ekthesis at the beginning of 18:10; much of the omicron of Ὁρᾶτε apart outside of a line formed by initial letters of the fourth column of the page of the manuscript. Codex Freerianus (GA 032) also has an ekthesis. Much of the omicron Ὁρᾶτε of 18:10 is outside of the line formed by initial letters of the page. Its previous line ends with a raised dot. However, Codex Freerianus also has just after 18:10 "ἦλθεν γὰρ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου σῶσαι τὸ ἀπολῶλος", which would have understandably influenced someone to include Mt. 18:10 with what comes after it. That text, though, was not original to Matthew. The unit delimitation of Codex Freerianus for 18:10 should consequently be ignored if no other relevant information is available. Codex Vaticanus has no break between the last word of Mt. 18:9 and the initial Ὁρᾶτε of Mt. 18:10. Thus, of the unit delimitation of these manuscripts, only Codex Sinaiticus presents an objection in the area of unit delimitation, and one does not feel compelled by it. Contra Codex Sinaiticus and many modern commentators, the triadic structure of the repentance discourse indicates that Mt. 18:10 is better grouped with verses that precede it.

III. The Periphrastic Future Perfect Verbal Forms of Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18

Though the history of scholarship reveals some disagreement about the order of binding and loosing, much of the preceding discussion has been built on the view that the periphrastic future perfects of 16:19b-c and 18:18 indicate that the binding or loosing order is heaven first (even if only on the level of logical order³⁹⁷ in many cases) and then earth. This section will attempt to give some defense of this view that the logical order of binding and loosing is from heaven to earth. It thus seems better to translate Mt. 18:19b-c and 18:18 with "will have been bound ... will have been loosed" rather than "will be bound ... will be loosed". The first section will put forth a positive argument for a heaven-first order. The second section will address a challenge presented by Stanley Porter and his verbal aspect theory for a heaven-first order. The third section will examine challenges from others.

397. Note the comments of Fanning (Fanning, Buist. (1990). "Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek"., p. 112):

One element of meaning in the perfect which is clear from a study of usage is the dual 'time'-reference inherent in virtually all its occurrences. The perfect forms, with few exceptions, juxtapose two related situations: an occurrence and a consequence of that occurrence. Juxtaposing these produces an inherent temporal sense, since the occurrence is anterior to its consequence. Although one could regard this anteriority as, at its heart, a *logical* rather than chronological relationship, it works its way out in actual expression as a *temporal* one, producing a dual time-reference of 'past and present' together.

1. Arguments in Favor of a Heaven First Order of Binding and Loosing

Two important factors in the claim of a heaven-first order in Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18 are the dual temporal reference that usually marks the perfect tense and the paucity or absence of future perfects in most verbs in Koine Greek. One factor that should not have a significant impact in favor of an earth-first order, but that has been used in arguing for an earth-first order, comes from Mt. 18:19. This section will argue that Mt. 18:19 does not require an earth-first order in Mt. 18:18 and that the perfect tense and its use in the periphrastic future perfect in Mt. 18:18 favor interpreting Mt. 18:18 as having a heaven-first order.

(a) Mt. 18:19 and Its Use of Πάλιν Does Not Favor an Earth-First Order in Mt. 18:18

An initial question needing attention in considering the relation of Mt. 18:19 and 18:18 is whether the order of events in Mt. 18:19 should have a significant influence on understanding the order of events in Mt. 18:18. One reason supporting an answer in the affirmative is that the very first word of Mt. 18:19 is *πάλιν*. This word indicates that Mt. 18:19 repeats something of Mt. 18:18, but its significance is a matter of contention.

France says that the "normal English translation" of *πάλιν* as "again" in 18:19 "would be misleading here since it would suggest that what is about to be said is a repetition of something Jesus has already said; *πάλιν* functions here rather to add a further significant saying to the one

just given (cf. similar uses of *πάλιν* to introduce an additional and comparable statement or event whose content is nonetheless new in 4:7, 8; 5:33; 13:45, 47, etc.)."³⁹⁸ Davies and Allison say "Whether *πάλιν* here equals *‘ôd* and means 'again' (as in 19.24) or (as in 4.8) carries the sense of the Aramaic *tûb* = 'then' (so MHT, p. 32) is unclear. In any case, *πάλιν* κ.τ.λ. links originally separate traditions."³⁹⁹ Morris says that "Again links this on as a fresh start; it is not a continuation of the teaching he has just been giving."⁴⁰⁰

It is notable that France moves away from the "normal English translation" of *πάλιν* as "again" because he perceives there to be significant discontinuity between the saying of Mt. 18:18 and 18:19, a discontinuity affirmed by Morris. If the two sayings are so discontinuous, then in France's view we should adopt a different interpretation of *πάλιν* than the normal "again". Even if one were to grant that his examples and the example of Davies and Allison are adequate in this regard, the admission of the normality of "again" as the translation reduces the plausibility of his interpretation, and actually presents an objection to the interpretation of France and others. Since what he views as the alternative is even less plausible for him, it is a lesser of two implausibilities in his eyes. Better than both, though, would be an interpretation that gives *πάλιν* its normal meaning and that connects Mt. 18:18 to 18:19 while doing justice to the text of both verses. This is to move in the direction of denying the assertion of Davies and Allison's commentary that in 18:18 and 18:19 there are two separate traditions. Much of the impetus for seeing two different traditions, outside of a particular source critical view of much of the material

398. France, R. T., *Matthew NICNT*, p. 695.

399. Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C., *Matthew 8-18*, p. 787.

400. Morris, Leon, *Matthew*, p. 469.

in Matthew, comes from the apparent difference in content between the two verses. It is that difference which has been a principal factor in the judgment that there is a joining of two different traditions. When that difference disappears, as it does in the interpretation of Mt. 18:18-19 in this thesis, so does much of the basis for thinking that there is in 18:18-19 the joining of two originally separate traditions.

Regarding the question of Davies and Allison whether *πάλιν* "(as in 4.8) carries the sense of the Aramaic *tûb* = 'then'" may be of some interest from a historical perspective if one grants that there was an independent oral tradition that Matthew received and here puts to use, but it seems unimportant for interpreting the text of Mt. 18:19 as we have it. His frequent use of *τότε* and *γάρ* expresses his preference for these two words as a temporal indicator or logical connector. Even if *πάλιν* could be used in these ways, he would likely have used one of these two other words were temporal indication or logical connection his purpose. Matthew chose the Greek *πάλιν*, and that is the word with which one must deal.

France's argument needs more attention. Evaluation of passages he cites shows that the interpretation of *πάλιν* as 'again' in Mt. 18:19 should not be as easily set aside as happens in his commentary. France cites specifically five verses in which *πάλιν* occurs,⁴⁰¹ but aside from the one in 18:19, there are eleven others.⁴⁰² None of these other occurrences of *πάλιν* in Matthew are adequate to avoid a sense of repetition in Mt. 18:19. In 4:7 it is repetition of the appeal to scripture, that again something is written. In 5:33, it is repetition of a statement of contrast

401. Mt. 4:7, 8; 5:33; 13:45, 47.

402. Mt. 19:24; 20:5; 21:36; 22:1, 4; 26:42, 43, 44 (2x), 72; 27:50.

between what was said and what Jesus says; *πάλιν* in 5:33 also introduces a new set of three such statements. In 13:45, 47, it is the repetition of 'kingdom or reign of heaven is like' comparison; the repetition of parable comparison is still present even if the parables themselves are different. The statement in 19:24 that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God reiterates at least much of the idea that it is not easy for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. In 20:5, it is the repetition of the vineyard master going out, and the repetition of servants being sent in 21:36 and 22:4. It is the repetition of speaking in parable(s) in 22:1. In 26:72, it is the repetition of denial, in 27:50 the repetition of crying out, in 26:42, 44 the repetition of going away and praying, in 26:43 of finding disciple(s) sleeping, and in 26:44 of praying the same thing.

Always in these uses of *πάλιν* there is something being repeated. France's appeal to some of Matthew's usage of *πάλιν* does not help his case much. Matthew's usage of *πάλιν* supports the idea that the *πάλιν* of Mt. 18:19 repeats in some way an idea or a sense of something said before it. He says,

Verses 19 and 20, which are bound together by the "two of you" / "two or three" motif, do not directly link up with the discussion of dealing with sin in the community, and may well have originally circulated separately from the context in which we now find them, but the "moreover" by which they are introduced indicates that Matthew intends us to see a connection, and the twin motifs of "on earth" and "in heaven" more explicitly link vv. 18 and 19 together.⁴⁰³

In addition to observing that this thesis has no need of Matthew bringing together two separate traditions in Mt. 18:18-20, it is not clear that France's explanation is adequate. In Mt.

403. France, R. T., *Matthew NICNT*, pp. 695-696.

18:18, the disciples do that which heaven does logically or temporally prior or posterior to their action, but 18:19 is supposedly indicating that they ask for heaven to do something and that it does it. The content of both verses is significantly different.

On top of this, France thinks of a heaven-first order in Mt. 18:18 and an earth-first order in Mt. 18:19. There would be some plausibility to thinking that, if both verses had the same order, *πάλιν* would be used for emphasizing that for two different activities, the order is the same in both cases. The repetition indicated by *πάλιν* would be that of order. But this is not available to France who thinks of heaven responding to prayer of Mt. 18:19, at least if he does not contend that the prayer itself was caused nor brought about by heaven and then subsequently ratified by heaven.⁴⁰⁴ If the order of Mt. 18:18 and Mt. 18:19 are different, then the heaven/earth contrast of both verses would be an unconvincing explanation for the use of *πάλιν* in Mt. 18:19 in light of Matthew's usage elsewhere.

Davies and Allison do think of the order in both verses being the same, and this at least can give some rationale for the *πάλιν*. They say that "Matthew has evidently added v. 19 and the next verse to the section on reproof. As it stands, v. 19 clarifies v. 18 by stating that agreement among believers on earth will have its sure effect in heaven."⁴⁰⁵ Although this can do some justice to the sense of repetition that *πάλιν* has elsewhere in Matthew, Davies and Allison go further and advance an argument that this thesis thinks should be flipped around.

404. Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 694-697.

405. Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C., *Matthew 8-18*, p. 788.

Davies and Allison appropriately contend that understanding of order in one verse in Mt. 18:18-19 should have a significant impact on understanding order in the other verse.

In 18:18 ὅσα ἐὰν δήσητε ... ἔσται δεδεμένα κ.τ.λ. is immediately followed by this: 'Again, I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven'. Here God's action is indisputably subsequent to human [decision⁴⁰⁶]. Is this not a clue to understanding 18:18, and near proof that the future perfects can be pressed too far?⁴⁰⁷

Davies and Allison are similar to Derrett, who appeals to what he regards as ratification in 18:19 in support of his interpretation of 18:18.⁴⁰⁸ Notice, though, the way this argument works. Davies and Allison say that "God's action is indisputably subsequent to human [decision]", and then suggest or indicate that the movement from human action to divine action in 18:19 should influence how one understands the periphrastic future perfects in 18:18. But far from thinking that God's action is "indisputably subsequent" to human decision in 18:19, this thesis has made a case that the reverse is true, and that the interpretation of Davies and Allison's commentary is inadequate for 18:19 taken apart from 18:18.

Since Davies and Allison are right to contend that interpretation of one may influence interpretation of the other, Davies and Allison's argument may be turned on its head, and the argument be made to work in the other direction if there is good linguistic grounds to translate the future perfect periphrastics as having perfect force. If 18:18 says that what is bound or loosed *will have been* bound or loosed, then the connecting πάλιν in 18:19, and the juxtaposition of the two verses right next to each other, would support the contention that the heaven-first order of

406. Davies and Allison's commentary has an "i" between the "e" and "c" in error.

407. Ibid., p. 638.

408. Derrett, "Binding and Loosing", p. 113.

18:18 carries over into 18:19. This would be a significant further argument in support of the alternative proposal of this thesis, that 18:19 is saying that two conflicting parties coming to a resolution is the result of the Father working in one or both of them. If there are good grounds to think that the periphrastic future perfects in 18:18 should be translated as having a perfect force when 18:19 is not taken into account, then this is even further cause for denying the claim that God's action in 18:19 is "indisputably subsequent" to human decision.

Or one might go in the opposite direction. Davies and Allison advocate moving from understanding of 18:19 to close in on an interpretation of 18:18. Fine. One can then marshal the arguments put forth in this thesis for a heaven-first order of Mt. 18:19 and use this in support of a heaven-first order of Mt. 18:18. If it works for Davies and Allison, it ought to work for this thesis. This thesis has argued that the action of heaven in 18:19 is prior to the action of earth, not "indisputably subsequent" to the action on earth. Since this heaven-first order of Mt. 18:19 allows this thesis to make the same argument from Mt. 18:19 to Mt. 18:18 that Davies and Allison try to make from Mt. 18:19 to 18:18, Davies and Allison's argument from 18:19 to 18:18 is nullified. Davies and Allison are right to see a connection between Mt. 18:18 and 18:19, but wrong to contend that Mt. 18:19 can adjudicate the order of the two verses. It can not, because the language of Mt. 18:19 admits as possibilities a heaven-first order (God brings about reconciliation or is involved in bringing it about) and an earth-first order (God answers prayer). What can adjudicate the issue of order is the periphrastic future perfects of Mt. 18:18. Therefore, if our understanding of order in one verse is to impact our understanding of order in the other, then the order of Mt. 18:18 should impact how we understand order in Mt. 18:19.

That said, the arguments already put forth in this thesis are adequate to favor a heaven-first order in Mt. 18:19 without appeal to Mt. 18:18. It is not necessary in this thesis to have evidence about order in Mt. 18:18 override evidence about order in Mt. 18:19, or vice-versa. The previous chapter provided evidence for a heaven-first order in Mt. 18:19 that did not depend on evidence for a heaven-first order in Mt. 18:18. This chapter provides evidence for a heaven-first order in Mt. 18:18 that is not dependent on evidence for a heaven-first order in Mt. 18:19.

(b) The Greek Perfect Tense and the Use of a Periphrastic Future Perfect in Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18

It is generally recognized by Greek grammarians that the perfect tense in Greek generally indicates a present state that is the result of a past action. It usually has a dual temporal reference. This section will use quotes from Dan Wallace, but his views are generally in agreement with that of other Greek grammarians. Wallace says that "The force of the perfect tense is simply that it describes an event that, completed in the past (we are speaking of the perfect indicative here), has results existing in the present time (i.e., in relation to the time of the speaker). Or, as Zerwick puts it, the perfect tense is used for 'indicating not the past action as such but the present 'state of affairs' resulting from the past action.'"⁴⁰⁹ Mantey has a similar view of the perfect generally having a dual temporal reference, and his quotations from Kuhner, Smyth, Hadley and Allen,

409. Wallace, Daniel B., *Greek Grammar Beyond Basics*, p. 573.

Goodwin, Burton, Robertson, and Jelf support this view of the perfect generally having a dual temporal reference.⁴¹⁰

Although Wallace's taxonomy of perfects recognizes what he calls normative uses, he also refers to what he calls collapsed perfects, which "are those that collapse (or suppress) either the internal or external aspect, because of contextual or lexical interference, respectively", and to what he calls specialized perfects, which he defines as "rare uses that detour from the normal usage in a more pronounced way than the collapsed perfects do." Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18 are not collapsed perfects in Wallace's taxonomy, but appear to contain what he would call specialized perfects. Although his work makes no reference to Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18 in its scripture index, his section in which he treats what he labels "Proleptic (Futuristic) Perfect" does tell the reader to cf. Jn. 20:23, a verse which has significant similarity to Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18. It is notable, though, that even Wallace in his 'Proleptic (Futuristic) Perfect' definition says that "The perfect can be used to refer to a state resulting from an antecedent action that is future from the time of speaking. ... This usage occurs in the apodosis of a conditional clause (either explicit or implicit) and depends on the time of the verb in the protasis. The proleptic perfect is quite rare."⁴¹¹ It is noticeable that even in this rare usage, Wallace still thinks of a state resulting from an antecedent event. The dual temporal reference remains even in this rare usage, according to Wallace, and the usage is rare.

410. Mantey, "Mistranslation of the Perfect Tense", pp. 244-245; cf. also Dayton, "John 20:23; Matthew 16:19 and 18:18", pp. 78-79.

411. Wallace, Daniel B., *Greek Grammar Beyond Basics*, p. 581.

In moving from the perfect indicative to the perfect participle, one may note that there continues to be a general dual temporal reference. In his section on time in participles, Wallace remarks that "Generally speaking, the tenses behave just as they do in the indicative. The only difference is that now the point of reference is the controlling verb, not the speaker. Thus, time in participles is relative (or dependent), while in the indicative it is absolute (or independent). ... The *perfect* participle also indicates antecedent time."⁴¹² In his section on aspect in participles, he says, "As for the participle's *aspect*, it still functions for the most part like its indicative counterparts."⁴¹³

Wallace's view of the perfect indicative and perfect participle is similar to other grammarians, and it is significant for interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18. The temporal reference of the ἔσται in these passages is the same as the time of the event of the protases in the verses. Coming as they do right after the occurrences of ἔσται, the perfect participles are adverbial and retain their force of indicating a present state resulting from an action prior in some sense to the ἔσται, that is, antecedent in some way to the event of the protases. Thus, the action of the apodoses of Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18 (the action of binding or loosing in heaven), is logically or temporally antecedent to the action of the protases (the binding or loosing on earth). Such an interpretation does not depend on calling the construction of ἔσται + perfect participle a periphrastic future perfect and taking it as a substitute for a future perfect form. There is no good

412. Ibid., p. 614.

413. Ibid., p. 615.

contextual, grammatical, or syntactical reason for interpreting the perfect participles in Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18 as only referring to a state and not also indicating an antecedent action.

This is the conclusion that is reached if the ἔσται and the perfect participle are taken individually and not treated as one construction that was intended to be a substitute for a monolectic verb. Yet it is still true that the 'ἔσται + perfect participle' construction in Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18 is a periphrastic future perfect construction. Wallace indicates that the periphrastic participle is called so because "it is a *round-about* way of saying what could be expressed by a single verb" and later remarks that "various verb-participle combinations are used to constitute a single finite verb tense".⁴¹⁴ Given the rarity of the future perfect in Hellenistic Greek,⁴¹⁵ there is much justification for taking a periphrastic future perfect as the equivalent of a future perfect. Given the paucity or absence of future perfects (see the section on 18:19 above), Fanning remarks that "In the NT this periphrastic substitutes entirely for the monolectic future perfect forms which were fading from usage. Even the periphrastics are rare (6 uses), since the future perfect is a specialized sense. These denote the basic sense of the perfect (a condition produced by an antecedent occurrence) moved into future time."⁴¹⁶ One may notice that two-thirds of those six uses (if Lk. 12:52 is a periphrastic) in the NT are in the binding and loosing statements of 16:19b-c and 18:18, which would make the periphrastic future perfect a very rare construction in

414. Ibid., p. 647.

415. Accordance searches for the future perfect in texts of Josephus, of Rahlfs' LXX material, of apostolic fathers, and of NA 27 gave only Josephus *Ant.* 18:203 and Heb. 8:11.

416. Fanning, "Verbal Aspect in NT Greek", p. 322. It appears that Fanning's count would include Mt. 16:19 (2x); 18:18 (2x); Heb. 2:13; Lk. 12:52. The author of the present thesis is not convinced that Lk. 12:52 is to be taken as a periphrastic, though.

the NT outside of these two passages. This adds much plausibility to taking the periphrastic future perfects of Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18 as two-word equivalents of finite future perfect forms. In that case, Wallace's statements about the perfect indicative would apply to Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18. The perfect of the apodoses in Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18 would indicate a state resulting from an action logically or temporally prior to the event of the protasis. There would be a heaven-first order.

Although the NT does not have many examples of periphrastic future perfects, an analysis of examples outside of the NT provides some confirmation to this view of the order of Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18. In Gen. 30:33 (LXX), for example, the periphrastic future construction *κεκλεμμένον ἔσται* clearly has a dual temporal reference for the supposed situation to which it would apply. There is not room here to explore many future perfects and periphrastic future perfects outside of the New Testament, but the results of Dayton's study in which he did evaluate over ninety future perfects outside of the New Testament provides some support to this thesis's view of Mt. 16:19-c and 18:18. In article in which he summarizes some of his results, Dayton says that he

is of the opinion that of the 95 examples of the future perfect which he has examined, the literal significance of an act already completed in the future with enduring results is quite clear in 58 instances. In 16 more cases it seems necessary for one reason or another to reckon with an intensive element. And in the remaining 21 usages there are problems that deserved special consideration.⁴¹⁷

Of the ninety-five, he indicates that fifty-four were "simple forms", that eight were "compound non-periphrastics", and that thirty-three were periphrastics. Of thirty-three

417. Dayton, "John 20:23; Matthew 16:19 and 18:18", p. 87.

occurrences of what he deemed periphrastics (or of those thirty-three with eight occurrences of what he thought of as compound non-periphrastics), he says that

It was observed that these were distributed somewhat evenly between the figurative and literal passages. Though there are interesting trends observable in such a study there appears to be nothing about the periphrastic idea, *per se*, that would determine the translation of a given passage as figurative, though it might conceivably increase the likelihood of such a use.⁴¹⁸

Without going into all of his passages, Dayton's results do give some confirmation to this thesis's interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18, though his results also warrant some caution. It is notable that he does think all three passages have a heaven-first order.

Not all interpreters have accepted his conclusion. Porter, for example, thinks that indicative tenses do not grammaticalize temporal reference, and accordingly that participles do not indicate relative time. Cadbury, Derrett, and Davies and Allison are similar to Porter in his *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament, with Reference to Tense and Mood*.⁴¹⁹ Porter's argument for the Greek indicative tense largely depends on examples where an indicative tense is used in a sentence that refers to a time other than that with which that tense is usually associated. But this is not the only hurdle to interpretation of a heaven-first order. Even Fanning, who would later not be convinced of Porter's claim about the Greek indicative verbal form, says that Mt.

16:19 and 18:18

have engendered some discussion over the sense of the future perfect in Greek. The grammar does not require that these denote the sense of action 'already determined' in heaven *before* Peter and the apostolic company act. Instead, in bolstering the position of leaders in the Christian community, these verses

418. Ibid., p. 88.

419. Porter, Stanley E., *Verbal Aspect in NT Greek*.

emphasize the *permanence* of their actions: whatever they decide will be confirmed in heaven.⁴²⁰

Fanning thought that the Greek indicative verbal form was generally used with a double sense of aspect and temporal reference, yet his interpretation of Mt. 16:19 and 18:18 shows that this view of the Greek verbal form was not sufficient to bring him to a heaven-first order. Though it is necessary to overcome Porter's challenge, this does not necessarily bring one to a heaven-first order in Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18.

One might appeal here to other scholars. Cadbury, Derrett, and Davies and Allison point to examples from which it is argued that a conditional clause combined with a future form of εἰμί adjacent to an adjectival perfect participle need not mean that the event of the protasis of the conditional clause is posterior to an event of the apodosis having a future form of εἰμί and perfect participle (for examples from Cadbury, see below). Outside of Porter, many commentators do not deny that the perfect usually has a dual temporal reference. They rather argue from examples that in particular cases it need not indicate a prior action. In this way, room is made (so they would like one to think) for the order of binding and loosing in Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18 to be from earth to heaven. In such an argument, much depends on what can be concluded from such examples.

Part of the reason for appealing to such examples may be due to scholars already having decided on the meaning of binding and loosing, and, not finding the order from heaven to earth to make the best sense of such meaning, they have opted for examples that allow the normal force of the perfect participle or periphrastic future perfect to be avoided. This seems a good

420. Fanning, "Verbal Aspect in NT Greek", pp. 322-323.

explanation for binding and loosing as dealing with halakhic interpretation of scripture. Having come to a consensus conclusion that the binding and loosing sayings are granting power to Peter or disciples to make decisions or judgments that would be bound in heaven, taking the periphrastic future perfect verbs as indicating prior divine action would not make the best sense, unless the scholar thought of this as happening through some special revelation to disciples. If the scholar did think of the future perfect periphrastic forms as indicating an assured and adequate revelation to disciples for their halakhic decisions, then there would not be a need to discount the verb forms. But many scholars taking a consensus interpretation of binding and loosing do not seem to think the passage is a promise that such revelation would be granted. They think of binding and loosing by Peter or disciples as preceding divine action. In light of this, their view of binding and loosing would force them to discount the periphrastic future verb forms if such forms were significant linguistically. Fanning's wording seems amenable to this interpretation. It is notable that he puts his statement in the negative: "The grammar does not require that these denote the sense of action 'already determined' in heaven *before* Peter and the apostolic company act."⁴²¹ Fanning's language does not deny that the grammar is consistent with the heavenly action preceding earthly action, and it seems that he here posits Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18 as being exceptions to his general view of the perfect.

Given the confidence with which the consensus interpretation of binding and loosing is put forth, it is not too hard to suspect (or more than suspect) that such verb forms were ignored not so much because they really are insignificant, but because to think of them as significant

421. Ibid., pp. 322-323.

would clash with the scholar's view of binding and loosing. Suggesting that this process may have been at work is not to suggest that this thesis adopts a similar argumentative model. This thesis is not saying that because binding and loosing have a certain meaning, the periphrastic future perfects must be fit into the limits circumscribed by that meaning, even if the linguistic evidence has to be dragged into those limits kicking and screaming. This thesis examines the linguistic issue on its own, and such an examination demonstrates that the best interpretation of the periphrastic future perfects is that the heavenly action precedes the earthly action. Taking these two issues separately also does not mean that they are not interrelated. Scholars have appropriately seen that what one thinks of binding and loosing may affect how one views the periphrastic future perfects. In this respect, this thesis avoids a tension that affects other interpretations of Mt. 16:19 and 18:18. If the linguistic argument of these periphrastic future perfects that is presented in this thesis is correct, then interpretations of binding and loosing that are rejected in this thesis are less plausible, because they must ignore the significance of the periphrastic future perfects. There is no need to ignore the significance of the periphrastic future perfects in the new interpretation of Mt. 18:18 offered in this thesis.

(c) Matthew's Choice of the Periphrastic Future Perfect in Light of the Available Verbal Forms for an Earth-First Order

In addition to the argument derived from the perfect tense generally implying an event that is prior in some sense, an argument may be made from the unlikelihood of Matthew's using a periphrastic future perfect given the verbal forms that were available for him to use if his intention were to indicate an earth-first order of binding and loosing. Here, the views of France

and Carson will be given, and some analysis will also be included. France says, "Despite frequent statements of commentators that perfect forms in *koine* Greek do not always carry a perfect sense, I remain convinced that the choice of verb form is significant here. If Matthew had wished to use future passives he could have done so; his choice of the periphrastic future perfect form, consistently maintained for the two relevant verbs in both passages, suggests that he wished to say something different"⁴²² France is then right to observe that understanding the perfects to indicate that things bound on earth would "subsequently be found in heaven to have been bound (by means of their binding on earth)" is a view that not would not differ much "From the sense of a simple future passive"; he then says that "It would be more appropriate to the future perfect form to understand that things bound on earth will already have been bound in heaven prior to the earthly decision; and since this offers a meaning more clearly distinct from that of the simple future passive which Matthew avoided, it seems more likely that this was what he intended."⁴²³

France is supported by usage of λύω and δέω. Both δέω and λύω are used in future passive indicative forms, and so it would have been available to Matthew to use a future passive form in the binding and loosing statements. This is clear from the occurrences of such verbs in NA27, Rahlfs' LXX, Josephus, and Lightfoot and Harmer's Apostolic Fathers (see references below). The future passive indicative of λύω occurs four times in such a corpus,⁴²⁴ and the future

422. France, R. T., *Evangelist and Teacher*, p. 247.

423. Ibid., p. 247.

424. 2 Pet. 3:10, 12; Rev. 20:7; Sir. 28:2.

active indicative of λύω occurs six times.⁴²⁵ The future passive indicative of δέω occurs five times in the corpus, all in the LXX,⁴²⁶ and its future active indicative occurs eight times, all but two of which are in the LXX.⁴²⁷ Such evidence indicates that it would have been open to Matthew to use both a future passive indicative of λύω and a future passive indicative of δέω had he wanted to express the idea that heaven's binding and loosing is a response to earth's binding and loosing. France's point thus seems on target.

Carson's argument is similar to France yet different, and the two arguments are complementary. After his attribution to Turner and Zerwick of the claim that "where finite perfects have some force other than the normal perfect in the NT, they tend to be in well known-stereotyped forms", Carson remarks that "Likewise, when the perfect has an aorist force (Zerwick, pars. 288-89; as at 13:46), there are normally good reasons for it, as when the verb is defective and has no aorist form (cf. further discussion in BDF, parts. 340ff.)."⁴²⁸ Concluding that "Where questions dealing strictly with Greek syntax are asked, it seems impossible to reach a firm decision, because there are too many clear instances where perfects, whether finite or participial, have something other than perfect force", he then heads into a convincing argument. "But where paradigmatic questions are asked—Why was this word or syntax used instead of something else?—we can make some progress."⁴²⁹ Carson says in regard to Jn. 20:23 that "the

425. Book of Job 5:20; Isa. 5:27; 1 Clem. 56:9; Phila. 8:1; Josephus Antiq. 5:290; 13:205

426. Judg. 16:6, 10, 13; Nah. 3:10; Isa. 43:14.

427. Acts 21:11; Judg. 15:13; 16:5; Book of Job 39:10; 40:26, 29; Ezek. 3:25; Dan. 4:32; Josephus Antiq. 12:299

428. Carson, D. A., *Matthew 13-28*, p. 372.

429. Ibid., p. 372.

Greek perfects must be taken as retaining their normal force as perfects, because both verbs have acceptable present and future tenses used elsewhere: neither verb exhibits a preferential pattern for the perfect."⁴³⁰ He says of δέω that evidence for it is "ambiguous; it often occurs as a perfect participle in the NT, sometimes as an aorist participle, never as a present participle; so one might hold that its perfect-participle form has purely adjectival or present force in some instances—a debatable point."⁴³¹ But with λύω he says that it, or the evidence for it, is "unambiguous. *Lyō* has a full range of forms, and it is difficult to see why Matthew did not use either the future or the present participle in a periphrastic future if that was all that he meant. This result spills over onto *deō* ('I bind'), since the two verbs are so tightly linked in these verses."⁴³²

Carson's view is supported by a survey of participles of λύω and δέω in NA27, Rahlfs LXX, Lightfoot and Harmer's Apostolic Fathers, and Josephus. The perfect participle of δέω occurs abundantly in the NT⁴³³ and Josephus,⁴³⁴ and has a number of occurrences in the LXX⁴³⁵ and apostolic fathers.⁴³⁶ The aorist participle also occurs often enough in NA27,⁴³⁷ Josephus,⁴³⁸

430. Ibid., p. 372.

431. Ibid., p. 372.

432. Ibid., p. 372

433. Mt. 16:19; 18:18; 21:2; Mk. 11:2, 4; 15:7; Lk. 19:30; Jn. 11:44; 18:24; Acts 9:2, 21; 12:6; 20:22; 22:5, 29; 24:27; Rev. 9:14.

434. Antiquities 2:60, 63; 5:313; 8:140; 10:101, 106; 11:47; 13:204, 228, 302, 320; 14:58, 79, 329; 15:398; 18:115, 236 (2x), 319; 19:276; 20:36 (3x); War 1:71; 2:28, 273; 4:169, 327; 7:31, 36, 238, 344, 385, 449; Life 332; 343; Against Apion 1:48; 2:240, 246 (2x).

435. 2 Kings 7:10; Song 7:6; Book of Job 32:19; Isa. 22:3; 42:7; 45:14; Jer. 40:1; Ezek. 27:24.

436. Eph. 1:2; 21:2; Tral. 1:1; Rom. 1:1; 4:3; Phila. 5:1; Smyr. 6:2; 11:1.

437. Mt. 22:13; 27:2; Mrk. 15:1; Acts 21:11.

438. Antiquities 5:299, 311; 8:375; 10:140; 11:78; 14:97, 481; 15:87; 16:386; 17:133; 18:169, 195; 20:114, 131, 161, 208, 244; War 1:49, 71, 353; 3:225; 4:477, 628, 641; 6:357, 361, 418; 7:184; Life 13; 424.

and the LXX,⁴³⁹ though not at all in the apostolic fathers. The present participle occurs only twice in such a corpus, once in Josephus and once in the apostolic fathers.⁴⁴⁰ Outside of Mt. 16:19 and 18:18, the perfect participle of λύω does not occur in NA27, though it does occur in the LXX,⁴⁴¹ Josephus,⁴⁴² and apostolic fathers.⁴⁴³ The aorist participle of λύω occurs in NA27,⁴⁴⁴ the LXX,⁴⁴⁵ Josephus,⁴⁴⁶ and the apostolic fathers⁴⁴⁷ in sufficient number. Although the present participle of λύω does not occur in the apostolic fathers, it does occur once in the LXX⁴⁴⁸, six times in Josephus (five of which are middle/passive in form),⁴⁴⁹ and three times in NA27 (one of which is middle/passive in form).⁴⁵⁰ Two of those three occurrences are in a Mark/Luke parallel pericope, in a section that Matthew does not have. Even there, though, Mark has the present participle in the question directed to disciple(s), while in Luke it is part of the narrator's telling of the story. Such evidence provides some support to the idea that Matthew would have felt capable and unhindered about using a non-perfect passive participial form of λύω in Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18 had he so desired. His choice of the perfect passive participle thus needs explanation.

439. 1 Esdras 1:38; 4 Macc. 11:9, 10; Hos. 10:6.

440. Shep. 36:5; Josephus' Antiquities 10:103.

441. 3 Mac. 1:4; 4 Mac. 7:13; Dan. 3:92.

442. Antiq. 6:362; 18:233; War 1:530; 5:513.

443. Mag. 12:1; Smyr. 6:2; Shep. 86:5; 90:8.

444. Mt. 21:2; Lk. 19:30; Acts 2:24; 13:43; Eph. 2:14; Rev. 1:5.

445. Gen. 42:27; Judith 6:14; 3 Macc. 6:29.

446. Antiq. 2:121; 8:148, 391; 10:29; 13:248, 320; 14:272, 388; 17:134; War 1:85, 234, 285, 341, 663, 668; 2:28; 4:528, 644; Life 332; 415; Against Apion 1:48, 114, 115

447. Phil. 1:2; MPoly 13:2.

448. 4 Macc. 3:11.

449. Antiq. 3:293; 10:265; 15:365; 18:236; War 5:318; 6:295

450. Mark 11:5; Lk. 19:33; 2 Pet. 3:11. The passive participle is in 2 Pet. 3:11.

One might ask of Carson, when he says that "This result spills over onto *deō* ('I bind')", whether spilling over might go in the opposite direction. If Matthew felt that the perfect participle of *δέω* could have a purely adjectival force, and supposing that he wished the binding predicate to have a similar structure to the loosing one, could it be that he chose a perfect participle of *δέω* for its adjectival force, and simply chose the perfect participle of *λύω* to match the verbal construction of *δέω*?

The linguistic evidence just given does not provide much support for this, and the hypothesis does not seem likely. In his section on the future periphrastic, Fanning remarks that "The sense of these ranges from a future stative sense for the lexically STATIVE verbs and the passives (Matt. 10: 22 etc.; Luk 1: 20, 21: 24, 22: 69) to a progressive or iterative sense for the actives (...)." ⁴⁵¹ Noticeable here is that Matthew uses a future periphrastic construction with a passive participle of *μισέω* in the construction in Mt. 10:22, and, though *μισέω* is usually an active verb, Matthew uses its passive participle in the future periphrastic construction to express a stative idea, or something like a stative idea. Given that the passive participial form was available to Matthew, he could have done the same thing with *λύω* in Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18. The fact that he did not supports the claim that his choice of the perfect form was intended to signify something at least logically prior to the event of the protasis in Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18.

If to this it is responded that Matthew is simply taking on board the *ἔσεσθε μισούμενοι* of Mark 13:13, two comments are in order. This assumes a particular source-critical view of the

451. Fanning, "Verbal Aspect in NT Greek", p. 318.

synoptic problem that is debatable, and probably false. Second is that Matthew uses ἔσεσθε μισούμενοι twice,⁴⁵² but Mark has it only once. If Matthew took over Mark's material and used it twice, that would suggest more than just mere copying. It would suggest that Matthew particularly approved of the phrasing. It would be in keeping with Matthew's own language to use in 16:19b-c and 18:18 a future periphrastic of λύω, one with a present passive participle of λύω. If Matthew was wanting to say that heaven's binding and loosing would be in response to earth's binding and loosing, Matthew could still have used future periphrastic constructions in his binding and loosing statements, with the only difference being that the δέω constructions would have a perfect participle and the loosing statements a passive present participle. The fact that he chose the perfect participle of λύω, when there is not more than one future perfect indicative verb in the NT, when the future perfect periphrastic in Greek was used as a substitute in place of the future perfect form that was largely absent from the language, and when on more than one occasion he uses a passive present participle of what is normally a non-stative verb in a future periphrastic construction to indicate a stative idea or something like a stative idea (Mt. 10:22; 24:9), all this taken together is an argument that Matthew intentionally chose the periphrastic future perfect to indicate that heaven's binding and loosing preceded that of earth, even if in many cases it would only be on the level of logical order.

Taking France and Carson together provide a strong argument in favor of the heaven-first order of binding and loosing. Matthew had at least three options available to him, and maybe four. First, he could have used future passive indicative forms of λύω and δέω. If he thought of a

452. Ibid., p. 317 cites Mark 13:13 and both Mt. 10:22 and 24:9.

perfect participle of δέω as having only an adjectival force and not as indicating a logically or temporally prior event, a second option was that he could have used a periphrastic future perfect of δέω and a periphrastic future passive of λύω. A third option would be that he could have used two periphrastic future perfects. The first two options would have been consistent with and supported the earth-first order of binding and loosing. Only the third option, the one Matthew actually chose, would provide much linguistic support for a heaven-first order of binding and loosing. What makes the best sense of him choosing, out of the options available to him, the one construction that would provide support for a heaven-first order is that he actually intended to indicate a heaven-first order of binding and loosing.

There is also a fourth option (or third option if Matthew did think of a perfect participle of δέω as indicating a logically or temporally prior event, but that would concede a major point at issue). Matthew could have used periphrastic futures for both λύω and δέω, with each periphrastic having a present passive participle. It seems likely that the reason for there being only two occurrences of a present participle of δέω in NA27, Rahlfs' LXX, Josephus, and apostolic fathers is not that writers thought that a present participle of δέω was not available to them had they desired to use such a form. Particularly instructive here is the distribution of usage of δέω. In all of NA27, Josephus, Rahlfs' LXX, and Lightfoot and Harmer's apostolic fathers, there is not a single usage of a present indicative of δέω outside of the formulaic usage of δεῖ. It would be inappropriate to argue from this fact, though, that a writer would have thought it inappropriate or impossible to use a present indicative form of δέω. A similar statement might apply to the aorist passive indicative of δέω. The aorist indicative form of δέω occurs six times in

NA27,⁴⁵³ at least twenty-three times in the LXX,⁴⁵⁴ eleven times in Josephus,⁴⁵⁵ and once in the apostolic fathers.⁴⁵⁶ Yet of all these occurrences only five are passive aorist indicatives,⁴⁵⁷ and only one is a middle aorist indicative.⁴⁵⁸ No more than 13% of all the occurrences of aorist indicatives in this corpus are passive indicatives, and only one of the at least forty-one occurrences is a middle aorist indicative. It seems that it was the lexical nature of δέω that was more determinative in the total absence of the present indicative of δέω in the corpus (outside of the formulaic usage of δεῖ), and the predominance of active indicatives over passive indicatives in the aorist. Most situations simply did not require an aorist passive indicative form of δέω, a fact which shows up in the usage of δέω. Similarly, there is a total absence of usage of δέω in the present indicative in the corpus because the content of the writings did not require that a present indicative form be used.

But in 16:19b-c and 18:18 we do have a situation where the content of the writing would have made the use of a passive participle in the periphrastic construction quite appropriate if Matthew was intending to indicate an earth-first order of binding and loosing. It would seem reasonable to say that Matthew would have had four options open to him, not just three. There

453. Mt. 14:3; 6:17; Lk. 13:16; Jn. 18:12; 19:40; Rev. 20:2.

454. Gen. 38:28; 42:24; Judg. 15:13; 16:8, 12, 21; 2 Sam. 3:34; 2 Kings 12:21; 17:4; 25:7; 2 Chr. 33:11; 36:2, 6; 1 Esdr. 1:36; Judith 6:13; 16:8; Tob. 8:3; 3 Mac. 6:19; 88b 36:13; Wisd. 17:16; Sir. 28:19; Jer. 52:11; Ezek. 16:4. Rahlfs' Dan. 4:17a and one version of Judges 15:4 also have an aorist indicative of δέω, neither of which is passive. The other version of Judges 15:4 has an aorist active indicative of συνδέω.

455. Antiq. 10:82; 14:326; 16:251; 17:132; 19:294; War 1:496; 2:292, 477; Life 355; 410; 412.

456. 1 Clem. 43:2.

457. 2 Sam. 3:34; Wisd. 17:16; Sir. 28:19; Josephus Antiq. 19:294; Life 412.

458. Judith 16:8.

are two occasions where a present active participle form of δέω was used in the NA27, Rahlfs' LXXX, Josephus, and apostolic fathers corpus (Shep. 36:5; Josephus Antiquities 10:103), and surely authors would have capable of writing or understanding a passive participial form. Accordingly, Matthew had a fourth option (or third option, if a major concession has already been made that Matthew did think of a perfect participle of δέω as indicating a logically or temporally prior event). He could have used future periphrastics that have present middle/passive forms of λύω and δέω. If that is taken to be the case, then his choosing just that one of the four (or three) possibilities that would provide support for the heaven-first order of binding and loosing is significant evidence for the heaven-first order.

This type of argument does not work against the interpretation of Mt. 18:19 provided in this thesis. Whereas it is agreed that Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18 have two events in mind, the binding on earth and the binding in heaven, the very number of events in mind in 18:19 is now in contention. This thesis says there is just one event, the event of the protasis of 18:19, with the apodosis giving information about the event of the protasis. The traditional interpretation thinks of two events, the disciples agreeing in prayer and the answering of the prayer by 'my Father'. In light of such disagreement, it is not adequate to say that in Mt. 18:19, Matthew would have needed to use the perfect tense. There was no need for Matthew to distinguish an order between two events in Mt. 18:19 if he was thinking of just one event, and given that information-disclosing conditional statements can use a simple future indicative (for support of this assertion, see above), Matthew felt free to use a future indicative of γίνομαι in 18:19.

One may also notice that this argument still has a significant amount of weight even if there are some examples of a perfect verbal form not having its typical dual temporal reference. It is an argument from possibilities and of best explanation. What best explains the particular possibility that Matthew chose is that he wished to indicate a heaven first order of binding and loosing.

2. Matthew's Choice of the Future Form ἔσται

The preceding section has argued that a heaven-first order of binding and loosing in Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18 should be adopted in light of Matthew's choice of the perfect form in his periphrastic constructions. The preceding section has not examined in great detail why Matthew chose the future form of εἰμί in that periphrastic construction. The future ἔσται was not the only option available to Matthew. If his intent was to emphasize the heaven-first order, and if the perfect was thought of as indicating a present state resulting from a past action, it can be asked why he did not choose the present form of εἰμί for his periphrastic construction, or even a simple perfect indicative. The previous section gave one clear example from 1 Jn. 4:12 in which a perfect in the apodosis of a periphrastic construction gave information about the cause of what was in the protasis. But in 1 Jn. 4:12, it is a periphrastic present perfect, not a periphrastic future perfect. Why, then, is there no present form of εἰμί in Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18? Even if the perfect participle were to favor a heaven-first order, the future form of εἰμί needs some explanation.

One of the simplest responses to this challenge is to observe that, since Mt. 18:18 refers to a future situation, a future verb is the most appropriate verb to use. Though it has been contended that the reference to the church in Mt. 18:17 is an historical anachronism, it is not clear that such a charge is convincing. But whether anachronistic or not from a historical standpoint, Matthew has placed the reference to the ἐκκλησία in his narrative at this point, and not only here, but also in the statement that Jesus would build 'his' ἐκκλησία on the rock in Mt. 16:18. If the task is to interpret Matthew's text as he has given it, then it would still be true that Matthew presents Jesus as looking forward to a time after his death and resurrection⁴⁵⁹ when 'his' church would exist.⁴⁶⁰ The process of Mt. 18:15-17 is obviously intended in its narrative setting for this envisaged future church; Jesus would not encourage his disciples to take a case of a sinning disciple before the entire group of disciples, and not him, while he was with them. He is their authority while he is with them on earth, so his words are best taken to refer to the future time when he is no longer with them physically.

The binding and loosing statement of Mt. 16:19b-c also looks forward to the future. In Mt. 16:18, Jesus says that he *will* build his church on 'this rock'. The future form οἰκοδομήσω is used; the building here is a future activity. Just after 16:18, Mt. 16:19a uses the future form δώσω to indicate that Peter would be given the keys of the kingdom in the future. Given this context of future reference, the simplest explanation for Matthew's choice of the future in Mt. 16:19b-c is that, since Jesus intends to refer to the future, a future verb is most appropriate.

459. Cf. Mt. 9:15; 16:21; 20:17-19.

460. Cf. Mt. 24:14.

In both Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18, the subjunctive verb in the protasis does not give a clear indication by itself as to what time the conditional statement taken as a whole applies. A subjunctive can refer to the present or the future. The temporal reference of the statements would thus need to come from the apodosis if it were to be made clear. Since Matthew intends that both statements refer to a future time, he was thus obliged to use a future verb form in the apodosis of both Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18. This adequately explains why Matthew chose the future form ἔσται in these two verses.

This also explains why Matthew would not have used a present indicative in the apodosis as is found in the statement about divine influence in 1 Jn. 4:12. The statement of 1 Jn. 4:12 was a gnomic statement that applied generally, and the present indicative of μένω and the present form of εἰμί with a perfect participle were thus appropriate. The situation is different in Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18 given that Matthew is looking forward to a future situation, so the present verbs in 1 Jn. 4:12 would not fit well in Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18.

Despite the explanatory power of this view of Matthew's choice of the future form of εἰμί in Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18, it is not the only explanation available. Another possible explanation appeals to Matthew's practice of using future indicative verbs in apodoses of conditional statements that have a subjunctive and εἰ in the protasis. Matthew's εἰ conditional statements can be classified into two main categories: those that have an indicative in the

apodosis and those that have a subjunctive⁴⁶¹ or imperative⁴⁶² in the apodosis.⁴⁶³ Those that have a subjunctive or imperative in the apodosis need not concern us now.

In regard to the present issue of Matthew's choice of the future form of εἰμί in Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18, conditional statements having an indicative in the apodosis are of interest.

Those statements that have an indicative in the apodosis can be classified based on whether the indicative is a future, present, or aorist. Outside of Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18, there are at least twenty-nine examples of a future indicative verb linked with an 'ἐὰν plus subjunctive'

construction, twenty-six of which have a non-εἰμί future indicative verb.⁴⁶⁴ There are at least

eight examples of an indicative present verb linked with an 'ἐὰν plus subjunctive' construction,

seven of which have a non-εἰμί verb in the subjunctive.⁴⁶⁵ There are also two examples of an

461. There are two examples of an οὐ μὴ + subjunctive construction in the apodosis (Mt. 5:20; 18:3) and two examples of a μὴ + subjunctive construction (Mt. 24:23, 26).

462. Cf. Mt. 5:23-24 (which has four imperatives with two subjunctives); Mt. 7:12; 10:13 (2x); 18:15 (which has two imperatives with the one subjunctive), 16, 17 (2x); 22:9; 23:3 (which has two imperatives for the one subjunctive).

463. Most of the verbs fall into one or the other of these two categories. Mt. 21:3, though, has a future indicative form in the apodosis, but it functions as if it were an imperative.

464. Mt. 4:9; 5:13, 19; 6:14, 15, 22, 23; 8:19; 9:21; 12:11 (which has two indicative future verbs for one subjunctive), 32; 15:14; 16:25, 26 (which has a future passive indicative verb with two subjunctive verbs); 17:20 (which has two indicative future verbs in the apodosis for one subjunctive verb in the protasis); 18:12 (which has a future active indicative verb with two subjunctive verbs); 18:19 (which has a future middle indicative verb with two subjunctive verbs); 18:35; 20:4, 26, 28; 21:21 (which has a future active indicative verb and future middle indicative verb with two subjunctive verbs); 21:24, 25; 22:24; 24:48-51 (which has three future active indicative verbs with four subjunctive verbs); 26:13, 35; 28:14 (which has two future active indicative verbs with one subjunctive verb). Mt. 21:3 has an indicative future form, but it functions imperatively. Mt. 6:22, 23; 20:26 have a future indicative form of εἰμί.

465. Mt. 5:32, 46, 47; 11:6; 12:29; 18:5, 13; 26:42. Mt. 11:6 is the only one of the eight that has a form of εἰμί in the 'ἐὰν plus subjunctive' construction. The statement about fearing people was one that was true at the time spoken and would have been true before giving the 'from men' answer had that answer been given. Accordingly, though it would have been true that religious leaders would have feared the people after saying that the baptism was 'from men' had that been said, there is some justification for taking the statement that they feared people as something other than a fulfillment of the 'ἐὰν plus subjunctive'

aorist indicative linked with an 'ἐὰν plus subjunctive' construction,⁴⁶⁶ one example of which occurs in Mt. 18:15.

From this data, one can see that Matthew normally uses a future indicative when he uses an 'ἐὰν plus subjunctive' construction. He does so at least three times as much as he uses a present indicative with an 'ἐὰν plus subjunctive' construction. With this, it might appear that there is some basis to offer an alternative explanation than the one provided above. Whether rightly or wrongly, one might say that the future was chosen not because Matthew was particularly looking forward to a future time of the church in Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18, but because Matthew had a habit of using a future indicative in the apodosis when he used an 'ἐὰν plus subjunctive' construction. If this more mundane explanation is right, then the choice of the perfect participle might have been somewhat separate from the choice of the future form of εἰμί and might have been done with an eye towards the stative-character of the perfect participle.

To this alternative proposal it may be said that this possibility does not necessarily present an either/or choice. The reason a future indicative is used so much with a subjunctive is precisely because the subjunctive very often looks forward to a future, potential situation. It is thus quite appropriate that Matthew wanted to refer to the future time of the church and accordingly chose the subjunctive in that desire. Here the choice of the subjunctive would be driven by the desire to refer to a future time. Even if it were the case that a future form was chosen because Matthew had already chosen a subjunctive and felt the need to line up his choice

construction.

466. Mt. 14:7; 18:15.

of future indicative with his choice of subjunctive, this by itself would not negate the fact that the primary driver of the choice of the subjunctive, and accordingly of the future indicative, would have been Matthew's desire to refer to a future time. The two explanations would not necessarily compete with each other, and it is quite clear from the context of Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18 that Matthew's intent was to refer to a future time of the church.

In response, it might be said that there are not many clear, simple ways to express the thought(s) of Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18 without using a subjunctive, and that the commonness of using a subjunctive for such a thought suggested the subjunctive to Matthew's mind when he wrote Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18. Here, the argument would be that there was not another simple, clear means of expressing the binding and loosing statement that would have come easily to Matthew's mind. Even if the context shows Matthew referring to the future, maybe the limitation of language presented to Matthew just the option of using a subjunctive, and, seeing no reason not to use the subjunctive form, Matthew chose to use it. What this proposal does is offer an alternative explanation for Matthew's choice of the subjunctive, one that does not invoke Matthew's intending to refer to a future post-resurrection time as the reason for choosing the subjunctive. This alternative is that there was only one option that came to Matthew's mind for expressing the binding and loosing statement that he wanted to communicate, the option of using a subjunctive, and, not surprisingly, he chose that option without giving the choice much thought.

There is a lot of appeal to this explanation, and working together with Matthew's usual choice of the future indicative when using an 'ἐὰν plus subjunctive' construction, this explanation provides a plausible case that explains Matthew's choice of the future form of εἰμί and that also

does not necessarily require a heaven-first order of binding and loosing, if the perfect participle is to be taken as "stative" without indicating a prior action. Despite this acknowledgement, there is at least one consideration that makes this explanation less preferable in comparison to the view advocated in this thesis that the periphrastic future perfects do indicate a heaven-first order. The above explanation does not address the argument of the previous section that Matthew would not have used a periphrastic future perfect were his intention other than indicating a heaven-first order; it does not explain why he chose a future form of εἰμί in a periphrastic future perfect construction when there were other available choices of the future that were open to Matthew. Even if Matthew thought of no other means of expressing the binding and loosing statement than one that used a subjunctive, and even if he acted out of habit in thus choosing a future form in the apodoses of Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18, there were multiple ways of expressing the idea in a future form. That he chose the rare periphrastic future perfect from the available options still speaks for the view of this thesis.

This conclusion is further supported by Matthew's choices of future verbs that are linked with an 'ἐὰν plus subjunctive' construction. Of twenty-nine such cases in Matthew outside of Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18,⁴⁶⁷ Matthew chooses a future form of εἰμί only three times,⁴⁶⁸ and two⁴⁶⁹ of those three have a form of εἰμί in the corresponding subjunctive verb in the 'ἐὰν plus subjunctive' construction. That is, in twenty-six of twenty-seven cases⁴⁷⁰ outside of Mt. 16:19b-c

467. See above.

468. Mt. 6:22, 23; 20:26.

469. Mt. 6:22, 23.

470. Mt. 4:9; 5:13, 19; 6:14, 15; 8:19; 9:21; 12:11, 32; 15:14; 16:25, 26; 17:20; 18:12, 19, 35; 20:4, 26, 28; 21:21, 24, 25; 22:24; 24:48-51; 26:13, 35; 28:14.

and Mt. 18:18 where Matthew has a non-εἰμί verb in the subjunctive of an 'ἐάν plus subjunctive' construction, the corresponding indicative future verb is a non-εἰμί verb. This is a very strong preference for a non-εἰμί form of the future indicative when Matthew uses an non-εἰμί verb in the 'ἐάν plus subjunctive' construction, and it demonstrates that Matthew's choice of the future form of εἰμί in Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18 is very atypical. Even if no other plausible option for expressing the binding and loosing statements of these verses came to Matthew's mind other than using a subjunctive, and even if that therefore inclined Matthew by habit to choose a future verb, this leaves unexplained Matthew's break with his nearly perfect record of using a non-εἰμί future indicative verb when he uses a non-εἰμί subjunctive verb form in an 'ἐάν plus subjunctive' construction.

Here the simplest explanation seems to be the one offered in this thesis. With a monolectic future perfect having at least nearly vanished from Greek outside of certain words, Matthew resorted to the periphrastic future perfect of binding and loosing in Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18 in order to express the heaven-first order of binding and loosing. This required him to use a future indicative form of εἰμί and thus required him to break with his nearly perfect record of using a non-εἰμί verb in the apodosis of conditional clauses that have a non-εἰμί verb in their 'ἐάν plus subjunctive' construction. In addition to this view of divine agency expressed in this heaven-first order being typical of Matthew's theology in a number of areas, it also explains Matthew's breaking with his normal pattern of using a non-εἰμί indicative verb when he uses an 'ἐάν plus subjunctive' construction. Thus, it is not an *ad hoc* explanation.

This view also loses none of its applicability if all of the present indicatives and aorist indicatives that are linked to an 'ἐὰν plus subjunctive' construction in Matthew were to disappear. However, Matthew does have a sizeable number of examples where an aorist indicative or present indicative is linked to an 'ἐὰν plus subjunctive' construction. Though Matthew has at least twenty-nine examples of a future indicative (at least twenty-six examples of which have a non-εἰμί future indicative) being linked with an 'ἐὰν plus subjunctive' construction, he also has eight examples of a present indicative (seven examples of which have a non-εἰμί present indicative) being used with an 'ἐὰν plus subjunctive' construction.⁴⁷¹ These occurrences are enough to show that Matthew was not slavishly beholden to using a future indicative with an 'ἐὰν plus subjunctive' construction and that Matthew could have used a present indicative in Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18. Even if it were the case that Matthew thought of no other plausible way to express the binding and loosing statements of these passages than with an 'ἐὰν plus subjunctive' construction, these occurrences of present indicatives with an 'ἐὰν plus subjunctive' construction establish a significant basis to doubt or disbelieve the idea that, if Matthew decided to use an 'ἐὰν plus subjunctive' construction, he would have felt obliged by necessity or strongly encouraged by habit to use a future indicative.

This is relevant in light of the fact that the nature of the binding and loosing statements of Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18 is similar to a number of the sayings in verses that have a present indicative with an 'ἐὰν plus subjunctive' construction. A number of these sayings are proverbial and aphoristic in style. Mt. 5:46 asks what reward one has if he loves those who love him, and

471. See examples above.

Mt. 5:47 does something similar in regard to greeting others. Mt. 11:6 (NRSV) says, "And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me." Mt. 18:5 indicates that one who welcomes one such child welcomes Jesus. Mt. 12:29 asks how one would be able to enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions if the strong man is not first bound. The binding and loosing statements of Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18 would fit comfortably with a number of the statements in this group in which a present indicative is used with an 'ἐὰν plus subjunctive' construction.

This observation is not to deny that there are proverbial or aphoristic sayings that have an indicative future linked to an 'ἐὰν plus subjunctive' construction. There are such statements. But it does give some support to the assertion that there was nothing about the style of statement in Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18 that would have necessarily prevented Matthew from using the present indicative with an 'ἐὰν plus subjunctive' construction in those two passages. The view that Matthew chose a future indicative largely out of habit or a feeling of necessity given his use of an 'ἐὰν plus subjunctive' construction thus looks significantly less plausible. In the end, Matthew's use of the future form of εἰμί in Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18 is well explained by this thesis' proposal for those two passages and presents no serious objection to the view that these two passages indicate a heaven-first order of binding and loosing.

3. The Challenge of Stanley Porter's Application of His Verbal Aspect Theory to a Periphrastic Future Perfect

One of the most significant challenges to the preceding understanding of the periphrastic future perfects has been presented by Stanley Porter. He contends that Greek indicative verbs do

not encode temporal reference and that the perfect does not have a double temporal reference. He says that

The perfect passive participle is best understood as aspectually designating the state or condition of being bound or loosed, without implicature of either the temporal construct that Mantey and many grammarians posit or the strictly adjectival sense that Turner, McKay and Moule suggest.⁴⁷²

A little later, specifically in regard to content of Mt. 16:19b-c, Porter indicates that "any presupposition of a rigid temporal scheme" is "unsupportable".⁴⁷³ Such comments make clear that Porter would disagree with the preceding assessment of Greek indicative verbs and of the periphrastic future perfects in Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18. Not all have agreed with Porter's insistence that Greek indicative verbs do not grammaticalize temporal reference. Fanning thinks that the evidence is quite clear that Greek indicative verbs have a double sense of temporal reference and aspect,⁴⁷⁴ and he appears to think that in some cases the temporal reference of the verb is lost or changed.⁴⁷⁵ For Porter, though, this would disqualify Fanning's proposal from being a proposal about the semantics of Greek indicative verbs on Porter's definition of semantics. A proposal about the semantics of Greek verbal forms must posit a meaning that the

472. Porter, "Vague Verbs", p. 160.

473. Ibid., p. 160.

474. Fanning, Buist M. (1993). "Approaches to Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek: Issues in Definition and Method". In Carson, Don A. & Stanley E. Porter (Eds.), *Biblical Greek Language and Linguistics: Open Questions in Current Research*. Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 80 (pp. 46-62). Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press. , p. 58.

475. Ibid., p. 59. Fanning indicates on pp. 58-59 that on Porter's view, temporal indication comes from "deictic markers used along with the verbs or by standard association with certain contexts. But the same argument can be made more easily for the opposite point: the broadly evidenced time values do attach directly to the indicative tenses, and occasional exceptions can be explained by other influences."

verbal form invariably has, according to Porter, and Fanning's apparent admission of the temporal reference would thus remove it from consideration.⁴⁷⁶

What Fanning failed to do was point out that on Porter's definition of semantics, it would be possible to think of verbal forms always having a temporal reference such that temporal reference would be able to be included in a theory about the semantics of Greek indicative verbs, and to interpret certain sentences as having two different and conflicting temporal references, only one of which is favored in the act of reading. Porter thinks that a verbal form's deixis provides temporal reference.⁴⁷⁷ Also, Porter appears to think that, though it did not happen with Greek, it is possible to encode temporal reference with a verbal form. It would be absurd for him to deny such a possibility. Rather than making Fanning's concession of verbal forms losing their temporal reference, then, it is possible to contend that, if semantics as defined by Porter exists and is not a fiction, a verbal form always keeps its temporal reference, but that its temporal references sometimes conflict with the temporal reference of the verbal form's deixis.

This means that, if semantics as defined by Porter is not a fiction, there can be two competing viable theories about the semantics of Greek indicative verbal forms as semantics is defined by Porter. Accordingly, Porter cannot rightly assume that Greek users had a shared meaning system of verbal forms that only encoded verbal aspect. Against Porter, the testimony of ancient Greek grammarians about their own language would favor the alternative semantic

476. Cf. Porter, Stanley E., *Verbal Aspect in NT Greek*, pp. 82-83, 104. On p. 104, Porter says, "Implicatures can be cancelled, whereas the essential meaning cannot."

477. Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 98-102.

proposal in which Greek indicative verbal forms always maintain their temporal reference, and Porter's theory would be deficient.⁴⁷⁸ Given the testimony of ancient Greek grammarians of their own language, this alternative proposal, in which Greek indicative verbs do encode temporal reference, would be superior to Porter's verbal aspect theory, and Porter's theory and its application to Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18 would thus be safely ignored. Though there is not adequate room in the body of this thesis to develop fully this alternative semantic proposal, a sustained development and defense of this alternative proposal can be found in Appendix C.

4. The Challenge of Cadbury, Derrett, and Davies and Allison

Still, there are other challenges to the heaven-first order of binding and loosing. In an attempt to support his case that the periphrastic future perfects in 16:19b-c do not indicate a heaven first order, Cadbury points to the perfect imperative *πεφίμωσο* in Mk. 4:39, the perfect imperative *πέπαισο* in Demosthenes, Alciphron, Lucian, and Philostratus (though he does not provide references for this assertion), and to, according to him, the periphrastic *ἔστωσαν περιεζωσμένοι* in Lk. 12:35.⁴⁷⁹ Such evidence is unconvincing. Imperatives apply to the future, so there would be no confusion if a Greek user, knowing that his auditor would recognize the imperative form as a command, would choose a verb form on the basis of aspect or some other

478. Cf. Porter's treatment of material of ancient Greek grammarians in *Ibid.*, pp. 18-22.

479. Cadbury, "Meaning", p. 252.

feature other than temporal reference. Imperatives are irrelevant for the declarative statements of Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18.

In regard to the question "whether a perfect in the apodosis indicates an action or condition prior to the time of the apodosis", Cadbury cites four texts in support of his conclusion that it does not: 1 Jn. 2:5; James 2:10; Rom. 13:8; 14:23. He also cites Rom. 7:2, 1 Cor. 7:39, Jn. 20:23, and Xen. *Anab.* i.8, 12 in support of the view that "the action or condition implied in the perfect is not necessarily prior to that of the other clause." Cadbury also points to the certain readings of the perfect verb in Lk. 5:20, 23; 7:47, 48. While he thinks that the perfect verb "is to be preferred possibly" for Mt. 9:2, 5 and for Mk. 2:5, 9, he focuses on Luke and says that "Surely Luke, to adduce the evangelist whose readings are undoubted, knew the Greek language well enough, in spite of his total ignorance of its modern grammarians, to avoid using ἀφένται if by its very tense the act or state it describes was unmistakably dissociated from the speaker and the time of speaking."⁴⁸⁰

Dayton raises an important point that makes some of Cadbury's citations disanalogous to Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18. Cadbury used his examples in support of his contention that a perfect in an apodosis need not necessarily indicate an action prior to the time of the protasis. Although Dayton concedes that "It simply is not always possible, because of the nature of a general condition, to fix the the point of completion of the action as previous to the time of the speaker or of the protasis", he then says,

480. Ibid., p. 254.

However, there is a new element that must be considered in John 20:23. In the other cases only one agent had to be considered and the nature of the construction often demanded that this sole agent aid in bringing about the result in the apodosis. However in John we have a double agency. Both God and man are pictured as acting. It is simply a question of who has priority. The literal use gives precedence to God and the figurative to man.⁴⁸¹

John 20:23 is similar to Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18 in this difference of having the action of two agents in view. Most of Cadbury's examples do not have such a clear focus on the action of two agents, and it is thus questionable whether they have much value for understanding John 20:23, Mt. 16:19b-c, and Mt. 18:18.

Another point can be made, this one on methodology. Much of the reason for Cadbury's appeal to many of these verses is to bolster the claim that a perfect in the apodosis does not necessarily indicate an action prior to the action of the protasis. Even if Cadbury succeeds in demonstrating that there are such cases, his conclusion would not demonstrate that Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18 don't have a heaven-first order. It seems that Cadbury's attempt is in a problematic situation. If "the linguistic evidence is overwhelming that in the indicative forms the tenses carry a double sense of time and aspect together",⁴⁸² then in cases where it is clear from the content of the clause and context what the temporal reference of the verb would be, an author could feel free to choose the tense form based on some reason other than temporal reference without concern that his auditor or reader would be confused as to the temporal reference of the clause. This applies to perfects in conditional and non-conditional statements. If it is clear from the sentence that the use of perfect would not be taken as indicating a double temporal reference, the

481. Dayton, "John 20:23; Matthew 16:19 and 18:18", p. 85.

482. Fanning, Buist M., *Approaches to Verbal Aspect in NT Greek* p. 58.

author probably assumed that clarity and chose the perfect for some other reason. If it is clear from the content of a conditional statement that the apodosis has a perfect verb and that the perfect verb's stative feature and the event producing that state both occur after the verb of the protasis, it would have also been clear to the author, and the author might have chosen the perfect because he knew his reader would not be confused as to temporal reference. This is a dynamic that happens with an indicative form that normally has a double sense of time and aspect.

It is not clear from the content alone, though, what the order of binding and loosing are in Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18. This thesis has argued that divine influence in human behavior is a repeated and important emphasis in Matthew's theology, and this would make it quite reasonable to see heaven's loosing and binding preceding that of earth, even if only on the level of logical order. Consequently, in Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18, Matthew would not have felt the same freedom to choose a tense form for some reason other than temporal reference that an author would feel in cases where content and/or context did make it clear what the order of two events would be. Cadbury's examples are not consequently relevant in all necessary respects to Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18. They are not significant counter-examples.

Another factor is worth consideration. If Cadbury cites texts in which it is not clear to his interlocutor that the perfect lacks the dual temporal reference, then his appeal to such texts is argumentatively of little or no value. If his interlocutor is unwilling to concede that such texts lack the double temporal reference that normally accompanies the perfect, then the text does not offer the common ground necessary for Cadbury's argument to have force. But if his interlocutor does concede that it is clear from the text that the perfect lacks the temporal reference, it is open

to the interlocutor to refer to the reasoning above and maintain that the author, counting on his reader to discern the temporal reference of the sentence from its content and/or context, chose the perfect form for some reason other than temporal reference. Either way, Cadbury does not succeed. Heads he loses. Tails the one who disagrees with him wins.

With these comments made, consider his texts. The perfect in the apodosis of 1 Jn. 2:5 does seem amenable to an interpretation in which the perfect is expressing something or some event prior to the protasis; the person's obedience to God's word is a sign of God's love having been made complete. Jn. 20:23 is just the type of verse under debate. Given John's theology, a similar argument as made in this thesis for the heaven-first order of Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18 would be made for Jn. 20:23. Thus, the verse is not of much use argumentatively for Cadbury. For 1 Cor. 7:39; Rom. 7:2; 13:8; 14:23; Jam. 2:10; Lk. 5:20, 23; 7:47, 48, one might argue that, if it is clear from the content of the verses that the perfect lacks a double temporal reference, the perfect might have been chosen for some reason other than temporal reference with the author counting on his reader to make his conclusion about temporal reference from the context in which the verb occurs and/or the content of the sentence. If in a passage such as Lk. 5:20 it is not clear that it lacks the dual temporal reference, then this would not be of much use for Cadbury's argument. All of Cadbury's citations thus fail to persuade. If he wishes to present a linguistic argument against the significance of the periphrastic future perfects indicating a heaven-first order of binding and loosing in Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18, he has to challenge Fanning's notion about the double sense of the perfect verbal form. Porter tried just that and failed. An attempt on Cadbury's part would suffer the same fate. The failure of Cadbury's examples is that Matthew's

emphasis on divine influence makes it a live question whether the order of binding and loosing in Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18 is heaven-first or earth-first. In such a situation, Matthew would not have had the freedom that other authors had in texts that Cadbury cites.

Derrett⁴⁸³ cites Isa. 8:17 LXX, 2 Sam 22:3 LXX, Lk. 12:52-53, and Heb. 2:13, which draws from the πεποιθώς of 2 Sam. 22:3 or of Isa. 8:17, in support of a periphrastic future perfect having the meaning of a simple future passive.⁴⁸⁴ In addition to referring to Cadbury and BDF, Davies and Allison refer to Aristophanes, *Pl.* 1027, and say that the passives in 16:19 "are probably emphatic futures" and claims that "the LXX, the *koine*, and the NT can use periphrastic future perfects as though they were simple future passives".⁴⁸⁵ Like Derrett, Davies and Allison also cite Isa. 8:17 LXX and Heb. 2:13; their citation of LXX 2 βασιλ 22:3 aligns with Derrett's citation of 2 Sam. 22:3.⁴⁸⁶

Even if some of these passages demonstrate that a perfect need not have a dual temporal reference, the argument above combining considerations of France and Carson would still have a lot of force. This argument would still stand, but there is another that would need to be considered. Davies and Allison's claim that in 16:19 the passives "are probably emphatic futures" is similar to Cadbury's claim that "in the two passages of Matthew the future perfects seem to imply a permanent condition rather than a condition prior to the time of the relative clause"⁴⁸⁷

483. Derrett, "Binding and Loosing", pp. 112-113.

484. If Derrett thought that Lk. 12:52-53 contained a periphrastic future perfect, it is not clear to the author of this thesis that Lk. 12:52-53 contains a periphrastic future perfect.

485. Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C., *Matthew 8-18*, p. 638.

486. *Ibid.*, p. 638.

487. Cadbury, "Meaning", p. 252.

and to Fanning's claims that Mt. 16:19 and 18:18 "emphasize the *permanence* of their actions: whatever they decide will be confirmed in heaven."⁴⁸⁸

These comments compete with the earlier claim that Matthew's choosing the periphrastic future perfect to indicate a heavenly action prior to the earthly action (even if only logically prior in many cases) provides the best explanation for those periphrastics. A better explanation for the perfect form, Cadbury, Fanning, or Davies and Allison might say, is that Matthew wanted to emphasize the finality or indicate its permanence. This is problematic, though, because Matthew would have been aware of the dual temporal reference of the perfect, and would have felt some constraint about using it if the context and content of the statement did not make it clear what the temporal reference was. But by 16:19b-c, Matthew has already indicated at different points his conviction about divine influence in human behavior, and even shortly before 18:18, the parable of the lost sheep emphasizes such divine agency. Accordingly, the proposals of Cadbury and Davies and Allison do not seem to provide a better explanation. Possible? Yes. Better? No. Matthew's repeated emphasis on divine influence prior to Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18 shows a sensitivity to the issue of order that would not have been simply discarded or ignored when choosing a verbal form in Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18. The context provided by his emphasis on divine influence means that Fanning, Cadbury, and Davies and Allison's interpretation is not the best explanation, even if it is possible.

488. Fanning, "Verbal Aspect in NT Greek", p. 323.

Much of the linguistic evidence is also not compelling. In Lk. 12:52-53, the future form of εἰμί and the perfect participle are separated by eight words (or seven if it is not appropriate to count the γάρ). It is not clear that the εἰμί and perfect participle are to be taken as a future periphrastic. The future "perfect" periphrastic form found in Isa. 8:17 LXX, from which Heb. 2:13 pulls, and in 2 Sam. 22:3 LXX, are all periphrastics of the verb πειθώ. The problem with appealing to this verb is that it has relevant characteristics that δέω and λύω lack. Its meaning of 'to persuade' resulted in its perfect active form being a natural tool of expressing the idea of 'to trust', and the perfect active form generally became at least somewhat stereotypical and lost much of its double sense of temporal reference. The verb πειθώ was one of the verbs in regard to which Carson attributed to Turner and Zerwick the assertion that "where finite perfects have some force other than the normal perfect in the NT, they tend to be in well known-stereotyped forms"⁴⁸⁹ (see discussion in chapter two). In light of this, appealing to specific examples of a future perfect periphrastic of πειθώ does not do much to persuade.

5. Conclusion

One of the most contentious issues in dealing with the binding and loosing sayings in Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18 is the issue of order. Does heaven's binding and loosing come logically after earth's binding and loosing? Is it the reverse? This chapter has put forth a positive argument for the logical order of binding and loosing being from heaven to earth. Accordingly, the future perfect translation 'will have been bound ... will have been loosed' is to be preferred over the

489. Carson, D. A., *Matthew 13-28*, p. 372.

simple future translation 'will be bound ... will be loosed'. This future perfect translation expresses Matthew's view that heaven's binding and loosing is logically prior to earth's binding and loosing in Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18. The chapter also evaluated Stanley Porter's verbal aspect theory and some arguments against a heaven-first order. Both Porter's verbal aspect theory and his application of it fail to be persuasive. Also unpersuasive are arguments put forth by others against a heaven-first order. The linguistic evidence supports the conclusion that in Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18, what is bound or loosed on earth would already have been bound or loosed in heaven.

IV. A Critique of Some Views of the Binding and Loosing Statement(s) of Mt. 16:19b-c and/or Mt. 18:18

Previous chapters have presented a positive case for this thesis' new interpretation of Mt. 18:18-20. The case for this interpretation may be made yet stronger by demonstrating that other interpretations suffer from one or more defects that render them less plausible. This chapter will present some criticisms of other interpretations of binding and loosing in Mt. 16:19b-c and/or Mt. 18:18.

Before delving into some of these criticisms, one point is worth making. The history of interpretation in the first chapter showed that scholar(s) who thought that taking the binding and loosing statement of Mt. 18:18 as granting authority for determination of what is and is not sin also thought that this goes hand in hand with determination of whether someone is forgiven of sin and determination of whether that person is a true member of the disciple community. There is a valid insight in such a composite view. Some connection between differing views of binding and loosing seems appropriate, and criticisms of one view may accordingly affect the plausibility of another view. Although this chapter will present criticisms under different headings, such presentation is not meant to discourage the observation that criticisms of one view may affect the plausibility of another.

1. Declaration of Forgiveness of Sin

Schlatter and others have entertained the idea that binding and loosing have to do with forgiving or not forgiving sin. But the forgiving or not forgiving of sin is based on what one might call the law of repentance. The disciple knows that his forgiving a brother or not doing so is in accord with heaven because God forgives people based on whether or not they repent of sin. The disciple can thus know that his loosing or binding is mirrored in heaven or mirrors heaven. But this is not really giving the disciple a power to affect whether or not some other person is forgiven. If the person repented, and if the disciple chose not to forgive that person, the disciple would be refusing to act in accord with heaven's law of repentance, and his binding would be out of step with heaven's loosing.

There is much to commend in this view of binding and loosing. It avoids absurdity. It is not a useless saying, but supports the claim that heaven's forgiveness is based on repentance. It also make sense of what is bound or loosed on earth also being bound or loosed in heaven. The main criticism of this view is that it does not give a fully satisfactory account for the periphrastic future perfects. If the sinner of Mt. 18:18 repents immediately upon confrontation, and if his sin is immediately loosed by the one who confronted him, what is to be done with the language indicating a heaven-first order? Is it just that God's reflexes are much faster than the one who confronted the sinner and so God would always manage to forgive the sinner just before the one who confronts the sinner would forgive him? That seems an implausible explanation for the periphrastic future perfects. The interpretation of this thesis gives a better explanation. The

periphrastic future perfects are expressing the theological conviction of divine influence in repentance, in a similar way that Matthew expressed divine influence for other activities prior to Mt. 18.

If it is claimed that heaven has acted first because God has already revealed his own law that he grants or withholds forgiveness based on whether a person repents, a different criticism arises. The verbs in Mt. 18:18 are action verbs, and there is both binding and loosing. A past decree of heaven's law of repentance does not by itself account for both the activeness of binding and the activeness of loosing in Mt. 18:18.

A third comment is also worth making. Mt. 16:19 is said to Peter. If his binding and loosing is merely the declaration that those who repent are forgiven and that those who do not repent are unforgiven, and not also an indication of divine influence in repentance, such declaration would be something that even non-disciples could do. The binding and loosing statement in Mt. 16:19 thus would not say much that could not be said of others were they to engage in the type of mission that Peter and others would undertake, or even of non-believers were they to develop an interest in pronouncing forgiveness or non-forgiveness based on who repents and who does not. A non-disciple could bind himself and be just as right (and no different) than if Peter were to bind him.

2. An Interpretive Dilemma and Attempts to Limit the Scope of Binding and Loosing

One interpretive route taken by some commentators⁴⁹⁰ is that binding and loosing deal with determination of what is morally right and wrong, and still others that binding and loosing have to do with making such a determination through interpretation or application of scripture. But here questions need to be asked. Does this authority apply to anything disciples might say? If binding and loosing are about determination of what is and is not sin through interpretation and/or application of scripture, is just any appeal to a scriptural text, however good, bad, or absurd the logic, sufficient to make the determination something that defines for others what is sin? To answer in the affirmative is simply absurd. On that view, Peter or a group of disciples could find some clever scriptural reasoning to claim that they should worship a female goddess alongside God himself, and on this view Jesus would be saying that heaven would ratify this.

To answer negatively, though, undercuts the supposed rationale for giving the saying. Denying the universal application of Mt. 16:19 and of 18:18 makes the binding and loosing statement of these verses useless for the community of disciples, since it implicitly grants a group of disciples, or even one disciple, the right (and even the duty?) to test Peter's claim or the claim of a group of disciples that what Peter or the group says should be done is really supported by scripture. If Peter or a group of disciples attempted to impose on a self-professed disciple their view of what is sin, and if it is possible that their interpretation of scripture was not justified

490. See section 1.(c).(iv)-(v) in the history of interpretation section in chapter one.

by scriptural reasoning such that their determination was not correct, then the disciple on whom such a determination would be imposed might simply respond that a majority of disciples have misinterpreted scripture. Certainly Jesus thought that many religious leaders in his day misinterpreted scripture and even criticized some of them quite strongly for imposing unnecessary burdens (cf. Mt. 23:1-4). He would have been quite supportive of a minority holding out against a majority on the claim that the majority did not interpret scripture correctly. If one accepts that the disciple is right and Peter or the group wrong, and yet still maintains that Jesus is affirming that what Peter or the group decides is bound in heaven, then we have an otherwise prophetically-minded Jesus putting the opinion of the majority over truth, and saying that heaven will accede. In this case, the saying does have a sociological function. It grants Peter or a group of disciples some basis for squelching prophetic dissent, but it does so at the cost of an utterly implausible Jesus. If the disciple can object that Peter's interpretation or the interpretation of a group of disciples is unsound, then Mt. 16:19 and 18:18 would not serve a sociological function. They would not justify the group in imposing its determination of sin on the disciple. They would be sociologically useless.

Nor would it be true that Mt. 16:19 and 18:18 give personal assurance to Peter or a group of disciples that their judgment is correct. One might say that, even if this interpretation of Mt. 16:19 and 18:18 makes them useless for church governance, they still might provide the individual disciple with the comfort that what he or she has concluded about the scriptural interpretation or application is correct. Yet what good would this be? Two sides to a disagreement might both think that Jesus' words are for them, that Jesus is telling each of them that what they

have decided about the interpretation or application of scripture has been ratified in heaven. We are not plausibly to think that heaven ratifies both an assertion and its negation. And if both sides have the sense to see that this is obviously not what was meant, then the question of who is in the right still lingers, and Jesus' words do nothing to resolve the issue, nor to comfort the disciple that his interpretation or application of scripture is right. Even if this were not the case, it is implausible to think that Jesus is encouraging individual disciples to have an idiosyncratic and schismatic confidence in their own interpretation or application of scripture. There simply is no satisfactory rationale for giving the binding and loosing saying on the traditional interpretation if it is to avoid absurdity. The problem is even greater if Mt. 16:19 and 18:18 gives Peter and disciples a power of binding and loosing that need not justify itself by appeal to scripture. It is even more absurd to say that Mt. 16:19 and 18:18 give Peter and disciples unfettered authority to declare anything right and anything wrong that they wish, whether or not they have scriptural support to back it up.

That Jesus' words obviously do not mean this has the logical consequence that a disciple may be justified in disagreeing with Peter or a group of disciples when Peter or the group says that one thing is wrong and the one disciple thinks it is morally acceptable. Jesus' words do not adjudicate the disagreement, nor say who is really correct. The sayings would thus be sociologically useless for the community of disciples, and would do nothing to discourage schism nor the idiosyncratic disciple. We are again left without a convincing answer as to why such a saying would even be given. If they are to avoid absurdity, neither saying would justify

Peter or a group of disciples in imposing on another disciple determinations of what Peter or disciples think is sin.

The saying would also be useless for even justifying the majority in their own eyes. If some judgments could be wrong, Mt. 18:18 certainly gives no guidance about which binding and loosing would be ratified in heaven and which would not be. So disciples in the majority are offered no real assurance that their binding and loosing really is ratified in heaven. Even for Peter or those in the majority, Mt. 18:18 would be a useless saying. On traditional interpretation of Mt. 16:19 and 18:18, whether it is a broad power of determining what is sin or one limited to interpretation and/or application of scripture, the verse leads to absurdity or uselessness. It posits a Matthean Jesus who loses good sense or who has no reason to say what he supposedly said. Absurdity or uselessness are the Scylla and Charybdis of traditional interpretation of Mt. 18:18.

The dilemma described above does not apply to the interpretation of this thesis. In this thesis, Mt. 16:19b-c emphasizes a theological point about God's influence in human behavior that Matthew elsewhere emphasizes. It does the same thing in regard to repentance in 18:18, but in 18:18, the statement also has a sociological function. It serves as a warning. If God influences the sinner to come toward repentance, then disciples would make themselves unlike God if they refused to welcome back a repentant sinner.

Although some scholars have ignored the dilemma,⁴⁹¹ others scholars have recognized a need to limit the binding and loosing statement of Mt. 18:18 and have given some rationale for

491. For examples of the dilemma being ignored, see Strack, Hermann Leberecht, & Paul Billerbeck, *Matthäus* and Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C., *Matthew 8-18*.

doing so. Some of these attempts deserve attention. This section will examine some strategies that have been used to soften interpretation of Mt. 18:18.

(a) Appeal to Mt. 18:19-20 and Mt. 6:9-13

The history of interpretation provided in the first chapter showed that different commentators have appealed to the context of Mt. 18:18-20 as a limiter of the scope of binding and loosing and of the supposed prayer of Mt. 18:19-20. Of course it is true that context is relevant to understanding Mt. 18:18-20, as it is with many passages, but in this case, some reservation needs to be expressed. The wording of Mt. 18:19-20 is such that explanations offered for these verses are not entirely satisfactory.

The first concern has to do with the scope of the supposed prayer in Mt. 18:19. The wording of that verse is simply too broad to be limited to the situation of Mt. 18:15-17. Only two need agree for the prayer to be answered, according to the traditional interpretation. Derrett rightly recognized that this leads to absurdity. Nolland tried to connect the two or three with those who bind or loose in Mt. 18:18 and with the church of Mt. 18:17. But this is a strange reading of these verses. According to Nolland, the 'church' of Mt. 18:15-17 can be composed of as little as two persons in Mt. 18:19, and it is this church which can do the binding or loosing in Mt. 18:18.⁴⁹² But Mt. 18:16 already envisions two or three persons confronting the sinner, and then Mt. 18:17 envisions the church as a larger group than just the two or three persons of Mt.

492. On p. 749 of his commentary, Nolland remarks, "Presumably the agreement between the two is meant to exclude inappropriate requests. With this qualification, v. 19 represents a more expansive statement of the asking and receiving aspect of 7:7-8. However, in the present context 'two of you' appears to be the minimal group to function as the 'you' of v. 18 and therefore as the 'church' of v. 17."

18:16. On Nolland's definition, there already is a 'church' in Mt. 18:16, but for Matthew the church is a larger group. Is the third step of the process in Mt. 18:17 unnecessary because there is already a gathered 'church' in Mt. 18:16 on Nolland's definition? If the disciple who sins in Mt. 18:15 can find just one person to agree with him, which could surely happen for many questionable behaviors (if Mt. 18:18 is dealing with questionable behavior that needs the judgment of a 'church'), are we to think of conflicting 'churches' who each have heavenly ratification for their binding and loosing? The text of Mt. 18:15-17 does not support Nolland's attempt to define the church as something composed of as little as two persons. The wording of Mt. 18:19 thus applies to a group smaller than a whole church.

There would accordingly be disagreement between the scope of Mt. 18:19 and the scope of Mt. 18:18. If Mt. 18:19 is what justifies and describes the activity of the church in Mt. 18:18, it also justifies much more. Mt. 18:19 would justify even two dissenting persons in their binding and loosing just as much as it would justify the majority in its binding and loosing. But to justify both groups is to abolish the idea of justification and render useless or void the claim that binding and loosing are ratified in heaven or come from heaven. The wording of Mt. 18:19 goes too far, and does not prevent absurdity in traditional interpretation of Mt. 18:18 or 18:19. Derrett's claim that traditional interpretation of Mt. 18:19 is absurd is a justified claim. To limit the scope of Mt. 18:18 by appeal to Mt. 18:19 as traditionally interpreted does not avoid absurdity.

Luz recognizes some of the difficulty involved in traditional interpretation of the prayer. After asking "For whom is the promise valid that Christ will be with two or three who

gather in his name?", he gives some history of interpretation and his own assessment of the scope of Mt. 18:19. He has the following.

As early as Cyprian the opinion was expressed that the promise could not apply to schismatics. Does Christ countenance private conventicles outside the church? With his promise Christ certainly does not want to "separate people from the church" that he has created and established! Theophylactus observes: "Annas and Caiaphas also were in agreement!" What about the situation when churches pray against each other in the name of Christ? Is it enough with the Protestants to appeal to the word of God that is the basis of every true Christian community? Maldonat argues, not without justification, that such an appeal is not enough, since God's word is ambiguous and must be interpreted; that is why we must have church councils. Clearly it is easy for all who regard themselves as Christians to lay claim to the promise of Matt 18:20 for themselves, but it is difficult to agree (*συμφορέω*!) on criteria that keep groups and confessions from making absolute claims on their own behalf based on this promise. In my judgment, it is especially important to remember here that v. 20 intends to be understood as a marvelous *divine* assurance, but we are not justified in using divine assurances and promises to strengthen our own claims to legitimacy.⁴⁹³

What strikes one from the above quote is the *ad hoc* nature of limiting the text.

Interpreters feel that it is too broad to be taken as having no exceptions, and thus look for a way to limit it. But such limitation is imposed on the text, which by itself is quite expansive in scope.

When there is an alternative interpretation of the verse that does not need to engage in such an *ad hoc* attempt at limitation and respects the text as it is, that interpretation, *ceteris paribus*, is to be preferred. This, or something like it, is the situation created by the new interpretation offered in this thesis, at least in comparison to some traditional interpretations of the verse, if not to all of

493. Luz, Ulrich, *Matthew 8-20*, p. 461.

them.⁴⁹⁴ Attempts to read Mt. 18:18 in light of Mt. 18:19-20, and to read Mt. 18:19-20 in light of Mt. 18:15-18 end up importing from one section to another limitations that are not in the texts themselves. This thesis also reads one section in light of the other, but its interpretation of Mt. 18:19 at least has a basis in the text of Mt. 18:19 for taking the verse as indicating divine influence in reconciliation of two persons on a matter of conflict. Attempts to limit the scope of Mt. 18:19 by appeal to Mt. 18:15-18, and to limit Mt. 18:18 by appeal to Mt. 18:19-20 impose limits on the texts not from the actual verses themselves, but from the context. Even then, such attempts are not convincing. But even if they were, this thesis has the advantage of needing no such contextual limitation, and accordingly does more justice to the texts as they are found in Matthew.

Like Nolland, Thompson's explanation is also unconvincing. He thinks that "The disciple and the brother who has sinned (v. 15a) along with the witnesses (v. 16) and the larger assembly (v. 17a) are the ones who bind and loose (v. 18) and who reach an agreement in prayer (v. 19) and gather to invoke the name of Jesus (v. 20)."⁴⁹⁵ Thompson also says that the sinner

"and the disciple who convinced him (along with others) release his sin on earth, and at the same time it is released in heaven (v. 18). In other words, when they reach an agreement and offer it to the Father in prayer, he infallibly grants their petition (v. 19). For they pray in the name of Jesus who himself is present in their midst (v. 20)."⁴⁹⁶

494. The interpretation of Derrett (and Carson, who largely follows him) has its own ailment from which the interpretation of this thesis does not suffer.

495. Thompson, W. G., *Matthew's Advice*, p. 202.

496. *Ibid.*, p. 202.

In the first chapter, some indication was given that there is much to commend in Thompson's view of binding and loosing. Though the binding of the sinner by others in Mt. 18:18 is more restricted, Thompson's words indicate that binding and loosing is something that even the sinner does. In some sense, this seems right. The sinner in his repentance separates himself from his sin and renounces it; he 'looses' it from himself. When he continues to cling to his sin and not renounce it, he binds it to himself, and other disciples treat him as he treats himself. Less convincing is his explanation of Mt. 18:19-20. Of course it is true in Matthew's theology that a disciple goes to the Lord in prayer and seeks his forgiveness, forgiveness which then is granted by heaven itself. This is clear in the Lord's prayer (Mt. 6:9-13).

But this is not convincing as an explanation for Mt. 18:19 and 18:20 because of the mention of more than one disciple. Though it is true that the Lord's prayer uses first persons plural forms, it would be unjustified to think that this requires that one must have another disciple present in order for the prayer's request for forgiveness to be granted. For the Lord's prayer, there is no need of a second disciple joining the one praying in order for forgiveness to be granted. In a similar way that each disciple would be judged individually based on whether he or she forgave other(s) (Mt. 18:35), a single disciple may go to God himself without any others in order to receive forgiveness. The mention of two disciples agreeing in prayer in Mt. 18:19 thus looks out of place. The second disciple is superfluous, and this makes Thompson's explanation for Mt. 18:19 unconvincing. Thompson's explanation does not suffer from the same absurdity as some other explanations. Still, if he maintains that a second disciple is necessary for forgiveness to be granted to the sinner of Mt. 18:15, not only does this conflict with what is found in Mt.

6:9-13, but it would also mean that Thompson's interpretation has some similarity with interpretations that grant disciples power to withhold forgiveness with the consequence of heaven withholding forgiveness (see below).

In his section dealing with Mt. 18:18, Schweizer remarks that

In the present context, the idea is that what the community decides to bind or loose will be ratified by God; "anything" probably refers, as in 1 Corinthians 6:1, to a "dispute" between members of the community. The authority of the community's words is thus the authority they gain through prayer. It is assumed, of course, just as in 7:7-11, that the community prays according to God's will, as Jesus taught his disciples to pray in the Lord's prayer.⁴⁹⁷

At first glance, Schweizer's appeal has some merit. Mt. 6:8-13 does indicate that disciples are to pray that God's will would be done. One would therefore have some basis for saying that Jesus' teaching on prayer could be assumed later in the gospel. But neither Mt. 6:8-13 nor Mt. 18:18-20 says what God's will is on many matters about which disciples in Mt. 18:18 could make some determination about what is right or wrong. This means that, if Mt. 18:19 is limiting the scope of Mt. 18:18, disciples will not be able to know that what they bind or loose is also bound in heaven in so far as they are uncertain about whether something is really the will of God. Mt. 18:18 thus would not give disciples assurance that heaven ratifies what disciples do, nor would it give assurance for imposing their view of what is right or wrong on another disciple. That other disciple might simply say that in the particular case, what they are binding or loosing is not the will of God. Even if Mt. 6:9-13 limits the scope of Mt. 18:19, Mt. 18:18 would still be absurd or

497. Schweizer, Eduard, *Matthew*, p. 374.

useless. It would be useless sociologically against other disciples, and it would fail to give assurance to disciples who bind or loose or who would like to bind or loose.

(b) Appeal to Common Sense

One method of limiting the application of the binding and loosing statements is by appeal to common sense. But if such a move is valid, one might ask if there is any objective criterion to choose between absurdity being cause for limiting the application of a statement and its being a cause for rejecting it. Consider here the two different conclusions Derrett reaches in response to the absurdity of an unlimited reading of Mt. 18:18 and of Mt. 18:19, two verses right next to each other. Derrett rejected traditional interpretation of Mt. 18:19 because he thought it was absurd. But in his article dealing with binding and loosing, he says that "On the surface vv 19-20, if taken as an appendage to v 18, authorize legislation even by two or three (!): a recipe for chaos. They must therefore have another meaning, and not necessarily the prayer to readmit a fallen brother!"⁴⁹⁸ Evidently, Derrett not only thinks absurdity an appropriate hermeneutical heuristic for elimination of a possible interpretation, he even thinks that 'resulting in chaos' would be an appropriate heuristic also. But when Derrett considers binding and loosing, he ignores this heuristic and takes common sense as limiting the scope of some saying and not as a substantive objection to it. "Heaven will ratify the acts of the designated persons, no condition being subjoined. Common sense would add that an abuse of the power would render its exercise void, but nothing is said about that."⁴⁹⁹

498. Derrett, "Binding and Loosing", p. 113.

499. Ibid., p. 113.

Such methodological inconsistency does not inspire confidence, but on behalf of Derrett it might be said that such appeal to common sense is similar to the interpretive move made by most exegetes in regard to expansive promises about prayer. It is obvious that to take such prayer promises as applying to any prayer whatsoever is unreasonable, if not absurd. Derrett asks that something similar be done for Mt. 18:18. Despite the appeal of such an approach, there is one significant and crucial difference between the two cases. In the case of prayer promises, one can discern the reason for the hyperbole. It is rhetorically effective, while at the same time it is obvious that it is not meant to apply to any prayer whatever. One would search in vain for a similar reason for uttering the binding and loosing sayings. If they only apply in some cases, then those to whom Peter or a group of disciples would want their decisions, interpretations, or applications to apply could simply dismiss such things as falling outside the purview of Jesus' saying. In making the binding and loosing statements not universally applicable, one empties the sayings of all usefulness for their ostensible purpose. We are again back in the troublesome spot of looking for a convincing rationale for giving the sayings, but there is none to be found. On Derrett's view, Matthew's Jesus is the first century counterpart of a contemporary politician, addressing a problem or potential problem with words that do nothing to alleviate it.

(c) Appeal to the Teaching of Jesus

Nolland's attempt to have binding and loosing deal with the teaching of Jesus fares somewhat better than interpretations of binding and loosing dealing with interpretation and/or application of scripture. It does not totally escape the problem, though. If Jesus affirmed that Old Testament commandments are binding, would this make his view subject to much of the same

criticism that can be directed towards those who would have binding and loosing deal with interpretation and/or application of scripture? If not, there is another consideration. Nolland's interpretation has even less support linguistically than binding and loosing as dealing with interpretation of scripture. At least in rabbinic circles, there is a clear understanding of binding and loosing. It deals with interpretation and/or application of scripture. But in having binding and loosing deal with teaching of Jesus, Nolland moves away from the rabbinic evidence, which thus provides less support for his view than it does for those who have binding and loosing deal with interpretation of scripture. Further, the context of Mt. 18:18 does not give much textual evidence for Nolland's attempt to have binding and loosing deal with teaching of Jesus. In 16:17-19, there would be some basis for this view if one were to interpret the keys of the kingdom as being a large amount of teaching of Jesus, but that is a debatable and implausible interpretation that has not even been on the radar screen of most commentators. Nolland's interpretation seems more of an *ad hoc* interpretation than a textually based one.

(d) Appeal to the Possession of the Holy Spirit or the Guidance of Jesus

Derrett does provide a qualification additional to common sense, though he goes outside Matthew to get it. "The power conveyed by Christ is not rabbinical: it is conveyed to the faithful (Matt 16:16-17), and not to a hierarchy. The qualifications are, according to John, searching, for they imply possession of the Holy Spirit."⁵⁰⁰ The relevant passage here is from John 20:22-23,

500. Ibid., p. 116. Morris, Leon, *Matthew*, p. 469 has a similar thought.

where Jesus says to disciples, according to NRSV, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." But it is not clear how relevant this passage is for interpreting Mt. 16:19 and 18:18. Indeed, the passage is a double-edged sword for Derrett. On the one hand, he wants to push aside the interpretation of 16:19 and 18:18 as dealing with forgiveness of sins, a position that John 20:23 would seem to support, and yet on the other he wants to use John 20:23 as suggesting a qualification of Mt. 18:18.

If Derrett's appeal to Jn. 20:23 is appropriate, and if Peter or disciples' granting forgiveness in 20:23 is an earthly event logically or temporally following after its heavenly counterpart, then it seems that it would also be appropriate to interpret the binding and loosing of 16:19 and 18:18 in light of the forgiveness of sin or non-forgiveness of sin in Jn. 20:23. Derrett cannot convincingly have it both ways. If appealing to Jn. 20:22-23 is legitimate for interpretation of Mt. 16:19 and 18:18, then this would favor interpreting the two nearly identical statements in those verses as dealing with forgiveness or lack thereof, and not as granting some absolute authority for saying what is right and what is wrong. If the appeal is not legitimate, then his suggesting that Mt. 18:18 be qualified by possession of the Holy Spirit must rest on text(s) other than Jn. 20:23 if it is to rest on anything.

If Jn. 20:23 is the only basis for such an appeal, and if the appeal is illegitimate, then Derrett's appeal would be based only on his assertion.⁵⁰¹ Whether or not one must depend on Jn.

501. So too would be the appeal of Morris (*Ibid.*, p. 469).

20:23 for interpreting Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18 is another matter. For now, it may simply be said that one can interpret Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18 as dealing with forgiveness and non-forgiveness of sin without an appeal to Jn. 20:23.

A different though similar path is advocated by Kingsbury. He says that "Matthaean Christians also know themselves to be living in the presence of the exalted Messiah Son of God, who is one with the earthly Messiah, for he has promised to be 'with them' to the end of time (28:20)."; shortly thereafter, he says "Indeed, within the church of Matthew it is the entire community that gathers together in the name of the exalted Jesus and so decides the matters of doctrine and of discipline (18:18-20). Under his guidance, the decisions of the community square with 'all that I [(the earthly) Jesus] have commanded you' (28:20)."⁵⁰²

Kingsbury's claim is that church members would not err because the exalted Jesus would be with them. Powell makes a similar claim when he says that "the authority to bind and loose is grounded in Matthew's christological claims—the church possesses such authority not because Christians have shown themselves to be wiser or more faithful than Pharisees but because Christ dwells in their midst (18:20; cf. 28:20)."⁵⁰³ For both Powell and Kingsbury, the guidance of the risen Jesus would prevent its decisions from error.

In evaluation of Derrett, Powell, and Kingsbury, it may be admitted that Matthew does envision the Spirit of 'your father' speaking through a disciple (Mt. 10:19-20), and affirms that the Lord spoke through prophets (cf. 1:22; 2:15). If the appeal is to be unsuccessful, it will not be

502. Kingsbury, "Figure of Peter", pp. 82-83.

503. Powell, "Binding and Loosing Paradigm", p. 443.

for a Matthean theology that lacks God's power to speak through persons. If God or his spirit can speak through persons, it is plausible that the exalted Jesus would be able to do so (or would be able to do through the Spirit). Even with this acknowledgement, though, an appeal to the possession of the Spirit or the guidance of Jesus fails to offer a convincing rationale for Mt. 18:18, and maybe also for 16:19b-c. Horizontally, Mt. 18:18 would be useless for group conflict. Even were everyone in a community of disciples to be agreed against one member, that member might still claim that he is the one who has really received the guidance of the exalted Jesus or of the Spirit, and that others have somehow failed to receive or heed such guidance. Jesus certainly would not have endorsed the view that just because a majority of self-professed disciples decided on some issue, their decision is therefore right, and he who knew he would die an unjust death and who denounced many of his own generation also would not have endorsed the attainment of group cohesion by expulsion of a recalcitrant member even if the group was wrong. Nor, given this, does it seem likely that his intent would be to encourage the two sides of some disagreement to think that their conflicting positions were both somehow from the same Lord. An appeal to the guidance of Jesus attributes an undue lack of intelligence to him or an incomprehensibility that seems ill-suited to what is known of him.

One might attempt to limit the guidance of Jesus only to Peter and 16:19b-c, but if 18:18 is nearly identical to 16:19b-c, such a limitation would appear to be merely an *ad hoc* limitation made not so much on exegetical grounds as to save an interpretation from being abandoned.

Kingsbury, though, rejects this approach, and so does Derrett.⁵⁰⁴ Both Kingsbury and Derrett

504. Kingsbury, "Figure of Peter", p. 81; Derrett, "Binding and Loosing", p. 113. For Kingsbury's

interpret the two statements similarly and keep Peter from being put on a pedestal. Although this means that their interpretations avoid a suspicion of special pleading, it also makes it subject to the criticism given above.

Another consideration discourages adopting Kingsbury's rationale for 18:18. Mt. 10:19-20 is about a specific situation of witness, and many of the prophets through whom the Lord spoke were themselves minority figures, speaking out against a majority's failure to truly follow the Lord. If Matthew's Jesus knew that the church would be infiltrated by those whom he would deny at the time of judgment (see 7:15-23 and the next section), he would be under no illusion that the community of disciples would be free from pernicious influence.

(e) Appeal to the Corpus Mixtum and to Jesus' Low View of His Disciples

This section has three parts. The first part examines France's rationale in limiting the scope of binding and loosing and finds it unconvincing. But the approach that he takes touches on Matthew's presentation of disciples, an issue of some discussion among scholars. The second section accordingly examines scholarly opinion regarding Matthew's characterization of Peter and disciples. Whether or not one finds France's rationale persuasive, it is true that how one views Matthew's presentation of disciples would affect how plausible one would think the proposal is that in Mt. 18:18, Jesus grants to disciples some broad and sweeping authority. Given that Mt. 16:19b-c is directed to Peter and is nearly identical to Mt. 18:18, it may also be of

criticism of treating 16:19 differently than 18:18 such that Peter has a special place above other disciples, see below.

particular interest to examine how Matthew portrays Peter. From an examination of scholarly opinion regarding Matthew's presentation of disciples and of Peter, it would then be appropriate to step back, analyze's France rationale, and render an assessment on the question of Matthew's characterization of disciples and of Peter and what significance that has for interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18.

(i) France's appeal to the corpus mixtum and to Jesus' low view of disciples

France recognizes the problem of the expansiveness of the binding and loosing sayings when he asks "Does Matthew intend by this formula to confer unquestionable authority on the decisions of fallible members of the disciple community? Or is there implicit here a promise of infallibility?"⁵⁰⁵ Even France recognizes, though, that there may be cases where the revelation would be absent or insufficient to the task. The possibility of the absence of sufficient revelation prompts even him to wonder about some limit to the supposed authority given to disciples. His two-part answer to this conundrum is remarkable. He calls attention to

the obvious fallibility of the disciples in general and of Peter in particular, a prominent feature of the Marcan tradition which Matthew does not gloss over, and even goes out of his way to emphasize by his distinctive use of terms like ὀλιγόπιστος ('of little faith') and διστάζω ('to hesitate, doubt') with reference both to the disciples in general (6:30; 8:26; 16:8; 17:20; 28:17) and to Peter (14:31), by the striking juxtaposition already mentioned of the special role of Peter as foundation-stone with his actual performance as stumbling-stone, σκάνδαλον (16:18, 23), and by the recognition in the verses preceding 18:18 that the same

505. France, R. T., *Evangelist and Teacher*, pp. 249-250.

disciples who constitute the ἐκκλησία to which the pronouncement is made are quite capable of proving themselves to be σκάνδαλα to one another (18:6-9).⁵⁰⁶

The second part of France's response is to use this evidence to qualify his interpretation of Mt. 18:18 rather than reject it. He writes that "There is an inevitable tension between these two factors, the frightening responsibility of passing on the decrees of heaven and the all too clear fallibility of the actual people to whom this responsibility is delegated. Matthew does not offer a direct resolution of this tension".⁵⁰⁷ He then says that Matthew's letting the two factors stand side by side suggests that we ought to be cautious of

assuming that he held so naive a view of the authority of the church that he saw no problem in endorsing any and every pronouncement made by a group of disciples. The ideal of the clear communication of the will of heaven through the presence of Jesus among his people must always be balanced by the fallibility and self-interest to which those people continue to be prone, and the recognition that it is not always easy in practice to discern where the true people of God is to be found (a problem of which Matthew was well aware, ...). So, for all Matthew's 'high' view of the authority delegated to Peter and the church, the overall perspective of his work does not encourage us to see this as a primarily 'ecclesiastical' gospel in the sense that it focuses attention on an institutional church as itself the locus of authority. ... the 'church' which emerges is not a shining army with banners, but a relatively unstructured gathering of 'little ones' who belong to Jesus, a body which impresses the reader more with its vulnerability and need of correction than with a sense of awe.⁵⁰⁸

France's reasoning is remarkable. Normally, one would think that a lower view of a person's abilities would involve the belief that the person would be less likely to reach a correct decision about controversial matters, and so the evidence cited by France would provide some ground for rejecting the interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18 as either granting power to

506. Ibid., p. 250.

507. Ibid., pp. 250-251.

508. Ibid., p. 251.

declare what is right and wrong or to apply or interpret scripture for controversial matters. That France instead uses this low view of disciples to qualify and not reject this interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18 seems born out of the prior conviction that this is what Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18 are about. Rather than reject evidence, France reinterprets that with which the evidence is incompatible. The methodology does not engender trust in the conclusion. It is the more striking when such authority is found nowhere else in Matthew outside of Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18. The closest one would get is Mt. 19:28, which does not promise authority for determining right or wrong or guidance in judgment. It would be still more striking if one goes with Powell and sees Matthew portraying disciples as if they were so uneducated that they received from scribes and Pharisees knowledge of scripture.⁵⁰⁹

Even if France's method were appropriate, France has only steered clear of one horn of the dilemma. He has fallen on the other. On his view, there is no convincing rationale for Jesus even to have said these binding and loosing statements. A dissenting disciple might simply say that Peter has stepped beyond the bounds of Jesus' words, or that a group of disciples have. Jesus speaks in vain in France's interpretation. It seems better to take France's low view of disciples as a valid objection and look for a different interpretation than to corral the text of Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18 into a mold against which its language chafes.

509. Cf. Mt. 17:10, Mt. 23:2-3 and Powell's article that deals with material from these passages (Powell, "Do and Keep").

(ii) Contemporary scholarship on the characterization of disciples and Peter

Not all scholars share France's view regarding Matthew's characterization of disciples and Peter. In a more positive view, there would be less room to argue against typical interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18 from Matthew's characterization of disciples and of Peter outside of those passages. There is not room in the main portion of this thesis to fully cover Matthew's characterization of disciples and Peter. Appendix B takes a thorough and sustained look at the subject and concludes that material outside of Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18 provides significant evidence against typical interpretation of these passages.

The present section, though, is concerned to look at contemporary opinion regarding Matthew's characterization of disciples and Peter and note some of the features that provide some counter-balance to a negative view of the portrayal of disciples and Peter. There has been a sizeable body of literature that deals directly or indirectly with portrayal of disciples⁵¹⁰ or of

510. Cf. Sheridan, M. (1973). "Disciples and Discipleship in Matthew and Luke". *Biblical Theology Bulletin*, 3, 235-255; Edwards, Richard A. (1985). "Uncertain Faith: Matthew's Portrait of Disciples". In Segovia, Fernando F. (Ed.), *Discipleship in the New Testament*. Philadelphia: Fortress. ; Edwards, R. A. (1997). *Matthew's Narrative Portrait of Disciples: How the Text-Connoted Reader Is Informed*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity; Wilkins, Michael J. (1988). *The Concept of Disciple in Matthew's Gospel: As Reflected in the Use of the Term Μαθητής* (Supplements to Novum Testamentum Vol. 59). Leiden: Brill; Wilkins, Michael J. (1992). "Named and Unnamed Disciples in Matthew: A Literary-Theological Study". *SBL Seminar Papers*, 1991, 418-439; Minear, Paul S. (1974). "The Disciples and the Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew". *Anglican Theological Review Supplemental Series III*, 28-44; Trotter, Andrew H. (1986). *Understanding and Stumbling: A Study of the Disciples' Understanding of Jesus and His Teaching in the Gospel of Matthew*. ; Aarde, Andries G. (1994). "The Disciples in Matthew's Story". *Hervormde Theologische Studies*, 5, 87-104; Kingsbury, Jack Dean. (1988). *Matthew as Story* (Revised edition ed.). Philadelphia: Fortress, pp. 13-17; Powell, Mark Allan. (1992). *Direct and Indirect Phraseology in the Gospel of Matthew* (SBL Seminar Papers Vol. 1991). , pp. 410-412, 417; Orton, David E. (1989). "The Understanding Scribe: Matthew and the Apocalyptic Ideal". *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series*, 25; Luz, Ulrich. (1983). "The Disciples in the Gospel According to Matthew". In

Peter,⁵¹¹ and there is certainly not room here to examine, compare, and contrast such

Stanton, Graham (Ed.), *The Interpretation of Matthew*. (pp. 98-128). Philadelphia: Fortress. ; Luz, Ulrich. (1971). "Die Jünger im Matthäusevangelium". *ZNW*, 62, 141-171; Zumstein, Jean. (1977). *La Condition du Croyant dans L'Evangile Selon Matthieu* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis Vol. 16). Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht; Howell, D. (1990). *Matthew's Inclusive Story: A Study in the Narrative Rhetoric of the First Gospel* (Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series Vol. 42). Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press; Elliott, J. Keith. (1979). "Mathētēs with a Possessive in the New Testament". *ThZ*, 35. On the subject of discipleship or related topic(s) in Matthew, cf. Pattarumadathil, H. (2008). *Your Father in Heaven. Discipleship in Matthew as a Process of Becoming Children of God* (Analecta Biblica Vol. 172). Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico; Hagner, Donald A. (1998). "Law, Righteousness, and Discipleship in Matthew". *Word & World*, 18(4), 364-371; Kingsbury, Jack Dean. (1978). "The Verb AKOLOUTHEIN (To Follow) as an Index of Matthew's View of His Community". *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 97, 56-73; Kingsbury, Jack Dean. (1988). "On Following Jesus: The 'Eager' Scribe and the 'Reluctant' Disciple (Matt. 8.18-22)". *New Testament Studies*, 34, 45-59; and Wilkins' provision of bibliographical information on discipleship studies in Wilkins, Michael J., *Concept of Disciple in Matthew's Gospel*, p. 2.

511. Cf. Brown, R., K. P. Donfried, & J. Reumann, *Peter in NT*; Bockmuehl, Markus. (2012). *Simon Peter in Scripture and Memory: The New Testament Apostle in the Early Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, pp. 67-88 (Bockmuehl's earlier scholarly work on Peter does not have the same section focused on Peter in Matthew. See Bockmuehl, Markus. (2010). *The Remembered Peter in Ancient Reception and Modern Debate*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck); Stock, A. (1987). "Is Matthew's Presentation of Peter Ironic?". *Biblical Theology Bulletin*, 17, 64-69; Pesch, R. (1980). *Simon-Peter*. Stuttgart: Hiersemann; Cassidy, Richard J. (2007). *Four Times Peter: Portrayals of Peter in the Four Gospels and at Philippi*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press; Grappe, Christian. (1995). *Images de Pierre aux eux premiers siècles* (Études d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses Vol. 75). Paris: Presses Universitaires de France; Cullmann, Oscar, *Peter: Disciple-Apostle-Martyr*; Cullmann, Oscar. (1969). *Petrus: Jünger - Apostel - Märtyrer* (2 ed.). Zürich: Zwingli; Barber, Michael Patrick. (2013). "Jesus as the Davidic Temple Builder and Peter's Priestly Role in Matthew 16:16-19". *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 132.4, 935-953; Burgos, Miguel de. (1991). "Simon-Pedro, Ideología y Historicidad en las Tradiciones Neotestamentarias". In Monasterio, R. Aguirre (Ed.), *Pedro en la Iglesia Primitiva*. Institución San Jerónimo 23 (pp. 235-258). Estella: Verbo Divino. ; Dschulnigg, P. (1989). "Gestalt und Funktion des Petrus im Matthäusevangelium". *Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt: Serie A*, 14, 161-183; Dschulnigg, P., Ed., (1996). *Petrus im Neuen Testament*. Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk; Ehrman, Bart D. (2006). *Peter, Paul, and Mary Magdalene: The Followers of Jesus in History and Legend*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Feldmeier, Reinhard. (1985). "The Portrayal of Peter in the Synoptic Gospels" (Bowden, J., Trans.). In Hengel, Martin (Ed.), *Studies in the Gospel of Mark*. (pp. 59-63). London: SCM. ; Grant, Michael. (1994). *Saint Peter*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson.; Grappe, Christian. (2007). "Pierre dans l'histoire et la littérature des deux premiers siècles". *Foi et vie*, 106.4, 7-18; Hengel, Martin. (2006). *Der unterschätzte Petrus: Zwei Studien*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck; Hengel, Martin. (2010). *Saint Peter: The Underestimated Apostle* (Trapp, T., Trans.). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Karrer, Martin. (1992). *Petrus Evangelisches Kirchenlexikon* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht; Perkins, Pheme. (2000). *Peter: Apostle for the Whole Church*. Minneapolis: Fortress, pp. 66-74; Wiarda, Timothy. (2000). *Peter in the Gospels: Pattern, Personality and Relationship* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2 Vol. 127). Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

scholarship.⁵¹² Rather, it may be of some use to point out some evidence that has influenced some scholars to take a more positive view of disciples and Peter in Matthew.

A notable treatment of Matthew's characterization is that of Kingsbury. Though he acknowledges that there is negative material, his analysis of Matthew's characterization of disciples also points to positive aspects in that portrayal. In Mt. 4:7-11:1, the disciples demonstrate allegiance in their following Jesus, attend to his discourses, are given authority by him for casting out demons and healing and are commissioned to proclaim the kingdom. Kingsbury identifies various character traits associated with disciples, at least some of which are supported by these positive features; according to Kingsbury, disciples appear to be loyal, attentive, observant, obedient, trusting, authoritative, servantlike, and vulnerable.⁵¹³ In Mt. 11:2-16:20, Matthew characterizes disciples as having understanding, and their understanding at times is in contrast to a lack of understanding of others of Israel. Jesus indicates that things hidden from 'wise and learned' have been revealed to his disciples.⁵¹⁴ Disciples are given

512. Starting with Bornkamm's "Die Sturmstillung im Matthäusevangelium", Wilkins provides a short but good look at history of study of disciples in Matthew for much of twentieth-century scholarship. Cf. Wilkins, "Named and Unnamed Disciples in Matthew", pp. 418-420. The same section also gives references for study of disciples in Mark. For treatment of lack of understanding of disciples or characterization of disciples in Mark, cf. Black, C. Clifton. (1989). *The Disciples according to Mark: Markan Redaction in Current Debate* (Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series Vol. 27). Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press; Focant, Camille. (1985). "L'Incompréhension des Disciples dans le Deuxième Evangile". *Revue Biblique*, 82, 161-185; Tyson, Joseph B. (1961). "The Blindness of the Disciples in Mark". *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 80, 261-268; Tannehill, R. C. (1977). "The Disciples in Mark: The Function of a Narrative Role". *JR*, 57, 386-405; Hawkin, David J. (1972). "The Incomprehension of the Disciples in the Markan Redaction". *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 91, 491-500. For Peter in Mark, cf. Wiarda, Timothy. (1999). "Peter as Peter in the Gospel of Mark". *New Testament Studies*, 45, 19-37.

513. Kingsbury, Jack Dean, *Matthew as Story*, p. 14.

514. Mt. 11:25-27.

knowledge of secrets of the kingdom of heaven that is not given to others. Where Jews think of Jesus as a prophet, disciples understand him to be the Son of God.⁵¹⁵ Disciples, despite their abandonment of Jesus, are commissioned to make disciples and are given authority at the end of the gospel.⁵¹⁶ Disciples indicate that they understood Jesus' teaching⁵¹⁷ and later the narrator indicates that they understand^{518, 519}.

Kingsbury also points to a contrast between disciples' understanding versus lack of understanding of Israelites who are not part of the twelve. A number of scholars have thought that Matthew's characterization of disciples' understanding is significantly different from Mark's portrayal.⁵²⁰ In Mark, faith and understanding go together, and disciples often fail to understand. In Matthew, faith and understanding are at least somewhat separate, but disciples do understand.⁵²¹ Accordingly, Matthew can portray disciples as having little or no faith and yet also portray them as having understanding.⁵²² Such a mixed characterization is on one level more

515. Mt. 14:33; 16:16.

516. Ibid., pp. 14-17. Cf. Wilkins, "Named and Unnamed Disciples in Matthew", p. 424.

517. Mt. 13:51.

518. Mt. 16:12; 17:13.

519. Edwards, R. A., *Matthew's Narrative Portrait of Disciples*, p. 2.

520. Sheridan, "Disciples and Discipleship in Matthew and Luke", p. 244.

521. Cf. Wilkins, "Named and Unnamed Disciples in Matthew", p. 422. Luz, Ulrich, *Disciples in Matthew*, p. 102 remarks,

In short, the only point at which Matthew has quite consistently "improved" the picture of the disciples is in his elimination of the Marcan motif of their failure to understand. In Matthew the disciples do understand. And at this point Matthew is as consistent as he seems everywhere else to be inconsistent.

522. Sheridan, "Disciples and Discipleship in Matthew and Luke", pp. 244-251 offers a succinct and good treatment of faith and understanding of disciples in Matthew. Wilkins acknowledges that disciples understand in Matthew, but he indicates that the non-understanding of disciples in Mark and the understanding of disciples in Matthew is to be understood as a pointer to Jesus' capacity as a teacher. (Wilkins, Michael J., *Concept of Disciple in Matthew's Gospel*, pp. 165-166; cf. also his statement on p. 172).

positive than that of Mark, and those ascribing to Markan priority could thus see Matthew improving Mark's characterization of disciples on that level. Noting the direction of this change in characterization would make it harder for such scholars to find convincing the argument presented above in which Matthew's characterization of disciples outside of Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18 would discourage interpreting Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18 as giving broad and sweeping authority to Peter and disciples, respectively.

Sheridan provides other evidence. He thinks that "Mark's identification of the disciples with the twelve is uncertain and incomplete. Matthew, having perceived this, made the identification of the disciples and the twelve complete by eliminating any other interpretation whenever possible."⁵²³ Sheridan also says that there is completed in Matthew the identification of three terms: disciples, the twelve, and apostles.⁵²⁴ If Matthew has taken Mark and limited 'the disciples' to the twelve, and if he has equated this group with 'apostles', this would plausibly be seen as elevating the twelve in some way. This elevation would possibly be seen as mitigating some of the force of the view that Matthew's characterization of disciples outside of Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18 makes implausible an interpretation of Mt. 18:18 that grants disciples broad authority for determining what is right and wrong and imposing that determination on others.⁵²⁵

523. Sheridan, "Disciples and Discipleship in Matthew and Luke", p. 237. Note, though, Sheridan's statement on p. 242 that "As Jesus made disciples, so they are to make disciples, but not for themselves. Jesus remains with them as their one teacher. In Matthew the disciples remain disciples and do not emerge as teachers in their own right to the extent that they do in Luke (Acts 2:42)."

524. Ibid., p. 237. Cf. also Wilkins, "Named and Unnamed Disciples in Matthew", p. 421.

525. Against a strict identification of 'the twelve' with 'the disciples' in Matthew, see Wilkins' comments on or related to Joseph of Arimathea being a disciple and his comments on or related to the significance of disciples coming to Jesus in Mt. 5:1. Cf. Ibid., p. 432-438. See especially his comments at the top of p. 437, and the comments of Luz, Ulrich, Disciples in Matthew, p. 99.

There would still be some strength to this type of argument even with Wilkins' more modest observation that

Matthew (and Mark) refers only to a small group of Jesus' disciples. This reference is different from Luke and John, who refer to a great crowd of Jesus' disciples (cf. Luke 6:17; 10:1; John 6:60, 66). Jesus can meet with the disciples "in a house" (cf. 9:10-19; 9:28; 13:36ff.) and they can all travel together in a single boat (cf. 8:23; 14:22). On several occasions Matthew focuses on a small group of disciples when in Luke and even in Mark there are indications of a larger group of disciples. In his story, Matthew consistently has only a small group of disciples.⁵²⁶

If Matthew purposefully ignores other disciples and usually limits the 'disciple' terms to the twelve and thinks of them as apostles, this would be understandably seen as in some way elevating them. Minear's contention would be compatible with this view. He says that in his article he will test the thesis that "because the *ochloi* in Matthew represent followers of Jesus, his *mathetai* form a much more limited and specialized group than is usually supposed. They are those chosen and trained as successors to Jesus in his role as exorcist, healer, prophet, and teacher."⁵²⁷ If Minear is right, and if disciples are to be contrasted with crowds as having in some sense a higher status or function in the community of Jesus followers, then this would still further reduce the strength of this thesis' claim regarding the implausibility of thinking that Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18 give Peter and disciples, respectively, broad and sweeping authority for determining right and wrong for other disciples.⁵²⁸

526. Wilkins, "Named and Unnamed Disciples in Matthew", p.

527. Minear, "Disciples and Crowds in Matthew", p. 31.

528. In contrast to Minear, Wilkins, "Named and Unnamed Disciples in Matthew", p. 422, differentiates three groups - Jesus' disciples, crowds, and Jewish leaders - and says that "The crowd is the basically neutral group that is the object of Jesus' saving ministry ... but as a group the crowd does not exercise faith in him."

Prior to his treatment of Matthew's characterization of disciples in his book *Matthew as Story*, Kingsbury's article on the figure of Peter in Matthew's gospel gave specific attention to Matthew's understanding of Peter. In addition to providing some bibliography on the subject and a survey of three periods in academic assessment of Matthew's portrayal of Peter,⁵²⁹ and in addition to setting forth the two poles of the debate, with one side seeing Peter as a type of supreme Rabbi and the other seeing Peter as a typical disciple, Kingsbury examines evidence from Matthew himself.

For the present purpose, the analysis of Kingsbury and others is of limited usefulness given that they have not separated out characterization of Peter and disciples in Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18. This thesis puts into question the interpretation of these two passages, and Mt. 16:19b-c is connected to Mt. 16:17-19a and closely tied to Mt. 16:19a. Given these considerations, the fact that some assessments of Matthew's characterization of Peter rely heavily on Mt. 16:16-19, and specifically on Mt. 16:19b-c, means that such surveys do not specifically address the question of the significance of Matthew's characterization of Peter outside of Mt. 16:16-19 and Mt. 18:18 for interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c. Since Kingsbury views Peter as a typical disciple, the problem may not be as big for him as for those on the opposite side of the debate who use Mt. 16:19b-c as the key text in thinking that Peter is portrayed as a type of supreme Rabbi. In the end, though, most scholars in both camps do not address the question of the significance of characterization of Peter outside of Mt. 16:16-19 and Mt. 18:18 for

529. Cf. Kingsbury, "Figure of Peter", p. 67, note 3 for some bibliography. In Kingsbury's postscript, he indicates that there were three periods of assessment of Matthew's characterization of Peter (see p. 83).

interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c. They also do not look at the significance of characterization of Peter outside of just Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18 for interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c.

Still, Kingsbury does provide what many would deem significant evidence to reduce the strength of the claim that Matthew's characterization of Peter outside of Mt. 16:19b-c makes the supreme rabbi interpretation quite implausible. Kingsbury claims "In comparison with Mark, Matthew lends greater prominence of both a positive and negative sort, to the figure of Peter."⁵³⁰ On the positive side, Matthew indicates that Peter is 'first' in Mt. 10:2. Peter is the one whom Jesus encourages to get out of the boat and walk on water in Mt. 14:27-30. Peter is the one who requests an explanation in Mt. 15:15 when disciples need it. If material from Mt. 16:17-19a is included, he is also one who has received revelation from the Father about Jesus' Christological identity, is one on whom Jesus' church will be built, and is one who would receive keys of the kingdom of heaven.⁵³¹

Though Kingsbury thinks that "first" in Mt. 10:2 has to do with Peter's salvation-historical primacy,⁵³² Hagner⁵³³ and Davies and Allison⁵³⁴ may be right that it indicates something of Peter's prominence. Taken together, some may find this evidence sufficient to significantly reduce the strength of the claim that Matthew's characterization of Peter outside of Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18 makes implausible the supreme Rabbi interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c.

530. Ibid., p. 69.

531. Ibid., p. 69.

532. Ibid., pp. 70-71.

533. Hagner, Donald A., *Matthew 1-13*, pp. 265-266.

534. Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C., *Matthew 8-18*, p. 154.

(iii) Assessment of contemporary scholarship on Matthew's characterization of disciples and Peter

Despite some of the evidence that points to Matthew having a more positive portrayal of disciples and Peter than Mark, it is the judgment of this author that such evidence does not succeed in making plausible a common interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18 in which Peter and disciples, respectively, are given broad power to make determinations about right and wrong which are endorsed by heaven and imposed on others. Appendix B looks at characterization of disciples and Peter at some length and supports the present author's conviction that the claim of implausibility is maintained by material outside of Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18. For now, though, some limited comments may be given in regard to characterization of disciples and Peter.

Jesus was willing to denounce not only people in his own generation,⁵³⁵ but he also quite strongly denounced Peter⁵³⁶ and his own disciples⁵³⁷ in the very sections of Matthew where he supposedly grants Peter or disciples broad authority over other disciples. Further, in the one narrative setting, despite Peter's confession, Peter demonstrates that his understanding of Christ was inadequate.⁵³⁸ Matthew portrays disciples as sinners and capable of sin⁵³⁹ or as having wrong values or being rebuked or rebuffed.⁵⁴⁰ Even if Matthew gives a more positive portrayal of

535. Cf. Mt. 12:39; 16:4.

536. Mt. 16:22-23.

537. Mt. 18:1-5.

538. Cf. the words of Blomberg, Craig L., *Matthew*, pp. 255-256.

539. Mt. 18:7-9, 21-35.

540. Mt. 18:1-5; 19:13-14; 20:20-23; 26:3-13.

disciples' understanding than in Mark, there are places where disciples' lack of understanding is evident⁵⁴¹ or where some explanation is requested,⁵⁴² and they are characterized as having little faith⁵⁴³.⁵⁴⁴ Even if Mt. 10:2 does indicate that Peter was in some sense superior to other disciples in being 'first', such a description is comparative; if Matthew already has a low view of disciples generally, it does not do much to justify traditional interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c to say that Peter is somewhat better than the rest. Also, if Matthew intended to portray Peter as a typical disciple, this again makes characterization of Peter relative to characterization of disciples. If Peter is representative of a group that Matthew characterizes quite negatively, his being representative of them would count against typical interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c, not for it.

These passages are sufficient to make implausible traditional interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18 as granting heavenly endorsement to decisions of Peter and disciples, respectively.⁵⁴⁵ In regard to Mt. 18:18, it is better to think that a discourse launched by flawed thinking and wrong values would not turn around and grant sweeping authority to those whose thinking and values were in such error that the error if continued could bar entrance to the kingdom of heaven. Rather than swimming against this current of Matthew's thinking, the proposal of this thesis embraces it, and even allows that Mt. 18:18 act as a check against

541. Mt. 15:16; 16:9, 11; 18:21; 19:22-25. In light of input from Dr. Paul Foster, one may also notice the indication that 'some doubted' in Mt. 28:17 (if that is the right translation and if it refers to disciples).

542. Mt. 13:10, 36; 15:15.

543. Mt. 8:26; 16:8; 17:20; cf. 6:30; 14:31.

544. France, R. T., *Evangelist and Teacher*, p. 273, and see more broadly, pp. 272-274, 249-251, where France covers some of the above material.

545. Blomberg, Craig L., *Matthew*, p. 255 remarks that "Matthew paints a consistently negative or at least ambiguous portrait of Peter, which may make it more probable that he was trying to temper an already overexalted view of that apostle."

disciples' being tempted to hang a brother's sin over his head when he repents. This thesis would continue Matthew's negative depiction of disciples, not subvert it. It also is relevant to the traditional interpretation of Mt. 18:19. It would be odd to think that in Mt. 18:19 Jesus promises disciples, of whom he has so low a view, an answer to their promises so long as they gather. The interpretation of Mt. 18:19 in this thesis has no such problem.

Even if one were to use Matthew's characterization of disciples as a way to limit the scope of authority granted in Mt. 18:18, and not more sensibly as an objection to it, such limitation results in there being no convincing rationale for the statement on binding and loosing to have been given. Matthew's negative characterization of disciples portrays the disciples as being wrong even as a group. One disciple in conflict with others might merely claim that his particular case was just such an instance where a group of disciples happened to be wrong.

This would be based on the belief that Jesus would not endorse the view that a majority is always right. Given Jesus' prophetic mentality, the refusal to attribute to Jesus a belief in the infallibility of a majority is appropriate. This is even more certain in light of Jesus' own indication that there would be false prophets, wolves among sheep⁵⁴⁶ and that not all who called him Lord and who acted as if they were used for miraculous deeds would enter the kingdom.⁵⁴⁷ Further, France is right to call attention to the fact that in Mt. 24-25, all ten bridesmaids expected to take part in wedding celebration, but that even with their plea and their addressing the bridegroom as 'Lord', they were denied their expectation. He is also right to point to the fact that,

546. Mt. 7:15.

547. Mt. 7:21-23.

of the three persons who at the beginning were all servants of the master in Mt. 25:14-30, only two end in the joy of their master; the other would be in weeping or gnashing of teeth.⁵⁴⁸

The difference lies in how they have made use of what was entrusted to them. Preparedness for the judgement seems then to consist in action appropriate to the privilege the disciple has received, not merely in the receipt of that privilege in itself. So when the parables of preparedness are followed by the awe-inspiring tableau of the last judgement (25:31-46), it comes as no surprise that the criterion of judgement is one not of profession but of practice.⁵⁴⁹

France then concludes that the true disciple is not the one who addresses Jesus as Lord, but "the one who does the will of the Father."⁵⁵⁰ France says that

Disciples are still vulnerable to impostors, whose targets will include 'even the elect', and many will be deceived (24:4-5,10-12,23-26); it is only the one who stands firm to the end who will be saved (24:13). If there were no danger, there would be no need for the disciples to be exhorted so urgently to 'watch' (24:42,44; 25:13).⁵⁵¹

France sees here the possibility of disciples being led astray, and of false leaders deceiving disciples. When he says that "only at the final judgement will it be ultimately clear who are the saved and who the lost (13:40-43,49-50), and there will be some surprises (25:37-39, 44)",⁵⁵² one would be tempted to ask why this mixed church did not result in a different view of Mt. 18:18.

At least some of the evidence he cites does point towards the fact that the visible church is a *corpus mixtum*, one that contains those who will not enter the eschatological kingdom and

548. France, R. T., *Evangelist and Teacher*, pp. 277-278.

549. Ibid., p. 278.

550. Ibid., p. 278.

551. Ibid., p. 277.

552. Ibid., p. 277.

those that would. In light of this, person(s) in the disciple community, whether the group of the one member or the one member of the group, must be judged by fruit.⁵⁵³ Thus, the decision of the group is not sufficient for the one member to conclude that he is wrong and that they are right. Matthew's own theology discourages the disciple from being dissuaded from his course simply for the fact that a whole group of others who claim to be disciples say that such a course is wrong. France's interpretation of Mt. 18:18 accordingly offers no convincing rationale for why Jesus would have even given the saying.

One might also apply the evidence cited above to the traditional interpretation of Mt. 18:19. If calling Jesus Lord or oneself a disciple is not sufficient for kingdom entrance, and if Mt. 18:18 is directed to only those disciples who truly will enter the kingdom, then the resulting qualification of Mt. 18:19 nullifies much, if not all, of its force. If Mt. 18:19 were thus interpreted to mean something like, 'If two of you on earth agree about something for prayer and are really my disciples, then you would get what you agree about in prayer', it still runs straight up against Derrett's absurdity objection. Two true disciples could still agree about many things in prayer for which it was no intention of Mt. 18:19 to give assurance regarding those prayers being answered. Mt. 18:19 would then need to be understood differently. It would read, 'If two of you on earth agree about something you ask for, and it is in the Father's will, then my Father would grant it'. But in this reading, Mt. 18:19 would be of little or no value. If the Father's will would be accomplished with or without prayer, there is not much reason to give the verse in its current form, since the verse does not state clearly that his will would be accomplished with or without

553. Mt. 3:10; 7:16-20; 12:33.

prayer. Alternatively, if the verse is saying that something is the Father's will but will not come to pass without some prayer on the part of disciples, this seems unpersuasive as an interpretation of the verse, and is certainly not clearly communicated by the verse as it stands. Matthew's introducing the statement with the conditional, 'if two or three συμφωνήσωσιν ...' encourages one to think that the verse is concerned about something other than prayer.

3. Authority for Determination of Sin

The history of interpretation reveals a significant strand of commentators for whom the binding and loosing statements of Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18 grant Peter and disciples an authority for determining what will and will not be sin for other disciples. This section will give criticism of such a view.

(a) Absence of Interpretive Authority in Early Christianity

If Mt. 16:19b-c were granting Peter a special authority, it is remarkable that this does not appear to have significantly impacted early Christian behavior and discourse of the New Testament. While it is true that Peter plays a significant role in the pre-history of the decision of the Jerusalem council in Acts 15, much of his role is one of testimony of his own experience, an experience in which his own objections were repeatedly rebuffed by divine revelation. After Peter speaks and Barnabas and Paul are heard, James quotes scripture and encourages acceptance of Gentile believers; the text then says that it seemed to apostles and elders, with the whole church to select and send men (Τότε ἔδοξε τοῖς ἀποστόλοις καὶ τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις σὺν ὅλῃ τῇ

ἐκκλησίᾳ ἐκλεξαμένους ἄνδρας ἐξ αὐτῶν πέμψαι). There is no hint here of Peter having a position of supreme Rabbi to whom everyone looks and submits for a final judgment call. In line with this, Mantey says that "Peter called himself a fellow-elder, 1 Pet [5.1], and was treated only as an equal by the apostles and was even publicly rebuked for his inconsistency by Paul, Gal 2 14 f., and there is no record of his having exercised [sic] authority beyond the others, such as appointing a successor to Judas, Acts 1 26, or selecting deacons, Acts [6.3-4]."⁵⁵⁴ Jeremias contends that "Restriction to the teaching office is hardly in accord with the sense of Mt. 16:19, as shown by the understanding of binding and loosing in primitive Christianity"⁵⁵⁵ France says of Peter that

As a matter of historical fact no-one else could occupy the position of 'foundation-stone'; as leader of the initial disciple group Peter was called upon to exercise the office of 'key-holder' after the death of Jesus both as the leader preacher of the Jesus movement in the early days in Jerusalem, and in taking the initiative in matters requiring decision for the life and discipline of the community (e.g. Acts 1:15-23; 5:1-11; 8:14-25; 10:1 - 11:18). Yet even in these incidents Peter is not acting alone (notice the inclusion of John in Acts 8:14ff), nor as a dictator with unquestionable authority. He is answerable not only to the other members of the twelve, but also to the church as a whole (Acts 11:1-18), and is not the only one initiating new developments in the church's organisation and mission.⁵⁵⁶

While one might argue that such an absence of Petrine authority is evidence that Mt. 16:19b-c is Matthew's creation, in response one may rightly say that such a conclusion does not follow if an alternative and justified interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c exists. If it can be shown that there is a convincing alternative explanation for Mt. 16:19b-c, then it seems premature to take

554. Mantey, "Mistranslation of the Perfect Tense", p. 249.

555. Jeremias, Joachim, κλείς, p. 751.

556. France, R. T., *Evangelist and Teacher*, p. 246.

the absence of Petrine interpretive authority as a basis for denying the historicity of Mt. 16:19b-c. Rather, such absence might count as evidence in favor of the interpretation of this thesis. There was no special Petrine interpretive authority in early Christianity because Mt. 16:19b-c was not granting such an authority. That is a simpler explanation of the data than an alternative in which Matthew created material but lacked the foresight or acumen to see that the saying that he created is absurd or useless.

(b) Mt. 23:8-10, 23:34, and 13:52

A previous section indicated that interpreting 16:19b-c and 18:18 as dealing with binding interpretation of scripture by Peter and a group of disciples, respectively, runs into the problem of uselessness or absurdity. Some of the difficulty here is avoided if one limits teaching authority only to Peter. Although indicating that both passages have to do with halakhic authority, Davies and Allison still contend that Peter has a special place.

It remains true that only he is explicitly said to have the keys. More significantly, v. 19 cannot be isolated from vv. 17 and 18, and in these last Peter is spoken of in terms not applicable to anyone else. Also, it should not be overlooked that whereas 18:18 concerns the local community or assembly, 16:19 is about the church universal (cf. v. 17); hence the authority bestowed in 16:19 is implicitly wider than that given in 18:18.⁵⁵⁷

Given such reasons, Davies and Allison's commentary is not "persuaded that the existence of 18:18, with its more general promise of the authority to bind and loose, diminishes Peter's prominence."⁵⁵⁸ This position can be challenged by Mt. 23:8-10. Kingsbury writes,

557. Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C., *Matthew 8-18*, p. 635.

558. *Ibid.*, p. 635.

Matthew is explicit about the problem of position and status. ... the Matthaean Jesus expressly forbids them to arrogate to themselves a station that would set them above the rest of the community. They are not, for example, to assume the title of "Rabbi" (*hrabbi*) or "Teacher" (*didaskalos, kathēgētēs*), for these titles are the prerogative of Jesus Messiah, the Son of God (23:8, 10; cf. 16:16).⁵⁵⁹

From our study we cannot see, for example, that Matthew writes a "Peter-Gospel" and makes of the apostle the "supreme Rabbi" whom Jesus has uniquely invested with the "office" of teaching and whom Matthew's church therefore esteems as "the guarantor" of its doctrinal and disciplinary traditions. This flies in the face of the cardinal Matthaean dictum that "you are not to be called Rabbi, for one is your Teacher [Jesus Messiah], and you all are brothers" (23:8, 10).⁵⁶⁰

Not all interpreters have drawn the same conclusions from Mt. 23:8, 10 as Kingsbury.

Marcus remarks of Büchsel⁵⁶¹ that while Büchsel notices the dominance of viewing the binding and loosing idiom through the lens of authoritative halakic decisions in regard to what is and is not permitted, Büchsel thinks that this interpretation does not fit well with the rejection of the title 'rabbi' for Jesus' followers (see Mt. 23:8) and that Büchsel rejects it for Mt. 16:19. But Marcus contends that "The point of Matt 23:8, however, is not the rejection of halakah per se, but rather that one is to learn one's halakah not from any human master but from God himself or the exalted Jesus (cf. 28:18-20)."⁵⁶²

One need not contest Marcus' remark that Mt. 23:8 does not forbid all halakah, but this misses or ignores Büchsel's point against a disciple having a special status in comparison to others.⁵⁶³ Marcus takes a halakic interpretation of 16:19. It is just Peter to which this statement is

559. Kingsbury, "Figure of Peter", p. 79.

560. Ibid., p. 81; see also pp. 79-80, 82-83 and Mantey, "Mistranslation of the Perfect Tense", p. 249.

561. Büchsel, F., δέω (λύω), pp. 60-61.

562. Marcus, "Gates of Hades", pp. 449-450. See footnote 34 of those pages.

563. Cf. Büchsel, F., δέω (λύω), p. 61.

made, and for Marcus, the binding and loosing statement in Mt. 18:18 is about "excluding from and accepting back into the community".⁵⁶⁴ He thus seems to miss the point. Further, Kingsbury is not claiming that Mt. 23:8, 10 opposes halakhah; according to Kingsbury, Mt. 23:8, 10 opposes a leader in a Christian community having a special status wherein he can dictate to others through his halakhic interpretation what is right and not right. Kingsbury,⁵⁶⁵ who has a view similar to Thyen,⁵⁶⁶ Frankemölle,⁵⁶⁷ and Hoffmann,⁵⁶⁸ opposes the idea that "in Mt. 23:8-10 Matthew is not attacking 'precedence' but merely a 'style of precedence'".⁵⁶⁹ Kingsbury is opposing a view put forth in a volume devoted to Peter in the New Testament, which says that

There was some form of authority in the Matthean church, e.g., it had "prophets, wise men, and scribes" (23:34). But those who had authority were not to lord it over others (20:25-28). What Matthew is attacking, then, is not precedence but a style of precedence. The faithful servant of 24:45 is set over the household, even though he has fellow servants (24:49).⁵⁷⁰

This quote in the Peter volume, which makes a distinction between 'precedence' and 'style of precedence', ignores the plain thrust of Mt. 23:8-10. Kingsbury is right. While it is true that Mt. 13:52 refers to a scribe μαθητευθεὶς τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν, and that Mt. 23:34 refers to scribes, such verses do not offset the force of Mt. 23:8, 10. Kingsbury comments that the scribes

564. Marcus, "Gates of Hades", p. 451.

565. Kingsbury, "Figure of Peter", p. 79, fn. 39.

566. Thyen, Hartwig. (1970). *Studien zur Sündenvergebung im Neuen Testament und seinen alttestamentlichen und jüdischen Voraussetzungen* (Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments Vol. 96). Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, pp. 234-235.

567. Frankemölle, H. (1973). "Amtskritik im Matthäus-Evangelium?". *Bib*, 54, 247-262, pp. 249-250.

568. According to Kingsbury, "Figure of Peter", p. 79. See Hoffmann, Paul. (1974). "Der Petrus-Primat im Matthäusevangelium". In Gnllka, J. (Ed.), *Neues Testament und Kirche: Festschrift R. Schnackenburg*. (pp. 94-114). Freiburg: Herder, , pp. 112-113.

569. Kingsbury, "Figure of Peter", p. 79, fn. 39.

570. Brown, R., K. P. Donfried, & J. Reumann, *Peter in NT*, p. 100, n. 232.

in 23:34 are "depicted as being itinerant missionaries who go to Israel"⁵⁷¹; if they are such missionaries, it seems far less likely that they would be authoritative teachers having a special place in individual Christian communities. Mt. 23:34 offers little or nothing in the way of support for Davies and Allison's interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c. Citing Mt. 13:52 and 23:8-10, Kingsbury says that

While there are certainly those in the community engaged in the function of teaching (cf. 13:52; 23:8-10), they do not occupy an "office" in succession of Peter and do not pattern themselves after the rabbis in contemporary pharisaic Judaism, who do have office and the status that accompanies it (23:8-13). For were they to do so, they would place themselves at odds with the clear injunction of Jesus: "But you are not to be called Rabbi, for one is your Teacher, and all you are brothers" (23:8).⁵⁷²

Kingsbury is right not to think that the presence of Christian scribes counterbalances Mt. 23:8, 10. Of course there were teachers in Christian communities. Such teachers would have had respect and some prestige in the eyes of person they taught given their role and their knowledge. The same would be true for prophets and wise men (23:34). Mt. 13:52, if it indicates the presence of Christian scribes in Matthew's community, would be in line with this. But this is a very different issue than whether Matthew or Matthew's Jesus would seek to grant Peter or such teachers an authority to determine what is right or wrong. It simply does not follow that if Matthew knew of Christian scribes, he would have sought to grant them a broad power of halakhic authority that could be wielded over others. Neither Mt. 13:52, nor Mt. 23:34, softens the difficulty that Mt. 23:8, 10 poses to Davies and Allison's interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c.⁵⁷³

571. Kingsbury, "Figure of Peter", p. 79, fn. 38.

572. Ibid., p. 82.

573. Referring to W. Trilling (Trilling, Wolfgang. (1970). "Amt und Amtsverständnis bei Matthäus". In

One may go further than this, though. Given these comments about Mt. 13:52 and 23:34, one would do well to notice the significance of this thesis' new proposal for Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18-20. The common tendency to think that Matthew's gospel is concerned with ecclesiological matters, and that mirror-reading the historical community of Matthew from his gospel, is largely based on Mt. 16:19b-c and/or 18:15-20. Whether or not that approach was legitimate before, the proposal of this thesis insists that it is not legitimate now, or at least, that previous conclusions from such mirror reading were wrong. If mirror reading is appropriate, then the new interpretation of Mt. 18:18-20 might reflect conflict in the Matthean community, conflict which, in the eyes of Matthew or of his Jesus, was an indictment of person(s) for resistance of God's influence to bring peace and/or their refusal to imitate him.

Even if this mirror reading is appropriate, at least one can still affirm that in this new interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18, Matthew's gospel is not endorsing a disciple foisting his interpretive decisions on others nor endorsing a disciple having a place of prominence over others. This is in accord with other evidence of Matthew's gospel. Kingsbury remarks that

As has often been pointed out, Matthew makes no reference whatever to such early Christian "office-holders" as "presbyters" (*presbyteroi*), "deacons" (*diakonoï*), and "overseers," or "bishops" (*episkopoi*). In consideration of the fact that these terms appear in other NT documents written, like the first gospel, in the

Descamps, A. & R. P. A. Halleux (Eds.), *Mélanges Bibliques: Festschrift R. P. Bédard Ridaux*. (pp. 29-44). Gembloux: Duculot. , pp. 32-34), Kingsbury (Kingsbury, "Figure of Peter", p. 79), says that if one were to follow Trilling and accept that there is in 13:52 an indication the Matthean church had a group of Christian scribes, "it is noteworthy that Trilling, in discussing this alleged group, is unwilling to attribute them either 'office' (*Amt*) or 'station' (*Stand*). He sees them simply functioning as 'teachers,' and even in his use of the term "teacher" (*Lehrer*), he consistently places it in quotation marks in deference to the force of the passage 23:8-10."

latter part of the first century (ca. A.D. 90), there is good reason not to attribute too easily to Matthew's community a hierarchical structure.⁵⁷⁴

In addition to the lack of these ecclesiastical terms in Matthew, one may add that Matthew does not grant the majority some interpretive authority over a minority, nor Peter a halakhic authority over other disciples. Truly, then, the disciples of Matthew's gospel have only one Master and one Teacher, and they are all brothers (Mt. 23:8-10).

(c) Mt. 18:18-20 in The Context of Jesus' Theological Discourse

The interpretations of Luz and Davies and Allison run counter to the trend and mindset of Matthew's Jesus. After mentioning some of Bultmann's view of binding and loosing, Hiers counters that "elsewhere Matthew seems to say that Jesus expected his followers to forgive those who offended them without need for special authorization or benefit of clergy: Matt 5:23-26; 6:12-15; 18:21-35."⁵⁷⁵ Even within Matthew 18, Davies and Allison's commentary recognizes that the heavenly shepherd's pursuit of a lost sheep in Mt. 18:12-14 acts as a sort of standard for which activity of disciples in Mt. 18:15-17 is to be the imitation. In Mt. 18:10, the importance of a little one to the father comes with the expectation that disciples should adopt a similar attitude to the Father. In 18:12-17, the heavenly shepherd's pursuit of the lost sheep is what humans are to imitate in seeking the restoration of a brother who sins. In 18:21-35, God's behavior toward and forgiveness of the disciple is the standard that the disciple is to imitate. Mt. 18:18-20 lies right between these two examples of *imitatio dei*. The traditional interpretation asks the interpreter to

574. Ibid., p. 78, fn. 36.

575. Hiers, "'Binding' and 'Loosing'", pp. 234-235.

think, against the specific example(s) of *imitatio dei* on each side of Mt. 18:18-20, that Mt. 18:18-20 reverses direction and offers the only passage of *imitatio hominis* in Mt. 18.

But it is not only against the practice of Mt. 18 that the traditional interpretation asks for an exception. It also asks for an exception against Jesus' general practice of appealing to God's character or actions as a guide for human action in other parts of Matthew. Matthew's Jesus repeatedly appeals to God's action or attribute(s) as a basis for imitation or for doing something in life in a particular way, or he takes commandments as requiring obedience. The number of passages in which one finds such response to God is remarkable.⁵⁷⁶ In addition to these passage, there are also passages for which disciples respond to or imitate Jesus.⁵⁷⁷

All of these passages are outside of Mt. 18, and the pattern of reasoning in them is directly opposite to what is supposed to be found in Mt. 18:18-20 according to traditional interpretations of that passage. Time and time again, Jesus makes God or himself the point of reference for humans, not the other way around. It is not only the theology of the rest of Matthew 18 that is incongruous with traditional interpretations of Mt. 18:18-20. They run counter to the theology of Matthew's Jesus in many other places in Matthew's gospel. It is implausible to suppose that such a prominent and repeated emphasis of Matthew's theology is abandoned and

576. Cf. the temptation episode in Mt. 4; 5:48; 6:1-6, 7-8, 10, 12, 14-15, 16-18, 25-34; 7:7-11, 21; 8:3-4; 9:9-13; 10:19-20, 26-27, 28, 29-31; 12:3-8, 50; 15:1-6, 7-9, 13-14; 16:22-23; 19:1-9, 16-19; 20:20-23; 21:12-13, 28-32, 33-46; 22:1-14, 29, 31-32; 23:2-3 (Cf. here Powell's interpretation of material in this passage (Powell, "Do and Keep")), 16-22, 31; 26:39-44.

577. Cf. Mt. 7:24-27; 10:32-33, 37-39; 16:24-26, 27; 20:24-28.

reversed in just Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18-20 when 16:19b-c and 18:18 are nearly identical in wording.

4. Authority for Interpretation and/or Abrogation of Scripture or Teaching of Jesus

Some scholars have contended that binding and loosing in Mt. 18:18 have to do with determination of what is and is not sin through interpretation and application of scripture. This section will give some criticism of such a view.

(a) Loosing in Mt. 5:19

An initial criticism of Powell, Marcus, and others stems from Mt. 5:19. Powell⁵⁷⁸ and France⁵⁷⁹ recognize that λύω, the same word for loosing in Mt. 16:19 and in 18:18, is used in 5:19. It says in Mt. 5:19 that one who 'looses' one of the least of these commandments and teaches others in this way will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. Some interpreters think it adequately clear that 'these commandments' in Mt. 5:19 refer to commands of the law;⁵⁸⁰ this interpretation of 'these commandments' seems correct given the reference to law in Mt. 5:18. In 5:19, λύση μίαν τῶν ἐντολῶν τούτων τῶν ἐλαχίστων ('loosing one of the least of these commandments') is a bad thing, so bad that this loosing combined with teaching others the same

578. Powell, "Binding and Loosing Paradigm", p. 440.

579. France, R. T., *Matthew NICNT*, p. 626, fn. 41.

580. Büchsel, F. (1967). λύω → δέω *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, p. 336. Carson, D. A. (1995). *Matthew: Chapters 1 through 12* (The Expositor's Bible Commentary with the New International Version). Grand Rapids: Zondervan, p. 146; Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C., *Matthew 1-7*, pp. 495-496.

thing would make a person ἐλάχιστος (NRSV: 'least') in the kingdom or reign of heaven. In Powell's view, if λύσης in 16:19 and λύσητε in 18:18 apply to commandments of the law, then we must think that what Jesus says makes a person one of the least in the kingdom of heaven in 5:19 is positively granted to or encouraged for Peter in 16:19 and all disciples 18:18, or we must embrace the view that 'loosing a commandment' in 5:19, a verse that frowns upon such an action, means something different in 16:19 and 18:18, where supposedly it has lost its negative connotation and is actually encouraged. Either option requires the scholar to abandon good sense for the implausible.

After noticing that Mt. 5:19, 16:19, and 18:18 all use λύω, Powell says that if Mt. 16:19 and 18:18 were missing from Matthew,

we might assume that Jesus is here rejecting the rabbinic practice of "loosing" the law altogether. But in 5:17-19 "loosing" the commandments is contrasted not with binding them but with doing (ποιήσῃ) them and teaching (διδάξῃ) them. Clearly, then, Matthew condemns the practice of loosing the law when this means abolishing the scriptures rather than fulfilling them through obedience and teaching. But 16:19 and 18:18 present him as commending the practice of (sometimes) loosing the law in some other undefined sense; most likely, the latter sense is the same as that employed by rabbis—discerning the intent of the law with regard to particular circumstances. Sometimes, Matthews's Jesus allows, the church will be expected to determine that the law, while eternally valid, does not apply to specific circumstances.⁵⁸¹

This seems to be an equivocation, which is unlikely. Even Powell recognizes that 'loosing' in 5:19 has to do with obedience to scriptural command, but 'loosing' as he would have us think of it in 16:19 and 18:18 has to do with one's determination that some scripture does not apply in some specific situation and thus does not require obedience in that situation. That is a

581. Powell, "Binding and Loosing Paradigm", p. 440.

very great equivocation to make. In the one place loosing a command is disobedience; in the other, it is deciding that obedience is not required. The two meanings given to the same word are at least nearly opposite to each other, if not more, and that for a word that occurs in Matthew only twice outside of Mt 16:19 and 18:18. It occurs in 5:19 and 21:2, the latter of which has to do with loosing an animal.

Powell's hermeneutic refuses to let what is clear interpret what is not so clear. Mt. 5:19, which is set in a passage explicitly treating the law, discourages loosing commandments, while the binding and loosing statements of Mt. 16:19 and 18:18, in addition to not even using the word for commandments or the law, occur in contexts where those two subjects are not prominent, if it can even be said that they are present at all. Absent any other good evidence favoring interpreting 16:19 and 18:18 as dealing with interpretation of law, Mt. 5:19 should be a valid objection to the interpretation of Powell and others who have binding and loosing deal with interpretation or application of scripture. Powell's explanation of 16:19 and 18:18 is incongruent with 5:19. Powell says that

Many scholars who recognize that "binding and loosing" refers to determination of what is allowed or forbidden in Matt 16 19 think that the phrase has acquired a different sense in 18 18, namely, that of expelling from and admitting to the community See David L Bartlett, ..., Beare, ... Meier, ... Schweizer, ... But the proposal that Matthew uses these technical terms in two different ways is as unnecessary as it is unlikely⁵⁸²

582. Powell, "Do and Keep", p. 434, fn. 54.

One would wish that he would have adopted his own reasoning in comparing loosing in 5:19 to loosing in 16:19 and 18:18. 'Loosing' in Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18 is not loosing of commands of the law.

(b) Binding in Mt. 23:4

In Mt. 23:4, Jesus criticizes scribes and Pharisees and says that they bind (δεσμεύουσιν) people with heavy loads or hard burdens (φορτία βαρέα) and do not lift a finger to help them.

Powell uses this in support of his interpretation of binding and loosing when he says that

We should also note that, if Matthew's Gospel contains warnings about the potential abuse of "loosing" the law, it likewise warns against abuses involved in *not* doing so. One of Jesus' primary accusations against the scribes and Pharisees is that they "bind (δέσσει) heavy burdens that are difficult to bear" on the shoulders of those who listen to their teaching (23:4).⁵⁸³

One may admit that binding heavy burdens stems at least partially from rules and regulations of religious leaders. France expresses a sentiment common among scholars when he says in his section on Mt. 23:4 that "those who follow the scribes and Pharisees find themselves 'toiling and heavily loaded' (11:28), struggling under the weight of a hugely expanded legal code which enslaves rather than liberates those who follow it."⁵⁸⁴ Powell accordingly has some basis for the contention that another occurrence of δέω in Matthew would be used similarly, though this is the only use of δέω in his whole gospel that provides such support.

583. Powell, "Binding and Loosing Paradigm", p. 441.

584. France, R. T., *Matthew NICNT*, p. 861. France's discussion addresses the issue whether the binding of heavy burdens onto people should be seen negatively and concludes that it should. See also Nolland, John, *Matthew*, p. 924.

At the same time, if Mt. 23:4 is criticizing religious leaders for 'binding' things not required by scripture, then this verse is actually evidence that Jesus would not grant his disciples some authority for binding scripture. If Matthew's Jesus demonstrates in Mt. 23:4 that he is sensitive to this issue and quite willing to condemn rules that ostensibly have basis in scripture but that are not in fact required by scripture, that would make him less likely to grant disciples authority for binding things on others by appeal to scripture. The sentiment in Mt. 23:4 is contrary to the sentiment that Powell's interpretation finds in Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18. Jesus' criticism in Mt. 23:4 and his 'commandments of men' criticism in Mt. 15:1-10 discourage one from thinking that he would grant disciples authority for binding in Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18. There is no need for such authority when Matthew's Jesus already thinks of scripture as authoritative.

(c) Powell's Hierarchical Hermeneutic (Mt. 7:12, 9:13; 12:7; 22:34-40; 23:23)

One way that Powell attempts to bolster his view of binding and loosing is by imputing to Jesus a hermeneutic in which scriptural commands exist in an hierarchy. There, some scriptural commands have precedence over others such that they can render those others inapplicable, though Powell would refer to this as a discerning of the true intent and scope of scripture that does not nullify it. Powell says that "Acceptable binding and loosing is founded in a hermeneutic that interprets scripture in light of scripture and, specifically, recognizes the priority of certain

scriptural mandates."⁵⁸⁵ Among these he includes "the Golden Rule (7:12), a recognition of the divine preference for mercy over sacrifice (9:13; 12:7), a prioritization of love for God and neighbor (22:34-40), and identification of the 'weightier matters of the law' as justice, mercy, and faithfulness (23:23)."; these principles, he says, "derive in some sense from scripture itself, and in every instance in which Jesus binds or looses laws (or criticizes the binding and loosing of laws performed by others) his decision is consistent with this hermeneutic."⁵⁸⁶ This seems to be at the foundation of Powell's view of binding and loosing when he says that "It is important to note that for the rabbis (and for Matthew) loosing the law never meant dismissing Scripture or countering its authority. The law was never wrong when it was rightly interpreted. The issue, rather, was discernment of the law's intent and of the sphere of its application."⁵⁸⁷

Powell's hierarchy of scriptural commands provides him with a rationale to say that what some would call a clear abrogation of a scriptural command is not actually so, but is really a recognition of the priority of one command over another in the hierarchy of what is most important scripture.⁵⁸⁸ Douglas Moo has dealt with this issue. After consideration of evidence from or associated with Mt. 7:12; 9:13; 12:1-8, 9-13; 23:23, Moo indicates that "it should be clear" that the double love commandment of Mk. 12:28-34/Mt. 22:34-40/Lk. 10:25-28 "established a basic demand of God which, while given precedence over others, could not

585. Powell, "Binding and Loosing Paradigm", p. 443.

586. Ibid., p. 443.

587. Powell, "Asserting Moral Authority", p. 83.

588. See Powell, "Binding and Loosing Paradigm", pp. 443-445.

displace them" rather than "a principle by which the validity and applicability of other commandments could be assessed"; Moo says that love or humanitarian concerns were

In no instance ... shown to effect the abrogation of a commandment; with respect to the Sabbath, concern for the fellow man was recognized as an important factor in the original promulgation of the commandment itself. For Jesus, it is not a question of the 'priority of love over law' but of the priority of love *within* the law. Love is the greatest commandment, but it is not the *only* one; and the validity and applicability of other commandments can not be decided by appeal to its paramount demand.⁵⁸⁹

Moo's discussion and conclusion are adequate to demonstrate that Powell's hermeneutic is incorrect.⁵⁹⁰ Matthew does not pit one command against another as if they were in a conflict whose resolution required one command to be effectively abrogated in subservience to a more important one. Powell's attempt to use Mt. 7:12; 9:13; 12:7; 22:34-40 to establish a hermeneutic that would allow clear scriptural commands to be effectively abrogated by subsuming them under other commands is thus inappropriate.

5. Authority to Grant and Withhold Forgiveness of Sins

Still another stream of commentary has thought of binding and loosing as dealing with an authority for granting and withholding forgiveness of sin. This section will give some criticism of this view.

589. Moo, Douglas J. (1984). "Jesus and the Authority of the Mosaic Law". *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, 20, 3-49, p. 11.

590. See Ibid., pp. 6-11.

(a) Absence of Power of Clemency in Rabbinic and pre-Christian Judaism and a Democratic Judgment

The first objection to a view of binding and loosing in Mt. 18:18 as granting authority to dispense or withhold forgiveness is that it is discontinuous with that of much of Judaism.

Derrett's analysis here may be of some value. Consider the following words.

The loosing or forgiving of *sin* is of course a known Jewish idea. But it does not exhaust the activity of "loosing." Primarily in rabbinical Judaism God looses or forgives sins, or retains them (so John 20:23). Rabbis do not release sins. Forgiveness comes in various ways and there is no intermediary in Judaism to release sins, to release them conditionally, or to refuse to release them. Though Jesus claimed that *on earth* he had power to release sins (Mark 2:10 par.), we can see even at Acts 8:22-24 that the apostles had no authority to release sin by their unilateral act.⁵⁹¹

What Derrett points to is a legitimate objection to the view of 16:19 and 18:18 that they give disciples authority to forgive or not forgive sins by their own whim, with the consequence that God would give his endorsement of such a choice. Although one may disagree with Falk's assertion that the saying to Peter in 16:19 "makes use of the rabbinical competence of making decisions on vows and other ritual questions, extending it to a monopoly on salvation", he does also say that "The rabbis, on the other hand, never claimed the right to determine who was to enter heaven and who was going to hell. Even in question of religious law they did not pretend to hold discretionary powers."⁵⁹² Contrary to what he thinks of rabbinic practice, if Falk thinks Mt. 16:19 is granting Peter power to decide salvation on his own, without that power being grounded

591. Derrett, "Binding and Loosing", pp. 115-116.

592. Falk, "Binding and Loosing", p. 99.

in some guiding principle, then it seems that Falk's observation about rabbinic practice could be used as an objection to his interpretation of Mt. 16:19. Why would we see discontinuity between rabbis and Jesus on this point? No good reason seems forthcoming.

Further, if rabbinic evidence shows rabbis discussing what was allowed or forbidden, and yet not thinking that they had a right to determine who was to enter heaven, then this view of Mt. 18:18 actually posits discontinuity between Jesus and rabbis. If rabbinic evidence is used to bolster the interpretation that Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18 deal with halakhic authority, at the same time such evidence undercuts that interpretation, because the interpretation supposedly gives Peter or disciples power over the moral standing and eternal fate of others. Rabbis did not claim power over eternal fate of others.

This interpretation asks the reader to ascribe a new and significant differently function to binding and loosing than what is found in rabbinic material. They gave their assessment of what was right or wrong, but without an accompanying assertion that their word was decisive to the eschatological fate of others. But the supposed power in Mt. 18:18 of withholding or granting forgiveness of sin differs on this very point. That discontinuity between the absence of rabbis claiming power over eternal fate of others and the supposed granting of such power to disciples makes the interpretation less plausible.

(b) Absence of Power of Clemency in Early Christianity

The view that the binding and loosing statement of Mt. 18:18 gives disciples power to forgive or withhold forgiveness is also discontinuous with evidence of early Christianity. Citing Acts 16:30-31; Rom 10:9-10; and 1 Tim. 2:5, Mantey says of Paul that "Paul never claimed any such authority, but told inquirers simply to trust in Christ and him alone for salvation, calling him the only mediator between God and men; Acts 16 30-31; Rom 10 9-10, 13; I Tim 2 5".⁵⁹³ Of the apostle John, Mantey cites 1 Jn. 1:19 and says that he, "like Paul, urged people to confess their sins directly to Christ and to expect forgiveness from him"⁵⁹⁴ Of Peter, he says that

even Peter himself directed Simon the sorcerer to pray directly to Christ for forgiveness, Acts 8 22. In conclusion, there is no instance in the New Testament of anyone having practised sacerdotalism, nor is there any record in the first two centuries of anyone making use of John 20 23, Mt 16 19 or Mt 18 18 to support such a doctrine. And an accurate translation of the perfect tense precludes the possibility of such a teaching in the New Testament.⁵⁹⁵

Mantey also cites Hippolytus (Philos., 9.7) and contends that according to Hippolytus, "Callistus, who was bishop of the church in Rome A. D. 220, was the first person to claim he could absolve people's sins."⁵⁹⁶ Mantey's objections from Paul, 1 Peter, and 1 John have considerable weight, and correspondingly undercut a view of binding and loosing in Mt. 18:18 as dealing with a power to grant or withhold forgiveness of sin. The power to withhold forgiveness is incongruent with the practice of early Christians. Such an absence in early Christianity is

593. Mantey, "Mistranslation of the Perfect Tense", p. 249

594. Ibid., p. 249

595. Ibid., p. 249.

596. Mantey, "Distorted Translations", p. 414. See also Mantey, "Mistranslation of the Perfect Tense", p. 243.

significant evidence against this interpretation that the disciple may withhold forgiveness with the result that heaven would in consequence do the same. But this is only an objection to interpreting Mt. 16:19, 18:18, and Jn. 20:23 in terms of forgiveness preceding from the human action to divine confirmation. If one interprets the future perfect periphrastics of these verbs as indicating that what happens on the human level is logically or temporally subsequent to what happens on the divine level, and that this is an expression of divine influence in repentance, then Mt. 18:18 gives disciples no power to withhold forgiveness of sin. It is rather a warning, or a basis for a warning, that their withholding forgiveness would be in disagreement with the Father who influenced the sinner to repent and who forgave the sinner.

6. Conclusion

This chapter has considered some criticisms of different views of binding and loosing in Mt. 18:18. Most interpretations of binding and loosing in Mt. 18:18 have significant deficiencies. These deficiencies are not applicable to the interpretation of Mt. 18:18 offered in this thesis. The interpretation of this thesis is accordingly preferable in comparison to these other views of binding and loosing.

V. Conclusion

This thesis has argued a new interpretation of Mt. 18:18-20 that has not been advanced by any previous commentator on the passage (see chapter one). Novelty for novelty's sake is not to be commended, but the present thesis has not come from an attempt to shoehorn evidence into a new mold simply to have something new to say. The data of Matthew actually supports the contention that the entire history of interpretation has failed to fully grasp what Matthew intended to communicate in Matthew 18:18-20.

Such a bold statement does not mean that all commentators have been totally wrong, nor that this thesis has not partially built itself upon insights from previous scholars. A comparison of the proposal of this thesis with previous scholarship shows that much of the path to this interpretation was already laid down prior to this thesis. Many scholars have recognized that the periphrastic future perfects in Mt. 18:18 indicate a heaven-first order, though none appears to have taken this to be an expression of Matthew's conviction about divine influence in repentance. Derrett was right to see that Mt. 18:19 was not about prayer. It was about a situation of conflict, though his attempt to bring in arbitrators was not correct nor was his thought that the order was from earth to heaven. This thesis takes up his view that the situation is about a situation of conflict and not about prayer at all. But unlike Derrett, this thesis takes the order to be from heaven to earth. The apodosis of the conditional statement of Mt. 18:19 does not explain the effect of the event of the protasis. It gives information about the cause of the event of the

protasis. Mt. 18:20 continues in this train of thought. There it is both Jesus and God whose influence brings about reconciliation.

1. Summary of Evidence for a New Interpretation of Matthew 18:18-20

This proposal has been supported by positive argument, both in regards to vocabulary and in regard to grammar or syntax (see chapter two). In regard to the periphrastic future perfects (see chapter three), there were challenges from different scholars to a heaven-first order. The most significant challenge came from Stanley Porter. However, an evaluation of Porter's verbal aspect theory showed his claims to be unsubstantiated by his argument. Despite the extensive amount of writing he has produced, his theory is built on the flawed assumption that an author's intentionality is irrelevant to the meaning of that author's language. Even if the traditional grammarian were to adopt this denial of the relevance of intentionality for understanding the meaning of an author's language, a modified traditional view of the Greek indicative verb would still be preferable to Porter's view of the Greek indicative verb. The positive arguments for a heaven-first order accordingly continue to carry sufficient weight to tip the balance for a heaven-first order.

It seems, though, that much of the impetus for an earth-first order is driven by the meaning of binding and loosing. Scholars reached conclusions about what such terms meant and saw that a heaven-first order was incongruous with their interpretations of such terms. The linguistic evidence for a heaven-first order was accordingly pushed to the side in favor of what

order was thought better to fit the supposed meaning of binding and loosing. But many of the meanings proposed for binding and loosing in Mt. 18:18 suffer from serious criticism (see chapter four). This forms at least part of the negative side of the argument of this thesis. Many commentators have recognized that there is a danger of absurdity in interpretation of the binding and loosing statement of Mt. 18:18, though the problem of lack of rationale has often been ignored. The dilemma of absurdity or lack of rationale affects many interpretation of Mt. 18:18, interpretations which fall on one or the other horn of the dilemma. There are many other criticisms that need not be laid out here. They are sufficient in number and strength, though, to encourage the idea that scholars have continued with such dominant interpretations despite serious shortcomings. This appears to be a case in which scholars have settled for solutions because they thought alternatives appeared not to be as bad as their own. In such a situation, the advent of a new interpretation lacking the serious deficiencies of its predecessors calls for a reevaluation of the interpretative situation. This is that situation. None of the serious criticisms leveled against other interpretations of binding and loosing in Mt. 18:18 apply to the proposal of this thesis. In that respect, it stands a head taller than its competition.

The proposal of this thesis is in continuity with significant emphases prior to Mt. 18. Matthew repeatedly emphasizes divine influence in human activity prior to Mt. 18. In one place he quite clearly characterizes God as a peacemaker (Mt. 5:9). Mt. 18:19-20 states explicitly what is clear in Mt. 5:9, and Mt. 18:18 indicates that this divine influence occurs even in the area of repentance. Matthew also has a noticeable interest in reconciliation, and this is continued in Mt.

18:18-20. Matthew also repeatedly characterizes the Son as being in some sense equal to the Father. The move from Mt. 18:19 to 18:20 continues this trend.

Though this thesis is in strong continuity with significant emphases in Matthew, the same cannot be said of other interpretations of Mt. 18:18-20. It is only in Mt. 16:19 and 18:18 where Peter or disciples are supposedly given some sweeping authority for determination of what is and is not sin for others, whether by fiat or by supposed correct interpretation of scripture. Although Mt. 19:28 indicates that disciples would sit on thrones judging twelve tribes of Israel, this is a different timeframe than the time of disciples on earth. Outside of Mt. 19:28, it is only in Mt. 16:19 and 18:18 where Peter or disciples are supposedly given authority for having power over the eternal fate of an individual by being able to withhold forgiveness.

The overall characterization of disciples in Matthew is quite a strong argument against this view of Mt. 16:19 and 18:18. In Matthew disciples are fallible and at times misguided, even being told in the beginning of the repentance discourse that they need to repent if they are to enter the kingdom of heaven. In short, disciples are far from what one would expect of someone worthy of being entrusted with such sweeping authority. Scholars are right to see a connection between being able to determine what is and is not sin for others and a power to withhold forgiveness. The former can achieve in effect the latter or make one disciple the underling of another. But repeatedly Matthew's gospel emphasizes the necessity of forgiveness. To some extent, it seems to miss the intent of such admonitions or encouragements to forgiveness, or to posit a double-minded teacher, if one then contends that the teacher gives disciples power to determine what is and is not sin for others. Notably, just after Mt. 18:18-20, Matthew goes into a

passage where the consequence of not forgiving a brother who sins is eternal punishment. That can not be easily squared with a supposed power to achieve the same effect in Mt. 18:18 by imposing a determination of what is sin on someone who does not see it as sin.

The power to determine what is and is not sin for others also gives the disciple majority power over a minority, but Jesus consistently demonstrates a prophetic minority-mindset and even warns against false teachers, wolves in sheep's clothing. That mindset and that power do not go well together. It is simply against the tenor of much of Matthew's Jesus material to have him grant a majority the power to compel one of its members to do what it wants. Here scholars have the interpretation of Mt. 18:18 backwards. Mt. 18:18 is not giving a majority power over a minority. It is doing just the opposite. It is giving a minority a defense against the majority (and thus is quite in keeping with the sentiment of Lk. 18:9-14). The minority mindset does go well with an affirmation of God's divine influence in a person's repentance (Mt. 18:18). That affirmation of divine influence grants even the repentant sinner the comfort that God accepts his repentance whether or not he is accepted back by leaders in his community.

Mt. 18:18 is too often taken as if it were addressing the question, "What should be done if the sinner of Mt. 18:15-17 continues unrepentant in his sin?" rather than addressing the issue of how disciples should think of and behave towards that sinner if he does repent. The interpretation of Mt. 18:18 in this thesis functions well in addressing the latter issue. Indeed, many interpretations of the repentance discourse do not think that the question of how disciples should think and act towards a repentant sinner is addressed before Mt. 18:21, where Peter asks about how many times to forgive if he is sinned against. But that is too late. The issue is first addressed

in Mt. 18:18, and it is Mt. 18:18 that provides incentive for the question of Mt. 18:21. If God influences a sinner to repent, one may naturally inquire if God's patience in such an endeavor is limited, and, if it is, if patience of disciples should accordingly be limited. This issue is addressed in the passage starting at Mt. 18:21.

Still further evidence militates against traditional interpretation of Mt. 18:18. Repeatedly the loosing and binding have been taken to deal with loosing and binding of scriptural commands. But in the one place where loosing is explicitly applied to commands (Mt. 5:19), Jesus indicates that one who 'looses' commands and teachers others the same would be least in the reign or kingdom of heaven. This is quite a strong argument against the view that Matthew's Jesus would encourage loosing commandments and even give broad authority for loosing in Mt. 16:19 and 18:18. If what is clear is to interpret what is vague, this is a prime example where a clear passage should disqualify a notable strand of interpretation for Mt. 16:19 and 18:18.

Another positive feature of the proposal of this thesis is that it brings Matthew's editorial activity in Mt. 18 in line with his demonstrable tendency in discourses and smaller units to arrange his material in triads or in clearly discernible structures. More than one commentator has admitted that, in his view, Mt. 18:15-20 seems to conjoin material that did not originally belong together. The case for this is not primarily by comparison to Matthew-Luke double material in which Matthew has material in one place and Luke in another. If one were to make such an attempt, Lk. 17:3b would be parallel to Mt. 18:15-17 and Lk. 17:3c would be parallel to Mt. 18:18. On this view, though, Mt. 18:18 would be interpreted in the same or similar way that this thesis interprets it. Luke would confirm Matthew's having Mt. 18:18 come right after Mt.

18:15-17, and would also confirm taking Mt. 18:18 as a warning to disciples, or a basis for a warning. Although Mt. 18:19-20 has no Lukan or Markan counterpart, Mt. 18:19-20 would continue as texts that serve as a warning or basis for a warning, and thus would be in appropriate continuity with an idea of Mt. 18:18 and Lk. 17:3c. A comparison with Luke argues against Matthew bringing together separate traditions.

The case for thinking that Matthew brings together separate traditions thus rests on supposed disjointedness between or among passages just in Matthew. That supposed disjointedness is absent in this thesis. Rather, this thesis gives us a repentance discourse whose triad of triads structure is quite similar to other discourses and whose use of triads is consistent with Matthew's heavy use of triads in other parts of the gospel. No previous interpretation granted Mt. 18:12-20 the unity and coherence that this thesis gives the passage. That unity and coherence fits better with Matthew's editorial or authorial penchant for organization and triads in other parts of his gospel. Whereas the jumping from topic to topic in traditional interpretation of Mt. 18:12-20 has encouraged scholars in thinking that this section pulls together different strands of tradition into a narrative setting that is not true to history, that is unnecessary in the interpretation of this thesis. The flow of thought from one verse to another in the entirety of Mt. 18:12-35 makes great sense in the proposal of this thesis. This shows that source-critical conclusions about Mt. 18:15-20 are justifiable, if at all, only in one strand of interpretation. On interpretive grounds that strand is inadequate, and thus the source-critical conclusions are inadequate. The topical disunity that many scholars found in Mt. 18:15-20 evaporates in this thesis.

An attempt to mirror-read the situation of Matthew's community from Mt. 18:12-20 is also challenged by this thesis. France remarks,

While it is not necessarily true that every piece of New Testament paraenesis must reflect an actual problem to which it is a deliberate corrective, there seems good reason in this case to approve the title given to W.G. Thompson's sensitive discussion of the chapter, *Matthew's Advice to a Divided Community*.⁵⁹⁷

France also says that "Matthew's compilation of such a chapter must indicate something of the perspective and purpose of his gospel. Chapter 18 is often described as a *Gemeindeordnung*, a 'community rule', on the analogy of the Qumran document often known by that name, 1QS."⁵⁹⁸ France expresses a sentiment common among scholars, but his conclusion is not justified in the new interpretation of this thesis. Here, the sensible flow of thought and unity of Mt. 18:12-20, and of the whole discourse, discourage such mirror-reading. What the discourse of Matthew 18 reveals is a Jesus intent to emphasize that it is God's causative work that brings about true repentance and reconciliation between disciples (18:12-20, the middle triad). It is this divine influence that differentiates those who are humble from those concerned with greatness (18:3-10, the first triad). It is this divine influence that differentiates those who forgive others from those who do not (18:21-35, the third triad). Matthew has intentionally constructed his discourse such that it highlights divine influence as the hinge on which turns the proud/humble and forgiving/unforgiving distinctions in the discourse. This is a distinctly theological Jesus. It is a Jesus concerned with true repentance and the salvation of souls. Matthean scholarship must abandon its preoccupation in Mt. 18 with an author concerned about community problems, and

597. France, R. T., *Evangelist and Teacher*, pp. 252-253.

598. *Ibid.*, p. 252.

thus cast off the inapt title of 'community discourse'. Matthew 18 is a repentance discourse, and ought to be called so. It emphasizes that true repentance comes through God's influence, and supports the claim that this repentance not only separates the proud from humble and forgiving from unforgiving, but also those who enter the kingdom of heaven and those who suffer the fire of hell.

2. Matthew's Concept of Righteousness as a Prospect for Further Study

This thesis should also reopen the debate about what δικαιοσύνη means in Matthew. The present study has not been especially concerned at evaluating linguistic background of δικαιοσύνη nor with Przybylski's study that seems to have influenced a number of commentators, or that at least has been cited by such commentators.⁵⁹⁹ In the first few pages of his introductory chapter, Przybylski quickly surveys differing positions on righteousness in Matthew. One side of the spectrum has righteousness as both gift and demand, with demand subordinated to gift, and the other side has it as solely demand. Przybylski then says that "it will be argued that scholars who have used Pauline thought as the basis for their interpretation of the Matthaean concept of righteousness have essentially imposed a mode of thought foreign to the Gospel of Matthew."⁶⁰⁰ Later, Przybylski says that he has come to the conclusion that Ziesler, Schrenk, Fiedler and

599. Cf. France, R. T., *Matthew NICNT*, pp. 266-267; Carson, D. A., *Matthew 1-12*, p. 134.; Turner, David L., *Matthew*, p. 151; Keener, C. S., *Matthew Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, p. 170.

600. Przybylski, B. (1980). *Righteousness in Matthew and His World of Thought* (SNTSMS Vol. 41). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, p. 3.

Bornkamm have, "Whether consciously or unconsciously", "read the Gospel of Matthew in the light of the Pauline writings. In other words, they have paulinized the Matthaean concept of righteousness."⁶⁰¹ This thesis has argued that in Matthew 18:18-20, God brings about repentance in persons and also causes reconciliation. This is merely part of a broader pattern in which divine influence surfaces in Matthew's text.

Such prominence makes a view of righteousness purely as demand less plausible. If in a number of important passages Matthew emphasizes divine influence in righteous living or repentance, δικαιοσύνη as only demand for righteous living looks suspect and invites the reader to consider Przybylski's methodology. Przybylski contends that the reason for scholarly lack of consensus about δικαιοσύνη in Matthew is largely one of scholars having "misjudged what in fact constitutes the appropriate background literature for the Gospel of Matthew. ... Specifically, it will be demonstrated that the Matthaean concept of righteousness does not become intelligible when viewed in terms of Pauline usage or in terms of undifferentiated Old Testament usage."⁶⁰² Given Matthew's emphasis on the divine influence in repentance and righteous living, Przybylski's claim about what is relevant background literature is not easy to accept. The Old Testament expresses the idea of divine influence in an eschatological period⁶⁰³ and of divine influence generally.⁶⁰⁴ The latter is similar to what is found in Matthew, and Matthew's view of

601. Ibid., p. 105. Cf. also the comment of Snodgrass (Snodgrass, Klyne R. (1992). "Matthew's Understanding of the Law". *Interpretation*, 46.4, 368-378, p. 373) that "In Matthew, righteousness refers to ethical behavior and not, as in Paul, a gift from God or a status in the eyes of God."

602. Przybylski, B., *Righteousness in Matthew*, p. 3.

603. Cf. Jer. 31:31-34; 32:37-41; Ezek. 36:22-37:14. Preston Sprinkle graciously provided his own writing that pointed to passages emphasizing divine causation and deserves credit.

604. cf. 1 Sam. 16:7; Psa. 7:10; 15:2; 17:3; 19:14; 24:4; 26:2; 44:21; 51:10, 17; 66:18; 73:1; 86:11;

divine agency is the same or similar to Paul. What, then, would be the basis for denying that these provide appropriate background?

It is more problematic, though, that Przybylski ignores Matthew's own theology.

Noticeably absent from his scripture index is any attention to divine influence in human behavior in 5:16; 6:9-10, 13; 10:19-20; 16:19; 18:18-20, passages in which divine agency is in the fore.

The only significant attention that is given to some of Mt. 18:12-14 is when Przybylski says that

That the disciples are saved sinners is also clear. Barth has pointed out that Mt 18 shows that disciples are not those who rely upon their works but those who are empty before God and thus cleave to his grace. The parable 'The Lost Sheep' especially shows that 'The disciples are thus weak and lowly, helpless as regards their own salvation.'⁶⁰⁵

This surely does not do justice to the extent and strength of emphasis on divine influence in repentance and righteous living in Matthew. Such ignoring of evidence results in an unconvincing conclusion. Przybylski says that "The conclusion can now be drawn that Matthew uses the concept of righteousness in a way that directly reflects the usage of the Tannaitic literature and the Dead sea scrolls."⁶⁰⁶

119:36, 58, 80; 125:4; 139:23; 148:14; Prov. 3:1; 4:21; 6:21; 11:20; 16:1, 5, 9; 17:3; 19:21; 21:1, 2; 24:12; 27:19; Isa. 10:12; 29:13; 57:15; Jer. 3:10, 15; 4:14; 9:26; 11:20; 16:12; 17:5; 17:10; 20:12; 24:7; 29:13; 32:39; Ezek. 11:19; 18:31; 28:2, 5, 17; 36:26; 44:7, 9; Hos. 5:4; 10:2; Joel 2:12, 13; Obad. 3; Mal. 2:2. Cf. also Psalm 118.

605. Ibid., p. 111.

606. Ibid., p. 121. Cf. also his statement that "it should be recalled that in the Tannaitic literature and the Damascus Document, righteousness (*tsedeq*) also just referred to proper conduct and not to the gift of salvation. This aspect of Matthaean usage is thus not unique." (Ibid., p. 111).

But Matthew's emphasis on divine influence in human behavior joins Matthew's Jesus with Paul and Christians generally against the view of many Jews at the time, and in this we would have a real basis of difference that would explain why Jesus would oppose religious leaders and that might explain some of the tension between Christians and Jews in decades after Easter. Przybylski's conclusion would force us to think that Matthew adopted the usage of righteousness terminology of Jewish groups with whom he did not associate himself, usage in which there was primarily only demand for righteous living, while believing strongly with his own group that such living was in fact a gift from God, whatever language one chose to describe it. That seems implausible.

Although Matthew's emphasis on divine influence is sufficient to question Przybylski's methodology and conclusion, one must also take into account other Matthean evidence. Brice Martin calls attention to the fact that δικαιοσύνη occurs five times in the sermon on the mount (5:6, 10, 20; 6:1, 33), only twice more in Matthew outside of the sermon (3:15; 21:32), and only once more in the other synoptics (Lk. 1:75).⁶⁰⁷ Five of the eight occurrences in the synoptics of δικαιοσύνη are in the very sermon where much of Matthew's emphasis on the divine influence of the Father is found. That fact argues for the conceptual evidence of divine influence being as important or more so to understanding Matthew's δικαιοσύνη language than much of the chronologically later, external linguistic evidence used by Przybylski. Further, Martin asserts that "The gift character of righteousness correlates with the fact that being precedes doing. Before

607. Martin, Brice. (1983). "Matthew on Christ and the Law". *TS*, 44, 54-70, pp. 60-61.

one can do acts of righteousness, one must be righteous".⁶⁰⁸ He offers a number of examples that do not speak explicitly of divine emphasis.

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).⁶⁰⁹

Such evidence fits nicely with the contention that righteous living and repentance come from God's influence. There are passages that envision being preceding doing, and there are other passages that speak clearly to the role of divine agency in human repentance and righteous behavior. Such evidence leads to the conclusion that excluding righteousness as gift succeeds only by covering its ears to the loud and insistent remonstrations of Matthew's own theology. That theology puts Matthew and Paul in parallel, which would make misleading or not very helpful Luomanen's claim that Przybylski "emphasizes correctly that the concept of righteousness understood in a Pauline way cannot be taken as a starting point for the statements concerning Matthew's view of salvation."⁶¹⁰ If Paul as a starting point is not methodologically appropriate, Matthew and Paul end up at the same place, which means that taking him as a starting point, even if methodologically inappropriate, would reach the same conclusion as an

608. Ibid., p. 61.

609. Ibid., p. 61.

610. Luomanen, Petri. (1998). "Entering the Kingdom of Heaven: A Study on the Structure of Matthew's View of Salvation". *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2*, 101, p. 29. Cf. also his statement in p. 34, fn 110, that "The Protestant interpretations, as far as they reflect Paul's original ideas, may offer an interesting point of comparison but surely not an appropriate view to start with."

appropriate methodology. Luomanen's statement would thus seem misleading or not very helpful. For Matthew, righteousness is both gift and demand.⁶¹¹ This area of Matthean studies deserves to be re-evaluated in future scholarship.

3. Conclusion

Another conclusion seems warranted from this study. Given Matthew's emphasis on divine influence in the sermon on the mount and the mission discourse, the emphasis on divine influence in repentance from sin and conflict resolution in the repentance discourse also discourages one from adopting all of a conclusion put forth in Bruce Chilton's study of characterization of God as father in Biblical and non-Biblical material. Chilton says that

Matthew's Jesus does not say anything radically new about God in calling him 'father'. He simply prays, enjoys or speaks of the visions and revelations of prayer, anticipates God's response, praises him as the father of all and of his follows [sic] particularly. That he also stresses the judgment of the 'father' and his demand for ethical conduct is unusual, but hardly unprecedented. The persistence and character of the usage in Matthew is distinctive, but no mystery; and the usage of Matthew is a suitable starting point for proceeding to discover the usage of Jesus, which may well emerge as distinctive, but hardly unique or esoteric.⁶¹²

Chilton seems to have missed one of Matthew's most distinctive emphases. Mt. 18:19 refers to God as 'my Father', and it is this verse that emphasizes God's causative role in

611. Cf. Morris' judgment on 5:6 (Morris, Leon, *Matthew*, p. 100).

612. Chilton, Bruce. (1993). "God as 'Father' in the Targumim in Non-Canonical Literature of Early Judaism and Primitive Christianity, and in Matthew". In Evans, Craig A. & J. H. Charlesworth (Eds.), *The Pseudepigrapha and Early Biblical Interpretation. Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series // Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity 14 // 2* (pp. 151-169). Sheffield: JSOT Press. , p. 169.

reconciliation. Matthew's Jesus does say something unique about Father in his stress on divine influence in reconciliation.

Paul Foster once wrote that something appeared "to be a case where an argument has gained popular currency due to repetition, instead of being based on the perspicacity of its reasoning."⁶¹³ The argument of this thesis has shown that a similar claim applies to modern and ancient interpretations of Mt. 18:18-20. The ambiguity of Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18 has generated a substantial body of scholarly literature, but no interpretation of Mt. 18:18 nor of Mt. 18:18-20 has emerged from the gauntlet of criticism unscathed. This thesis offers a new interpretation that avoids the shortcomings of its predecessors, and calls for a reevaluation of the discourse of Matthew 18 and even of Matthew's theology. Divine influence in the repentance of Mt. 18:18 and the reconciliation of Mt. 18:19-20 solves the riddle of this passage. The problems of Matthew's community discourse ensured that it continued to be an enigma in need of an answer. Matthew's repentance discourse is that answer.

613. Foster, Paul. (2004). *Community, Law and Mission in Matthew's Gospel*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, p. 174.

VI. Appendix A: Translations of Mt. 16:19 and 18:18

This appendix provides translations for Mt. 16:19 and 18:18 from different versions.

There are four sections. The first section has translations of Mt. 16:19 and 18:18 that have a non-perfect future form (e.g. will be bound ... will be loosed) in the main text but with note(s) indicating that a perfect future form is a translational possibility. The second section has translations of Mt. 16:19 and 18:18 that have a perfect future form (e.g. will have been bound ... will have been loosed) in the main text but with note(s) indicating that a non-perfect future form is a translational possibility. This second section has the Palabra de Dios para Todos version, but there is some uncertainty about how to read the notes in this version. Whether this version should be included in this second section or in the fourth is left to the reader. Outside of the New King James version, the third section has translations of Mt. 16:19 and 18:18 with a non-perfect future form (e.g. will be bound ... will be loosed) but with no note indicating that a perfect future form is a translational possibility. The New King James version, which is in this third section, has a note for Mt. 16:19 indicating that a future perfect form is a translational possibility, but Mt. 18:18 has no such note, nor a note pointing back to Mt. 16:19. The fourth section has translations of Mt. 16:19 and 18:18 that have a perfect future form with no note indicating that a non-perfect future form is a translational possibility.

1. Non-Perfect Future Form with Note(s) Indicating That a Perfect Future Form Is a Translational Possibility

New International Version

Mt. 16:19

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be[a: Or will have been] bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be[b: Or will have been] loosed in heaven.

Mt. 18:18

Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be[a: Or will have been] bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be[b: Or will have been] loosed in heaven.

English Standard Version

Mt. 16:19

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed[a: Or shall have been bound... shall have been loosed] in heaven.

Mt. 18:18

Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed[a: Or shall have been bound... shall have been loosed] in heaven.

Nueva Biblia Latinoamericana de Hoy (NBLH)

Mt. 16:19

Yo te daré las llaves del reino de los cielos; y lo que ates en la tierra, será[a: O habrá sido] atado en los cielos; y lo que desates en la tierra, será[b: O habrá sido] desatado en los cielos.

Mt. 18:18

En verdad les digo, que todo lo que ustedes aten[a] en la tierra, será[a: O *prohíban*] en la tierra, será[b: O *habrá sido*] atado en el cielo; y todo lo que desaten[c: O *permitan*] en la tierra, será[d: O *habrá sido*] desatado en el cielo.

La Biblia de las Américas (LBLA)

Mt. 16:19

Yo te daré las llaves del reino de los cielos; y lo que ates en la tierra, será [a: O, habrá sido] atado en los cielos; y lo que desates en la tierra, será[b: O, habrá sido] desatado en los cielos.

Mt. 18:18

En verdad os digo: todo lo que atéis[a: O, prohibáis] en la tierra, será[b: O, habrá sido] atado en el cielo; y todo lo que desatéis[c: O, permitáis] en la tierra, será[d: O, habrá sido] desatado en el cielo.

2. Perfect Future Form with a Note Indicating That a Non-Perfect Future Form Is a Translational Possibility

Nova Versão Internacional

Mt. 16:19

Eu lhe darei as chaves do Reino dos céus; o que você ligar na terra terá sido ligado nos céus, e o que você desligar na terra terá sido desligado[a: Ou será ligado ... será desligado] nos céus.

Mt. 18:18

Digo-lhes a verdade: Tudo o que vocês ligarem na terra terá sido ligado no céu, e tudo o que vocês desligarem na terra terá sido desligado[a: Ou será ligado ... será desligado] no céu.

Holman Christian Standard Bible translation:

Mt. 16:19

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth is already bound[a: Or earth will be bound] in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth is already loosed[b: Or earth will be loosed] in heaven.

Mt. 18:18

I assure you: Whatever you bind on earth is already bound[a: Or earth will be bound] in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth is already loosed[b: Or earth will be loosed] in heaven.

Palabra de Dios para Todos⁶¹⁴

Mt. 16:19

Te daré las llaves del reino de Dios. Si tú juzgas a alguien aquí en la tierra, Dios ya lo habrá juzgado en el cielo. A quien perdones aquí en la tierra, Dios también lo habrá perdonado en el cielo. [a: *Si tú juzgas [...] el cielo* Textualmente *Lo que ates en la tierra, también será atado en el cielo. Lo que desates en la tierra también será desatado en el cielo.*]

Mt. 18:18

614. There is some uncertainty about how to interpret the notes for this version. If the notes are not indicating that a non-perfect future form would be a possibility, then this would be included in the fourth section with versions that have a perfect future form without a note indicating that a non-perfect future form is a translational possibility. Whether the notes indicate that a non-perfect future form is a translational possibility is left to the reader.

Les digo la verdad: si ustedes juzgan a alguien aquí en la tierra, Dios ya lo habrá juzgado en el cielo. A quien perdonen aquí en la tierra, Dios también lo habrá perdonado en el cielo. [a: *si ustedes juzgan [...] el cielo* Textualmente *Lo que aten en la tierra, también será atado en el cielo. Lo que desaten en la tierra también será desatado en el cielo.* Ver 16:19.]

3. Non-Perfect Future Form Without a Note Indicating that a Perfect Future Form Is a Translational Possibility

Nueva Versión Internacional

Mt. 16:19

Te daré las llaves del reino de los cielos; todo lo que ates en la tierra quedará atado en el cielo, y todo lo que desates en la tierra quedará desatado en el cielo.

Mt. 18:18

Les aseguro que todo lo que ustedes aten en la tierra quedará atado en el cielo, y todo lo que desaten en la tierra quedará desatado en el cielo.

Revised Version

Mt. 16:19

I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Mt. 18:18

Verily I say unto you, What things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

American Standard Version (ASV)

Mt. 16:19

I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Mt. 18:18

Verily I say unto you, what things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

King James Version/Authorized Version (KJV/AV)

King James 16:19

And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

King James 18:18

Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Authorized (King James) 16:19

And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Authorized (King James) 18:18

Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

New King James Version (NKJV)

Mt. 16:19

And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed[a: Or will have been bound . . . will have been loosed] in heaven.

Mt. 18:18

Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Revised Standard Version (RSV)

Mt. 16:19

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Mt. 18:18

Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Mt. 16:19

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

Mt. 18:18

Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Moulton's Modern Reader's Bible

Mt. 16:19

I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Mt. 18:18

Verily I say unto you, What things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

James Moffatt's translation

Mt. 16:19

I will give you the keys of the Realm of heaven; whatever you prohibit on earth will be prohibited in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven.

Mt. 18:18

I tell you truly, Whatever you prohibit on earth will be prohibited in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven.

Edgar Goodspeed's The Bible: An American Translation

Mt. 16:19

I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you forbid on earth will be held in heaven to be forbidden, and whatever you permit on earth will be held in heaven to be permitted

Mt. 18:18

I tell you, whatever you forbid on earth will be held in heaven to be forbidden, and whatever you permit on earth will be held in heaven to be permitted.

New English Bible

Mt. 16:19

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven; what you forbid on earth shall be forbidden in heaven, and what you allow on earth shall be allowed in heaven.

Mt. 18:18

I tell you this: whatever you forbid on earth shall be forbidden in heaven, and whatever you allow on earth shall be allowed in heaven.

W. L. Courtney's The Literary Man's New Testament,

Mt. 16:19

And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Mt. 18:18

Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Frank Schell Ballentine's The Modern American Bible Matthew Translation

Mt. 16:19

I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and
Whatever you shall bind on earth
Will be bound in heaven.
Whatever you shall loose on earth
Will be loosed in heaven.

Mt. 18:18

To tell you the truth:
Whatever you shall bind on earth,
Will be bound in heaven.
Whatever you shall loose on earth
Will be loosed in heaven.

Robert D. Weekes' translation, the New American Bible

Mt. 16:19

I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever thou shalt bind upon the earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever thou shalt unbind upon the earth shall be unbound in heaven.

Mt. 18:18

And I tell you, that whatever ye shall bind upon the earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever ye shall unbind upon the earth shall be unbound in heaven.

George M. Lamsa's Peshitta Translation

Mt. 16:19

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Mt. 18:18

Truly I say to you, Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you release on earth will be released in heaven.

Christian Community Bible

Mt. 16:19

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven: whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven, and what you unbind on earth shall be unbound in Heaven.

Mt. 18:18

I say to you: whatever you bind on earth, Heaven will keep bound; and whatever you unbind on earth, Heaven will keep unbound.

Joseph Bryant Rotherham's The Emphasized Bible translation (1902)

Mt. 16:19

I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of the heavens,-
And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon the earth shall be bound in the heavens,

And whatsoever thou shalt loose upon the earth shall be loosed in the heavens.

Mt. 18:18

Verily I say unto you-

Whatsoever things ye shall bin on the earth

Shall be bound in heaven;

And whatsoever things ye shall loose or the earth

Shall be loosed in heaven.

Knox Version (1945)

Mt. 16:19

and I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Mt. 18:18

I promise you, all that you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and all that you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

William Tyndale's translation (1526)

Mt. 16:19

And y wyll geve vnto the the keyes of the kyngdome of heven and whatsoever thou byndest vppon erth yt shalbe bounde in heven and whatsoever thou lowsest on erthe yt shall be lowsed in heven.

Mt. 18:18

Verely I say vnto you Whatsoever ye bynde on erth shalbe bounde in heven. And whatsoever ye lose on erth shalbe losed in heven.

H. Highton's A Revised Translation of the New Testament (1862)

Mt. 16:19

And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Mt. 18:18

Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Leicester Ambrose Sawyer's translation (1858)

Mt. 16:19

And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on the earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you unbind on the earth shall be unbound in heaven.

Mt. 18:18

I tell you truly, that whatever you bind on the earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you unbind on the earth shall be unbound in heaven.

La Sainte Bible Nouvelle Version Second Révisée (Cinquième Édition)

Mt. 16:19

Je te donnerai les clefs du royaume de cieux: Ce que tu lieras sur la terre sera lié dans les cieux, et ce que tu délieras sur la terre sera délié dans les cieux[u: Comp. 18.18; Jn. 20.23].

Mt. 18:18

En vérité je vous le dis, tout ce que vous lierez sur la terre sera lié dans li ciel, et tout ce que vous délierez sur la terre sera délié dans le ciel.

21st Century King James Version (KJ21)

Mt. 16:19

And I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven.

Mt. 18:18

Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven; and so whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven.

Common English Bible (CEB)

Mt. 16:19

I'll give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Anything you fasten on earth will be fastened in heaven. Anything you loosen on earth will be loosened in heaven.

Mt. 18:18

I assure you that whatever you fasten on earth will be fastened in heaven. And whatever you loosen on earth will be loosened in heaven.

Complete Jewish Bible (CJB)

Mt. 16:19

I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you prohibit on earth will be prohibited in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven.

Mt. 18:18

Yes! I tell you people that whatever you prohibit on earth will be prohibited in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven.

Contemporary English Version (CEV)

Mt. 16:19

I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven, and God in heaven will allow whatever you allow on earth. But he will not allow anything that you don't allow.

Mt. 18:18

I promise you that God in heaven will allow whatever you allow on earth, but he will not allow anything you don't allow.

Darby Translation

Mt. 16:19

And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of the heavens; and whatsoever thou mayest bind upon the earth shall be bound in the heavens; and whatsoever thou mayest loose on the earth shall be loosed in the heavens.

Mt. 18:18

Verily I say to you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on the earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on the earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition (DRA)

Mt. 16:19

And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven.

Mt. 18:18

Amen I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven.

God's Word Translation

Mt. 16:19

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you imprison, God will imprison. And whatever you set free, God will set free.

Mt. 18:18

I can guarantee this truth: Whatever you imprison, God will imprison. And whatever you set free, God will set free.

Good News Translation (GNT)

Mt. 16:19

I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of heaven; what you prohibit on earth will be prohibited in heaven, and what you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven.

Mt. 18:18

And so I tell all of you: what you prohibit on earth will be prohibited in heaven, and what you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven.

Lexham English Bible (LEB)

Mt. 16:19

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound[a: Or “will have been bound”] in heaven, and whatever you release on earth will be released[b: Or “will have been released”] in heaven.

Mt. 18:18

Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you release on earth will be released in heaven.

New International Reader's Version (NIRV)

Mt. 16:19

I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. What you lock on earth will be locked in heaven. What you unlock on earth will be unlocked in heaven.

Mt. 18:18

What I'm about to tell you is true. What you lock on earth will be locked in heaven. What you unlock on earth will be unlocked in heaven.

New Living Translation (NLT)

Mt. 16:19

And I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you forbid[a: Or bind, or lock.] on earth will be forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit[b: Or loose, or open.] on earth will be permitted in heaven.

Mt. 18:18

I tell you the truth, whatever you forbid[a: Or *bind*, or *lock*] on earth will be forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit[b: Or *loose*, or *open*.] on earth will be permitted in heaven.

The Voice Translation (VOICE)

Mt. 16:19

Peter, I give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Mt. 18:18

Remember this: whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Worldwide English translation (WE)

Mt. 16:19

I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. What you tie on earth will be tied in heaven. What you set free on earth will be set free in heaven.

Mt. 18:18

I tell you the truth. What you tie on earth will be tied in heaven. What you set free on earth will be set free in heaven.

Wycliffe Bible (WYC)

Mt. 16:19

And to thee I shall give the keys of the kingdom of heavens; and whatever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound also in heavens; and whatever thou shalt unbind on earth, shall be unbound also in heavens.

Mt. 18:18

I say to you truly, whatever things ye [shall] bind on earth, those shall be bound also in heaven; and whatever things ye [shall] unbind on earth, those shall be unbound also in heaven. [I say to you truly, whatever things ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound also in heaven; and whatever things ye shall unbind on earth, shall be unbound also in heaven.]

Dios Habla Hoy (DHH)

Mt. 16:19

Te daré las llaves del reino de los cielos; lo que tú ates aquí en la tierra, también quedará atado en el cielo, y lo que tú desates aquí en la tierra, también quedará desatado en el cielo.

Mt. 18:18

Les aseguro que lo que ustedes aten aquí en la tierra, también quedará atado en el cielo, y lo que ustedes desaten aquí en la tierra, también quedará desatado en el cielo.

Nueva Traducción Viviente (NTV)

Mt. 16:19

Y te daré las llaves del reino del cielo. Todo lo que prohíbas[a: O *ates*, o *cierres*.] en la tierra será prohibido en el cielo, y todo lo que permitas[b: O *desates*, o *abras*.] en la tierra será permitido en el cielo.

Mt. 18:18

Les digo la verdad, todo lo que prohíban[a: O *aten*, o *cierren*.] en la tierra será prohibido en el cielo, y todo lo que permitan[b: O *desaten*, o *abran*.] en la tierra será permitido en el cielo.

La Palabra (España) (BLP)

Mt. 16:19

Yo te daré las llaves del reino de los cielos: lo que ates en la tierra quedará atado en el cielo, y lo que desates en la tierra quedará desatado en el cielo.

Mt. 18:18

Os aseguro que todo lo que atéis en la tierra quedará atado en el cielo, y todo lo que desatéis en la tierra quedará desatado en el cielo.

La Palabra (Hispanoamérica) (BLPH)

Mt. 16:19

Yo te daré las llaves del reino de los cielos: lo que ates en la tierra quedará atado en el cielo, y lo que desates en la tierra quedará desatado en el cielo.

Mt. 18:18

Les aseguro que todo lo que ustedes aten en la tierra quedará atado en el cielo, y todo lo que desaten en la tierra quedará desatado en el cielo.

Reina Valera Contemporánea (RVC)

Mt. 16:19

A ti te daré las llaves del reino de los cielos. Todo lo que ates en la tierra será atado en los cielos, y todo lo que desates en la tierra será desatado en los cielos.

Mt. 18:18

De cierto les digo que todo lo que aten en la tierra, será atado en el cielo; y todo lo que desaten en la tierra, será desatado en el cielo.

Reina-Valera 1960 (RVR1960)

Mt. 16:19

Y a ti te daré las llaves del reino de los cielos; y todo lo que atares en la tierra será atado en los cielos; y todo lo que desatares en la tierra será desatado en los cielos.

Mt. 18:18

De cierto os digo que todo lo que atéis en la tierra, será atado en el cielo; y todo lo que desatéis en la tierra, será desatado en el cielo.

Reina Valera 1977 (RVR1977)

Mt. 16:19

Y a ti te daré las llaves del reino de los cielos; y todo lo que ates en la tierra, estará atado en los cielos; y todo lo que desates en la tierra, estará desatado en los cielos.

Mt. 18:18

De cierto os digo que todo lo que atéis en la tierra, estará atado en el cielo; y todo lo que desatéis en la tierra, estará desatado en el cielo.

Reina-Valera 1995 (RVR1995)

Mt. 16:19

Y a ti te daré las llaves del reino de los cielos: todo lo que ates en la tierra será atado en los cielos, y todo lo que desates en la tierra será desatado en los cielos.

Mt. 18:18

De cierto os digo que todo lo que atéis en la tierra será atado en el cielo; y todo lo que desatéis en la tierra será desatado en el cielo.

Reina-Valera Antigua (RVA)

Mt. 16:19

Y á ti daré las llaves del reino de los cielos; y todo lo que ligares en la tierra será ligado en los cielos; y todo lo que desatares en la tierra será desatado en los cielos.

Mt. 18:18

De cierto os digo que todo lo que ligareis en la tierra, será ligado en el cielo; y todo lo que desatareis en la tierra, será desatado en el cielo.

Traducción en lenguaje actual (TLA),

Mt. 16:19

A ti, Pedro, te daré autoridad en el reino de Dios. Todas las cosas que tú prohíbas aquí en la tierra, desde el cielo Dios las prohibirá. Y las cosas que tú permitas, también Dios las permitirá.

Mt. 18:18

Les aseguro que cualquier cosa que ustedes prohíban aquí en la tierra, desde el cielo Dios la prohibirá. Y cualquier cosa que ustedes permitan, también Dios la permitirá.

Louis Segond (LSG)

Mt. 16:19

Je te donnerai les clefs du royaume des cieux: ce que tu lieras sur la terre sera lié dans les cieux, et ce que tu délieras sur la terre sera délié dans les cieux.

Mt. 18:18

Je vous le dis en vérité, tout ce que vous lierez sur la terre sera lié dans le ciel, et tout ce que vous délierez sur la terre sera délié dans le ciel.

Nouvelle Edition de Genève (NEG1979)

Mt. 16:19

Je te donnerai les clés du royaume des cieux: ce que tu lieras sur la terre sera lié dans les cieux, et ce que tu délieras sur la terre sera délié dans les cieux.

Mt. 18:18

Je vous le dis en vérité, tout ce que vous lierez sur la terre sera lié dans le ciel, et tout ce que vous délierez sur la terre sera délié dans le ciel.

Neue Genfer Übersetzung (NGU-DE)

Mt. 16:19

Ich werde dir die Schlüssel des Himmelreichs geben; was du auf der Erde bindest, das wird im Himmel gebunden sein, und was du auf der Erde löst, das wird im Himmel gelöst sein.

Mt. 18:18

Ich sage euch: Alles, was ihr auf der Erde binden werdet, wird im Himmel gebunden sein, und alles, was ihr auf der Erde lösen werdet, wird im Himmel gelöst sein.

Schlachter 1951 (SCH1951)

Mt. 16:19

Und ich will dir die Schlüssel des Himmelreichs geben; und was du auf Erden binden wirst, das wird im Himmel[a: w. in den Himmeln] gebunden sein; und was du auf Erden lösen[b: binden und lösen, Hebr.-Aram., bed. für verboten bzw. erlaubt erklären] wirst, das wird in den Himmeln gelöst sein.

Mt. 18:18

Wahrlich, ich sage euch, was ihr auf Erden binden werdet, das wird im Himmel gebunden sein, und was ihr auf Erden lösen[a: s. Mt 16:19; Fußn.] werdet, das wird im Himmel gelöst sein.

Schlachter 2000 (SCH2000)

Mt. 16:19

Und ich will dir die Schlüssel des Reiches der Himmel geben; und was du auf Erden binden wirst, das wird im Himmel gebunden sein; und was du auf Erden lösen wirst, das wird im Himmel gelöst sein.[a: vgl. Fn. zu Mt 18,18.]

Mt. 18:18

Wahrlich, ich sage euch: Was ihr auf Erden binden werdet, das wird im Himmel gebunden sein, und was ihr auf Erden lösen werdet, das wird im Himmel gelöst sein.[a: Nach dem damaligen jüdischen Sprachgebrauch steht »binden« und »lösen« für Maßnahmen der Gemeindezucht: Jemand konnte aufgrund eines Vergehens aus der Synagoge ausgeschlossen werden, aber nach Reue und Buße wieder in die Gemeinschaft aufgenommen werden (vgl. das mit »lösen« im Gr. verwandte »freisprechen« in Lk 6,37).]

Conferenza Episcopale Italiana (CEI)

Mt. 16:19

A te darò le chiavi del regno dei cieli, e tutto ciò che legherai sulla terra sarà legato nei cieli, e tutto ciò che scioglierai sulla terra sarà sciolto nei cieli».

Mt. 18:18

In verità vi dico: tutto quello che legherete sopra la terra sarà legato anche in cielo e tutto quello che scioglierete sopra la terra sarà sciolto anche in cielo.

La Parola è Vita (LM)

Mt. 16:19

Io ti darò le chiavi del Regno dei cieli; qualsiasi cosa avrai legata in terra, sarà legata in cielo, e ciò che avrai sciolto in terra, sarà sciolto in cielo!

Mt. 18:18

Vi dico questo: qualsiasi cosa avrete legata in terra sarà legata in cielo, e ciò che avrete sciolto in terra, sarà sciolto in cielo.

Nuova Riveduta (NR1994; also NR2006)

Mt. 16:19

Io ti darò le chiavi del regno dei cieli; tutto ciò che legherai in terra sarà legato nei cieli, e tutto ciò che scioglierai in terra sarà sciolto nei cieli.

Mt. 18:18

Io vi dico in verità che tutte le cose che legherete sulla terra, saranno legate nel cielo; e tutte le cose che scioglierete sulla terra, saranno sciolte nel cielo.

Nuova Riveduta 2006 (NR2006)

Mt. 16:19

Io ti darò le chiavi del regno dei cieli; tutto ciò che legherai in terra sarà legato nei cieli, e tutto ciò che scioglierai in terra sarà sciolto nei cieli.

Mt. 18:18

Io vi dico in verità che tutte le cose che legherete sulla terra, saranno legate nel cielo; e tutte le cose che scioglierete sulla terra, saranno sciolte nel cielo.

4. Perfect Future Form Without a Note Indicating That a Non-Perfect Future Form Is a Translational Possibility

Young's Literal Translation

Mt. 16:19

and I will give to thee the keys of the reign of the heavens, and whatever thou mayest bind upon the earth shall be having been bound in the heavens, and whatever thou mayest loose upon the earth shall be having been loosed in the heavens.

Mt. 18:18

Verily I say to you, Whatever things ye may bind upon the earth shall be having been bound in the heavens, and whatever things ye may loose on the earth shall be having been loosed in the heavens.

The amplified Bible (AMP)

Mt. 16:19

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind (declare to be improper and unlawful) on earth [a: Charles B. Williams, The New Testament: A Translation: "The perfect passive participle, here referring to a state of having been already forbidden [or permitted]."] must be what is already bound in heaven; and whatever you loose (declare lawful) on earth [b: Charles B. Williams, The New Testament: A Translation: "The perfect passive participle, here referring to a state of having been already forbidden [or permitted]."] must be what is already loosed in heaven.

Mt. 18:18

Truly I tell you, whatever you forbid and declare to be improper and unlawful on earth must be [a: See footnote on Matt. 16:19.] what is already forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit and declare proper and lawful on earth must be [b: See footnote on Matt. 16:19.] what is already permitted in heaven.

New English Translation (NET)

Mt. 16:19

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you release on earth will have been released in heaven.

Mt. 18:18

I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you release on earth will have been released in heaven.

Mounce Reverse-Interlinear New Testament

Mt. 16:19

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will have been loosed in heaven.

Mt. 18:18

I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will have been loosed in heaven.

New American Standard Bible

Mt. 16:19

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth [a: Gr estai dedemenon, fut. pft. pass.] shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth [b: Gr estai lelumenon, fut. pft. pass.] shall have been loosed in heaven.

Mt. 18:18

Truly I say to you, whatever you [a: Or forbid] bind on earth [b: Gr fut. pft. pass.] shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you [c: Or permit] loose on earth [d: Gr fut. pft. pass.] shall have been loosed in heaven.

New Life Version (NLV)

Mt. 16:19

I will give you the keys of the holy nation of heaven. Whatever you do not allow on earth will not have been allowed in heaven. Whatever you allow on earth will have been allowed in heaven.

Mt. 18:18

For sure, I tell you, whatever you do not allow on earth will not have been allowed in heaven. Whatever you allow on earth will have been allowed in heaven.

World English Bible (WEB)

Mt. 16:19

I will give to you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven; and whatever you release on earth will have been released in heaven.

Mt. 18:18

Most certainly I tell you, whatever things you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever things you release on earth will have been released in heaven.

La Bible du Semeur (BDS)

Mt. 16:19

Je te donnerai les clés du *royaume des cieux: tous ceux que tu excluras sur la terre auront été exclus aux yeux de Dieu et tous ceux que tu accueilleras sur la terre auront été accueillis aux yeux de Dieu[a: Autre traduction: tout ce que tu interdiras sur la terre aura été interdit aux yeux de Dieu et tout ce que tu permettras sur la terre aura été permis aux yeux de Dieu (voir 18.18).]

Mt. 18:18

Vraiment, je vous l'assure: tous ceux que vous exclurez sur la terre auront été exclus aux yeux de Dieu et tous ceux que vous accueillerez sur la terre auront été accueillis aux yeux de Dieu[a: Autre traduction: tout ce que vous interdirez sur la terre aura été interdit aux yeux de Dieu et tout ce que vous permettrez sur la terre aura été permis aux yeux de Dieu (voir 16.19).]

Segond 21 (SG21)

Mt. 16:19

Je te donnerai les clés du royaume des cieux: ce que tu lieras sur la terre aura été lié au ciel et ce que tu délieras sur la terre aura été délié au ciel.

Mt. 18:18

Je vous le dis en vérité, tout ce que vous lierez sur la terre aura été lié au ciel et tout ce que vous délierez sur la terre aura été délié au ciel.

Hoffnung für Alle (HOF)

Mt. 16:19

Ich will dir die Schlüssel zu Gottes neuer Welt geben. Was du auf der Erde binden wirst, das soll auch im Himmel gebunden sein. Und was du auf der Erde lösen wirst, das soll auch im Himmel gelöst sein.

Mt. 18:18

Ich versichere euch: Was ihr auf der Erde binden werdet, das soll auch im Himmel gebunden sein. Und was ihr auf der Erde lösen werdet, das soll auch im Himmel gelöst sein.

Martin Luther's Translation (1545)

Mt. 16:19

Und ich will dir des Himmelsreichs Schlüssel geben: alles, was du auf Erden binden wirst, soll auch im Himmel gebunden sein, und alles, was du auf Erden lösen wirst, soll auch im Himmel los sein.

Mt. 18:18

Wahrlich ich sage euch: Was ihr auf Erden binden werdet, soll auch im Himmel gebunden sein, und was ihr auf Erden lösen werdet, soll auch im Himmel los sein.

VII. Appendix B: Matthew's Characterization of Disciples and Peter, and an Explanation of Mt. 16:16-19

In the main body of this thesis, some attention was given to characterization of disciples and of Peter. Though a full analysis of material in Matthew bearing on these two issues was not undertaken, and though space limitations did not permit a thorough sifting and analysis of scholarly opinion on the matter, the relevant section did provide information to support one particular conclusion. Characterization of disciples and Peter outside of Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18 makes it unreasonable or absurd to think that these verses grant to Peter and disciples, respectively, broad authority for making decisions that would receive divine endorsement and that would be imposed on other disciples. This appendix takes a close look at much of Matthew's material and provides support to this judgment. The appendix consists of three parts. The first part examines Matthew's characterization of disciples outside of Mt. 16:16-19 and Mt. 18:18.⁶¹⁵ The second part examines Matthew's characterization of Peter outside of Mt. 16:16-19 and Mt. 18:18, and the third part looks at characterization of Peter in Mt. 16:16-19a.

615. Help in understanding Matthew's portrayal of disciples was found in Sheridan, "Disciples and Discipleship in Matthew and Luke" and Luz, Ulrich, Disciples in Matthew.

1. Matthew's Characterization of Disciples' Understanding and Faith, and Its Significance for Interpretation of Mt. 18:18

One may begin by looking at Matthew's characterization of disciples outside of Mt. 16:16-19 and Mt. 18:18. Though this thesis does not think that Markan priority is a correct solution to the synoptic problem, a comparison of Markan and Matthean double tradition passages may still be instructive. One of the differences between these two gospels in relation to characterization of disciples is that in multiple places Matthew's portrayal of the understanding of the disciples is more positive than that of Mark. This can be seen in passages where Matthew includes a statement about disciples' understanding that Mark lacks, or where Mark includes a statement about disciples' lack of understanding that Matthew does not have.

There are a number of passages where Matthew has a positive portrayal of disciples' understanding that is absent in Mark. Mt. 13:51 has Jesus asking his disciples if they understood *ταῦτα πάντα*, 'all these things', to which the disciples respond positively. Mark, by contrast, has no such question and answer in Mk. 4.⁶¹⁶ Further, this question and answer in Matthew occurs after Matthew's parable of the soils and its explanation. In Matthew 13:19, Matthew indicates that seed on the path are those who hear and do not understand, but in the explanation of Mark, there is no such explicit indication about lack of understanding. In Matthew 13:23, the one who received the good seed is the one who hears the word, understands (*συνιείς*), and produces a

616. Sheridan, "Disciples and Discipleship in Matthew and Luke", p. 246.

crop. Mark has both the hearing and producing a crop, but where Matthew has συνιείς, Mark 4:20 has 'accept' (παραδέχονται).⁶¹⁷ In Mt. 17:13, Matthew indicates that the disciples understood that Jesus was talking about the Baptist, a statement that is absent in Mark (cf. Mk. 9:11-13).⁶¹⁸

In response to the inquiry about parables in Mt. 13 and Mk. 4, both Matthew and Mark have Jesus indicating that disciples' knowledge of the mystery (singular in Mark 4:11) or mysteries (plural in Mt. 13:11) of the kingdom has been given to disciples. In Matthew it is not given to some of the people,⁶¹⁹ and Mark indicates that parables are used for those on the outside so that they would see but not perceive and hear but not understand.⁶²⁰ At this point, Matthew has something that Mark lacks. Matthew continues and includes material from Isaiah⁶²¹ that goes with the failure of others to understand⁶²² and that is not found in Mark.⁶²³ Further, he then has Jesus remark that the disciples' ears and eyes are blessed because they hear and see,⁶²⁴ and that many prophets and righteous men longed to hear and see what the disciples heard and saw, but those prophets and righteous men did not hear or see it.⁶²⁵ Mark does not have this statement of blessing about disciples seeing and hearing, though Luke has a similar statement^{626 627}.

617. Barth, G. (1963). "Matthew's Understanding of the Law". In Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew. (pp. 58-164). London: SCM. , p. 107.

618. Ibid., p. 106.

619. Mt. 13:10-11.

620. Mk. 4:11-12.

621. Cf. Mt. 13:14-15.

622. Mt. 13:14.

623. Ibid., p. 106.

624. Mt. 13:16.

625. Mt. 13:17.

626. Cf. Lk. 10:23-24.

627. Ibid., p. 107.

In some cases, Mark has a negative portrayal of disciples' understanding that Matthew lacks. In Mt. 14 and Mk. 6, Matthew has the disciples say that Jesus was the Son of God,⁶²⁸ but Mark, not having this, indicates that the disciples had hardened hearts and did not understand⁶²⁹.⁶³⁰ Mk. 9:6 indicates that Peter, being frightened, did not know what to say, but Matthew does not have such a statement⁶³¹.⁶³² In Mt. 16:9, Jesus asks if the disciples do not understand, but in Mk. 8:17, he asks if they do not see and understand and asks if their hearts are hardened.⁶³³ Matthew also does not include Mark's statement about disciples discussing what rising from the dead meant⁶³⁴.⁶³⁵ In Mk. 9:32, the disciples did not understand what Jesus meant, and they were afraid to ask him. In Mt. 17:23, though, the disciples are infused with grief.⁶³⁶

In the pericope containing the parable of the soils and its explanation,⁶³⁷ Mark 4:10 says that when he was alone (i.e., away from a crowd), twelve disciples and those with him asked about the parables. After some words, Jesus asks if they do not understand the parable, and if they did not, how they would understand other parable(s).⁶³⁸ Matthew does not contain such question(s) about understanding in this part of his gospel.⁶³⁹ After asking questions about bread

628. Mt. 14:33.

629. Mk. 6:51-52.

630. Cf. Sheridan, "Disciples and Discipleship in Matthew and Luke", p. 245; Barth, G., *Matthew's Understanding of the Law*, p. 106.

631. Mt. 17:4.

632. Sheridan, "Disciples and Discipleship in Matthew and Luke", p. 245-246.

633. Barth, G., *Matthew's Understanding of the Law*, p. 106.

634. Cf. Mk. 9:10; Mt. 17:9-10.

635. Sheridan, "Disciples and Discipleship in Matthew and Luke", p. 246; Barth, G., *Matthew's Understanding of the Law*, p. 106.

636. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

637. Cf. Mk. 4:1-20 // Mt. 13:1-23.

638. Mk. 4:11-13.

639. Allen, Willoughby C., *Matthew*, p. xxxiii.

in Mk. 8:14-21, the pericope concludes with Jesus' question, 'Do you still not understand?'; Matthew, though, concludes with the statement that disciples understood that Jesus was talking to them about teaching of Pharisees and Sadducees⁶⁴⁰.⁶⁴¹ In that same section, Mk. 8:17 has Jesus asking disciples if their hearts are hardened, but Mt. 16:9 lacks the question.⁶⁴² In Mk. 10:32, when Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem, Mark characterizes disciples as astonished and those who followed as afraid.

The statement about the disciples' astonishment fits well with Mark's characterization of disciples lack of understanding in other places. Luke also indicates that disciples did not understand and did not know his words.⁶⁴³ Matthew, though, does not have Mark's statement about astonished followers or afraid followers, nor Luke's statement about lack of understanding⁶⁴⁴.⁶⁴⁵ In Mark. 10:35-37, the two sons of Zebedee make the request about sitting at the right and left of Jesus in his kingdom, but in Matthew, it is the mother who asks⁶⁴⁶.⁶⁴⁷ In Mt. 18:1, disciples ask Jesus who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, but Mk. 9:33-34 indicates that disciples were arguing about who was greatest. The Markan statement is absent in Matthew.⁶⁴⁸

640. Cf. Mt. 16:5-12.

641. Sheridan, "Disciples and Discipleship in Matthew and Luke", p. 246.

642. Barth, G., *Matthew's Understanding of the Law*, p. 118.

643. Lk. 18:34.

644. Mt. 20:17.

645. *Ibid.*, p. 108.

646. Mt. 20:20-21.

647. Luz, Ulrich, *Disciples in Matthew*, p. 101.

648. Allen, Willoughby C., *Matthew*, p. xxxiv.

Positive statements about disciples understanding can also be found in the area of understanding the identity of Jesus. There are a number of cases in Mark where Jesus is addressed as Rabbi⁶⁴⁹ or teacher,⁶⁵⁰ but in parallel passages in Matthew, he is addressed as 'Lord'. Jesus is also addressed as 'Lord' and as 'Son of God' in the miracle pericope of Mt. 14:28-33.⁶⁵¹ Sheridan remarks that "It is clear from a comparison with the texts in Mark, from the consistency and contexts of Matthew's usage and from its relation to the portrait of the disciples' understanding, that this is not merely a respectful form of address [sic] but a christological title (Freyne 163)."⁶⁵²

(a) Matthew's Characterization of Disciples' Faith and Understanding

In addition to places where Matthew does not have a negative characterization of disciples that is found in Mark, places where Matthew has a positive characterization lacking in Mark, and places where disciples grasp some of the identity of Jesus, one particular feature of Matthew's characterization of disciples' understanding needs to be considered. This is the relationship of understanding to faith in Matthew. Luz says that "Faith and understanding are separated in Matthew. The disciples are men of little faith, but they do understand."⁶⁵³ Sheridan indicates that the theme of lack of faith or little faith "reflects a concept of faith which depends

649. Mk. 9:5//Mt. 17:4; Mk. 10:51//Mt. 20:33.

650. Cf. Mk. 4:38//Mt. 8:25.

651. Sheridan, "Disciples and Discipleship in Matthew and Luke", p. 246.

652. Ibid., p. 246.

653. Luz, Ulrich, Disciples in Matthew, p. 103.

on having understanding already. Matthew has removed the noetic moment, included in the term «faith» (*pistis*) by Paul, John and Mark, and designated it as understanding (Barth 105-7)."⁶⁵⁴

Barth, whom Sheridan cites, states in another place that "Understanding is ... obviously the presupposition of faith, if it does not extend its meaning still further and take over part of the function of πίστις."⁶⁵⁵ Luz, Barth, and Sheridan all make a distinction between faith and understanding and think that the two are related each to the other. For Barth and Sheridan, understanding in a sense is a foundation on which faith would rest.

This distinction between faith and understanding allows Matthew to have a different characterization of disciples' faith than he has of their understanding. In Matthew, more positive descriptions of disciples understanding than those in Mark don't necessarily translate into a robust faith, nor into an absence of fear. Disciples can be characterized in one place as having understanding but in another place as having insufficient faith.

This is, in fact, what is found. On more than one occasion in Matthew disciples are criticized for their lack of faith or their little faith;⁶⁵⁶ the same is done with Peter in Mt. 14:31. If the subject of the verb for doubting in Mt. 28:17 is disciples, then this verse might reflect a failure of disciples in regard to faith.⁶⁵⁷ Barth remarks that Matthew has inserted an accusation of deficient faith five times⁶⁵⁸ and then says that "Matthew has considerably strengthened the

654. Sheridan, "Disciples and Discipleship in Matthew and Luke", p. 247.

655. Barth, G., *Matthew's Understanding of the Law*, p. 113.

656. Mt. 8:26; 16:8; 17:20.

657. Luz, Ulrich, *Disciples in Matthew*, p. 101.

658. Cf. Mt. 14:31; 16:8; 17:20; 28:17; and 21:20.

accusation of defective faith."⁶⁵⁹ Although the characterization of disciples' understanding in Matthew is more positive than that of Mark, Matthew's presentation of disciples' faith is not always much better than that found in Mark. In comparison to Matthew's characterization of disciples understanding, his characterization of their little faith or lack of faith is at times worse.

The picture one gets from Matthew is that Matthew's disciples understand but at different points fail to have adequate faith. In Matthew's theology, this might seem problematic, since understanding is not sufficient alone. Sheridan indicates that understanding is in itself not enough to guarantee the disciple's future. Though a lack of fruit was associated with the taking of the reign or kingdom of God from one group, the group to which it would be given would need to bear fruit.⁶⁶⁰ Matthew does mention 'understanding' twice in the parable of the sower, but even there the good seed produces a crop.⁶⁶¹ Also, repentance and good fruit go hand in hand,⁶⁶² and the true state of a man is revealed by his fruit⁶⁶³.⁶⁶⁴ Understanding is necessary for producing fruit⁶⁶⁵ or is associated with healing,⁶⁶⁶ but by itself is not sufficient for a favorable eternal fate.

Sheridan also provides other evidence. He thinks that "Mark's identification of the disciples with the twelve is uncertain and incomplete. Matthew, having perceived this, made the identification of the disciples and the twelve complete by eliminating any other interpretation

659. Barth, G., *Matthew's Understanding of the Law*, p. 119.

660. Mt. 21:41-43.

661. Mt. 13:23.

662. Mt. 3:8.

663. Mt. 7:16-17.

664. Sheridan, "Disciples and Discipleship in Matthew and Luke", p. 249.

665. Mt. 13:23.

666. Mt. 13:15.

whenever possible."⁶⁶⁷ Sheridan also indicates that there is completed in Matthew the identification of three terms: disciples, the twelve, and apostles.⁶⁶⁸ Whether or not he does in fact do so, Minear indicates that in his article he would test the thesis that "because the *ochloi* in Matthew represent followers of Jesus, his *mathetai* form a much more limited and specialized group than is usually supposed. They are those chosen and trained as successors to Jesus in his role as exorcist, healer, prophet, and teacher."⁶⁶⁹ If Matthew has used Mark and more closely associated 'disciples' with 'the twelve', this might be interpreted as in some way exalting the twelve, and as giving a more positive portrayal of them.

(b) Evaluating Matthew's Characterization of Disciples in Regard to Some Interpretations of Mt. 18:18

The preceding discussion has examined Matthew's characterization of disciples' understanding, their faith, and the relation between the two. This section will consider the significance of this characterization and assess the plausibility of some interpretations of Mt. 18:18. The conclusion of this assessment may be stated briefly. Even when one takes into account Matthew's more favorable characterization of disciples' understanding than that in Mark, Matthew's portrayal of disciples outside of Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18 is still sufficiently low that the objection of absurdity or unreasonableness in traditional interpretations still stands.

667. Ibid., p. 237. Note, though, Sheridan's statement on p. 242 that "As Jesus made disciples, so they are to make disciples, but not for themselves. Jesus remains with them as their one teacher. In Matthew the disciples remain disciples and do not emerge as teachers in their own right to the extent that they do in Luke (Acts 2:42)."

668. Ibid., p. 237. Cf. also Wilkins, "Named and Unnamed Disciples in Matthew", p. 421.

669. Minear, "Disciples and Crowds in Matthew", p. 31.

Before moving to evaluate evidence of Matthew's characterization of disciples' understanding, some comments may be made about the remarks of Sheridan and Minear regarding disciples. First, even if Matthew generally reserved 'the disciples' for 'the twelve', it appears that Matthew did not intend by such usage to exclude the idea that others were disciples.

In their section on Mt. 5:1, Davies and Allison remark that

Until this point, the word 'disciple' has not been used, and only four followers have been called (4.18-22). Moreover, at this juncture it is difficult indeed to identify the disciples with the twelve because at least one of them, Matthew the tax-collector (see 10.3), does not meet Jesus until 9.9. ... In 5.1, the unspecified disciples, who must be a group larger than the four of 4.18-22, are—and this is the key point—contrasted with the crowd and so represent the church."⁶⁷⁰

Davies and Allison's conclusion regarding what 'his disciples' represent in Mt. 5:1 may be put to the side without taking away the insight that the "disciples" in Mt. 5:1 represent more than the four disciples already called but do not represent the twelve given that the disciple Matthew first steps onto the narrative scene only in Mt. 9. Wilkins provides an analysis of Matthew's references to disciples that is more nuanced than a simple, exception-less equation between the twelve and 'disciples'. He says that

Matthew generally identifies the disciples with the Twelve, but he does not exclude the existence of other disciples. Unless Matthew states otherwise, he refers to the Twelve when he refers to the disciples, but he does not mean to imply that Jesus has no other disciples. The ambiguity surrounding this nameless, faceless circle of disciples creates elasticity. It allows the term to function as a referent for the inner circle of Twelve, yet allows it to expand to imply a wider circle of disciples as well.⁶⁷¹

670. Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C., *Matthew 1-7*, p. 425.

671. Wilkins, "Named and Unnamed Disciples in Matthew", p. 437.

In addition to this analysis, Wilkins also notices that Matthew's language regarding Joseph of Arimathea indicates that Matthew considered Joseph to be a disciple.⁶⁷² Wilkins' assessment discourages one from finding much significance in Matthew's use of disciple language for interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18.⁶⁷³ That usage has little or no weight for such interpretation.

Wilkins' and Kingsbury's analysis of character of crowds, disciples, and religious leaders also disagrees with, or at least tempers, Minear's view. Wilkins says that "The crowd is the basically neutral group that is the object of Jesus' saving ministry ... but as a group the crowd does not exercise faith in him."⁶⁷⁴ If Wilkins is correct in this assessment, then this subverts or mitigates Minear's view that "because the *ochloi* in Matthew represent followers of Jesus, his *mathetai* form a much more limited and specialized group than is usually supposed."⁶⁷⁵ Wilkins' conclusion aligns with that of Kingsbury who says that, "Amicable though the crowds may be, they are nonetheless 'without faith' in Jesus."⁶⁷⁶ Even if Minear's analysis of crowds in Matthew did not seem to be in tension with views of other scholars, taking a small group of disciples from a much larger group would not necessarily mean that the one selecting the smaller group thought highly enough of them to make the type of statement some scholars suppose is made in Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18. It would also not remove the unreasonableness or absurdity in typical interpretation of those passages.

672. Cf. Ibid., pp. 432-435.

673. See also the comments of Luz, Ulrich, *Disciples in Matthew*, p. 99.

674. Wilkins, "Named and Unnamed Disciples in Matthew", p. 422.

675. Minear, "Disciples and Crowds in Matthew", p. 31.

676. Kingsbury, Jack Dean, *Matthew as Story*, p. 24.

In regard to the contrast of disciples understanding in Matthew and in Mark, if Matthew had any intention to improve the portrayal of disciple's understanding, Matthew's purpose may have been much more to demonstrate Jesus' adequacy as a teacher than disciples' understanding. Jesus' superiority as a teacher would naturally involve portraying those he teaches as reaching understanding, and an intention to portray Jesus as a great teacher would actually be served better by portraying disciples as initially obtuse and then attaining understanding. In that case, Matthew could portray disciples achieving a greater understanding without shedding a low (or lower) view of their capacities and values.

More than one scholar has entertained the idea that Matthew's focus was on showing the adequacy of Jesus as a teacher. There are a number of cases where disciples initially do not understand, and then with Jesus' input, they do understand. In Matthew, lack of understanding is at times not permanent, but temporary. If disciples did not understand Jesus' teaching earlier in Mt. 13, then their positive reply to Jesus' later question if they understood 'all these things' would encourage the reader towards thinking that lack of understanding had been removed. The pericope in which Jesus warns his disciples about yeast of Pharisees and Sadducees ends in a statement that disciples understood that Jesus was warning against teaching of Pharisees and Sadducees. In Mt. 17:10-13, after Jesus responds to disciples question why teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first, Matthew indicates that they then understood that Jesus was talking about the Baptist.⁶⁷⁷

677. Barth, G., *Matthew's Understanding of the Law*, pp. 108-109.

It is not just that disciples' lack of understanding is removed, but Jesus is often the agent of the removal of disciple's lack of understanding. In Mt. 16:5-12, for example, disciples' initial lack of understanding is changed when Jesus speaks further. Although the absence of Mark's indication of secret explanation of parabolic material to disciples has been taken to be consistent with a contrast of disciple's understanding and multitude's obduracy,⁶⁷⁸ Luz has some words in this regard that need consideration. Luz also speaks more broadly, addressing the issue of understanding in Matthew. He is worth quoting at length.

The evangelist is heading consistently for his formula quotation at Matt. 13:35. Mark 4:34 is not absent but is brought up later at 13:36 where the disciples expressly ask for an explanation of the parable of the Tares among the wheat. But at Matt. 13:10 the evangelist simply adapts the disciples' question to the explanation which follows. ... above all, the disciples receive far more frequent special instruction in Matthew than in any other Gospel, and this contradicts the thesis of Barth. It means that they often fail to understand, but that they come to understand through Jesus' explanation (13:51). For Matthew it is important that the disciples do finally - after Jesus' instruction - understand. That fits 15:16 and 16:9 too where it is expressly said that the disciples do not *yet* understand. In each case this is followed by an instruction of the disciples the point of which is to remove their lack of understanding. It is then expressly stated at 16:12 and 17:13 that the disciples *now* understand, i.e. after this exhaustive instruction ... So Jesus is shown here as a good teacher who successfully gives the disciples full instruction about everything. They do not understand of their own accord. They come to understand through Jesus' instruction. The purpose of this common and consistently applied motif in Matthew is probably not to idealize the picture of the disciples. It is concerned with something else. ... Jesus is the teacher who leads his disciples to understanding.⁶⁷⁹

Luz gives an explanation that builds on the temporary lack of understanding of disciples.

Wilkins expresses a similar view. Wilkins recognizes that Matthew and Mark had different

678. Cf. Ibid., p. 108.

679. Luz, Ulrich, *Disciples in Matthew*, pp. 102-103.

purposes. The latter emphasized "how difficult it was for even the disciples to comprehend the magnitude of Jesus' earthly ministry", a point with which Wilkins says that Matthew agrees, but, Wilkins thinks, Matthew added "a further point: when Jesus teaches, disciples understand."⁶⁸⁰ If Matthew's focus was on Jesus' superiority as a teacher, and not on improving Mark's negative portrayal of disciples, then the improved understanding of disciples in Matthew would offer less in support of the view that Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18 grant Peter and disciples broad authority to make decisions that would receive divine approval and that would be imposed on others.

If the above considerations were to be put aside, and if it were granted that Matthew intentionally improved the characterization of disciples, what would be the significance of this? Sheridan calls it a "striking fact that the disciples in Matthew understand everything Jesus teaches, whereas in Mark they are portrayed as understanding virtually nothing before the resurrection."⁶⁸¹ If this is the case, does such a striking fact give much support to traditional interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18? In the end, the objection to a traditional interpretation of Mt. 18:18 would still stand. That is, even the more positive view of disciples' understanding in Matthew does not make the extremity of the traditional interpretation tenable. There is still an objection of absurdity and unreasonableness. A number of considerations support this conclusion.

The first consideration in favor of the objection from unreasonableness is that, even with Matthew's more positive portrayal of disciples' understanding, the object of the understanding of

680. Wilkins, "Named and Unnamed Disciples in Matthew", p. 422.

681. Sheridan, "Disciples and Discipleship in Matthew and Luke", p. 244.

Matthew's disciples never comes close in scope to the understanding that would be necessary to properly exercise the sort of authority that is thought to be granted to disciples in Mt. 18:18 and to Peter in Mt. 16:19b-c. In Mt. 13:19, the object of understanding (συνίημι) is the word of the kingdom (τὸν λόγον τῆς βασιλείας), and in Mt. 13:23, the object is the word (τὸν λόγον). In Mt. 13:11, Jesus indicates that the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven is given to disciples, but not to many among the people. Here the object of συνίημι would be mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. How 'mysteries of the kingdom of heaven' is to be understood is itself somewhat uncertain, but no judicious interpretation of the phrase would come near the type of knowledge necessary for the authority commonly thought to be granted in Mt. 18:18. Very close to this phrase, there is in Mt. 13:13 and Mt. 13:15 more usage of συνίημι, but in Mt. 13:15, the switch from not understanding to understanding is associated with being healed. What is envisaged in being healed is the transformation of a person, not the granting of an inordinate level of understanding of ethical matters for problems in a community. This is true whether the mysteries of the kingdom are granted only to disciples, or to disciples and some among the people. The word of blessing for those who see and hear in Mt. 13:16-17 does not change this perspective of understanding in Mt. 13:11-15.

The difference between understanding and not understanding in the explanation of the parable of the soils is between producing fruit and not producing fruit. Understanding is linked to bearing fruit. This is a type of understanding that changes the person and thus would appropriately go with a preacher whose message, like the Baptist before him, was to repent.⁶⁸²

682. Mt. 3:1, 8; 4:17.

The scope of understanding in Mt. 13:11, 13, 15, 19, 23 is thus far more reserved than what is envisaged in traditional interpretation of Mt. 18:18. Accordingly, when one proceeds nearer to the end of the parables discourse chapter and finds Jesus' question about disciples understanding, the understanding of preceding teaching that is posited by their positive response is incommensurate with the knowledge necessary for traditional interpretation of Mt. 18:18. In Mt. 16:9, 11, Jesus' questions are with an eye to his warning against yeast of Pharisees and Sadducees. In Mt. 16:12, the disciples do understand, but the understanding is merely about what was meant by this metaphorical warning of yeast. Similarly, what the disciples understand in Mt. 17:11-13 is that the referent of "Elijah" is John the Baptist, a one-time this-is-that identification. In all of these places, the object of the understanding of the disciples does not come close to the understanding that would be necessary to be fit for the authority supposedly granted in Mt. 18:18.⁶⁸³

It is not only the case that Matthew's more positive portrayal about disciples' understanding is generally an understanding about things that fall far short of anything close to the type of knowledge necessary for the appropriate administration of the authority supposedly granted to disciples in Mt. 18:18 or to Peter in Mt. 16:19b-c. It may also be noted that the absence in Matthew of some of Mark's negative characterizations of disciples is not an affirmation of the opposite. That Matthew does not include a negative characterization is not the same thing as a positive affirmation. It is an unwarranted leap to say that we should think of

683. Also, in Mt. 10:1, disciples are given authority for things that are obviously negative, and the authority does not require the discretion and wisdom that one would need for the authority thought to be granted in Mt. 18:18.

Matthew affirming a positive portrayal of disciples if he does not include a negative portrayal of disciples found in Mark. This is true whether or not Matthew's reason for not including a negative characterization is due to having a different viewpoint about disciples than Mark. Further, if Matthew used Mark, some of his omissions are of such a small nature that they have little or no significance for interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18. In his transfiguration scene, for example, Matthew does not have the statement of Mk. 9:6 that Peter did not know what to say. It would not be easy to believe that this means anything significant regarding the unreasonableness or absurdity of typical interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c.

It is also worth keeping in mind that, if Matthew used Mark, some of his changes to his Markan material might have been for a reason other than disagreement. Luz remarks that

In a few passages where Matthew seems to have a more favourable picture of the disciples the tendency to tighten up the composition is probably at least partly responsible. That is true of Matt. 19:23 (Mark 10:23f); Matt. 20:17 (Mark 10:32); Matt. 18:19 (Mark 9:33-5). Abbreviation without change of content is found at Matt. 26:9 (Mark 14:5).⁶⁸⁴

It is often thought in synoptic studies that Matthew abbreviates Mark. It is not the tendency that scholars would question, and so the objection would not be that the practice is unknown to Matthew. Here Luz offers for consideration the idea that some of Matthew's omissions would be due at least partly to Matthew's propensity for condensing editorial activity, a propensity that would be evident in other places.

684. Luz, Ulrich, *Disciples in Matthew*, p. 101.

In addition to the limited nature of the positive understanding found in Matthew's more favorable characterization of disciples at places, and to the possible explanatory value of condensing activity if Matthew used Mark, another factor has to be taken into account. Even if it is true that Matthew has used Mark and has moved the characterization of disciples in a more positive direction in many cases, it would be methodologically deficient to focus only on such changes and ignore the very strong negative characterizations that Matthew would have taken over from his Markan source or would have added in the composition of his gospel. Here Tannehill's words in his article examining characterization of disciples in Mark are worth hearing.

Furthermore, additions and changes to source material do not in themselves reveal the concerns and emphases of the author. The question of what is emphasized in a writing is logically separate from the question of the origin of material within it. An addition or change by an author may reflect only a passing concern of minor importance. The composition of the writing as a whole must indicate to us that a greater concern is involved. On the other hand, an author may quote material without change but shape his writing to show that this material is centrally important and has a significance both greater and different than it may have had in previous tradition. The study of modification of the tradition can provide suggestions of possible concerns of the author. We can only specify the nature and importance of these concerns by studying the composition of the writing and the function of the modified material within it.⁶⁸⁵

It is legitimate to examine changes an author makes to his source material, but that is only part of the task. Leaving the rest of the task incomplete is prone to lead to distortion. For Matthew's characterization of disciples, the question must be asked what picture of the disciples is given when the Gospel is taken on its own, apart from source-critical considerations. When

685. Tannehill, "Disciples in Mark", pp. 386-387.

this is done, the differences between the characterization of disciples in Matthew and Mark are so minor that they do not even draw near to offsetting the clearly negative characterization of disciples overall in Matthew's gospel considered on its own.

This can be seen in a number of passages. Mt. 18 does not include the statement of Mk. 9:34 that the disciples argued about who was the greatest on the way. At the same time, Matthew's disciples do ask him who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, and his sharp reply that they would not enter the kingdom if they did not change and become like a child is a very strong and negative evaluation of their mindset. Here Matthew may leave out Mark's statement about arguing on the way, but he still shares a view that is as critical, if not more so, of values of the disciples.⁶⁸⁶

As indicated in the body of the thesis, there are substantial criticisms of the disciples in Matthew. These criticisms are of such strength that, if Matthew used Mark, his improvements in the characterization of disciples would not be sufficient to make plausible the view that Peter and disciples are given authority to make decisions about right and wrong that receive heavenly endorsement and that are imposed on other disciples.

686. Barth, G., *Matthew's Understanding of the Law*, p. 119.

2. Matthew's Characterization of Peter Outside of Mt. 16:17-19

The question of Matthew's characterization of Peter is at least partially tied to his characterization of disciples and is relevant for assessing the plausibility of Mt. 16:19b-c, a passage nearly identical to Mt. 18:18. Some of the preceding section is accordingly relevant. Also, it is important to recognize that in previous analyses of Matthew's characterization of Peter, a traditional interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c played no small part in the final assessment. Since the present aim is to provide an argument from Matthew's characterization of disciples elsewhere against that interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c, the conclusions of such studies are somewhat negated or irrelevant to the present study since they assume the point in question, namely, that a traditional interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c is correct. The methodology of the present section is to examine Matthew's characterization of Peter outside of Mt. 16:19b-c and 18:18 with an eye towards assessing the plausibility of some traditional interpretations of Mt. 16:19b-c. This analysis shows that the characterization of disciples outside of these two passages is evidence against traditional interpretations of Mt. 16:19b-c. This task will be undertaken in two phases. Given the connection of Mt. 16:19b-c to Mt. 16:16-19a, the first phase will examine characterization of Peter outside of Mt. 16:16-19 and Mt. 18:18. A subsequent section will then examine material in Mt. 16:16-19a.

(a) Peter as a Spokesman for Disciples

One may acknowledge upfront from the number of times that Peter speaks in Matthew that there is some evidence of Matthew characterizing Peter as a leader of disciples. This evidence will be reviewed below, but it is worth noting that the mere fact of Peter speaking far more than any other disciple is not sufficient evidence in itself to conclude that Matthew had a high view of Peter's capabilities, nor a higher view of Peter than of other disciples. Second only to Peter, Judas speaks more than any other disciple in Matthew, and like Peter, speaks more in Matthew than in Mark. Would one conclude from this that Judas is therefore worthy of the type of authority supposedly granted to Peter in Mt. 16:19b-c, or more worthy than other disciples for such authority? Surely not. Frequency of speaking apart from the content of speech is insufficient to reach a conclusion that a certain character is highly esteemed by an author.⁶⁸⁷ Frequency of a character's speech is irrelevant to how highly or lowly an author views a character. One must focus on the content of what is said about or by a character.

With this said, one can observe that the data of Matthew does give some support to the view that Peter was something of a leader of disciples or a spokesman for them. This support is found in the fact that Matthew's Peter speaks far more than any other disciple.⁶⁸⁸ If this is added to his being one of the three disciples in the inner group, then there is some legitimacy to say that

687. A non-Biblical example may be found in *The Screwtape Letters* of C. S. Lewis. Though at least almost all of the communication is from one devil to another, such frequency of communication would wrongly be taken to mean a high esteem of Lewis' imaginary devil by Lewis himself.

688. Cf. the speech of Peter in Mt. 14:28; 15:15 (note here that Peter asks for the parable to be explained to 'us'); 16:16, 22; 17:4, 24-26; 18:21; 19:27; 26:33, 35; 26:40.

in Matthew's characterization of Peter outside of Mt. 16:16-19, Peter is a spokesman or leader of disciples.

It may be noticed, though, that this feature of Matthew's portrayal of Peter is similar to that of Mark. As in Matthew, Mark's Peter speaks far more than other disciples and is something of leader or spokesman for disciples. Before Mk. 8:29, no member of the twelve is ever explicitly named and mentioned as speaking alone. Mark's general practice before Mk. 8:29 is to refer to disciples in the plural. Even in Mk. 1:35-38, Simon and his companions are mentioned, not just Simon alone. This pattern is broken in Mt. 8:29 when Peter speaks alone and confesses that Jesus is the Christ. Including Mk. 8:29, there are eleven cases in Mark's gospel where Mark gives direct speech of a single named member of the twelve⁶⁸⁹, ⁶⁹⁰ one case in which a group of specifically named disciples that includes Peter asks a question of Jesus,⁶⁹¹ and one passage in which Mark indicates that the two sons of Zebedee communicate three times.⁶⁹² In the eleven cases in Mark in which Mark gives direct speech of a single, named member of the twelve, eight

689. Mk. 8:29; 9:5, 38; 10:28; 11:21; 14:29, 31; 14:44, 45, 68, 71.

690. The qualification of "named" disciple means that the words are explicitly attributed to specific person(s). Thus, the words of 'one of his disciples' in Mk. 13:1 is not counted. Given Mark's penchant for naming Peter when he speaks, it seems more likely than not that this disciple is not Peter, whether or not the disciple is one of the Twelve. The count excludes the statement of Mk. 14:70, which says simply that Peter denied what was said, as it does not give direct speech. The count also excludes the words of Mk. 14:19//Mt. 26:22. In this passage, both Matthew and Mark indicate that *they* were sad and said to him one after the other (Mt. 26:22) or one by one (Mk. 14:19). Though direct speech is given as if it were applicable severally to different disciples, this passage is appropriately taken as collective, and it does not specifically name any of the disciples. For the present purpose it will be treated as if it does not give direct speech of a single, named disciple. The words of Judas in Mt. 26:25, though, will be treated as giving direct speech of a single, named disciple. Also, if Mt. 12:47 is original to Matthew, the person is not named, and so is not counted here.

691. In Mk. 13:3-4, Jesus is asked a question by Peter, James, John, and Andrew.

692. Mk. 10:35-39; cf. 10:35, 37, 39.

are of Peter.⁶⁹³ But two of the other three are from Judas and not representative of other disciples. One of these two is from Judas when he speaks to persons telling them what the signal of identification of Jesus would be, and the other is when Judas addresses Jesus as Rabbi before giving the kiss of betrayal. Obviously, both of these instances of direct speech of a single, named member of the Twelve are not to be favorably viewed by the reader, nor are they representative of the viewpoint of the rest of the Twelve. It would be better to leave these out and see Peter speaking in eight of the remaining nine cases of a single, named member of the Twelve having direct speech.

Not counting words of Judas, there remains only the one incident in Mark in which Mark gives direct speech of a single named member of the Twelve other than Peter. There are the words of John in Mk. 9:38. This pales in comparison to the eight times in which Mark gives direct speech of Peter. In many of these cases,⁶⁹⁴ Peter can be taken as representative of, or as a spokesman for, other disciples. It is thus quite appropriate to say that even in Mark, Peter has a role of a spokesman or leader of disciples.

If Matthew is using Mark, he does not alter this portrayal to a great degree. In Mark, eight of the nine cases of direct speech of a single named member of the Twelve (if words of Judas are not counted) were of Peter. In Matthew's parallel material to these eight incidents of direct speech from Peter, Matthew has Petrine direct speech for seven of them.⁶⁹⁵ The one difference is

693. Mk. 8:29; 9:5; 10:28; 11:21; 14:29, 31, 68, 71.

694. Mk. 9:5; 10:28, 11:21; 14:29, 31, and arguably 8:29.

695. Cf. Mk. 8:29//Mt. 16:16; Mk. 9:5//Mt. 17:4; Mk. 10:28//Mt. 19:27; Mk. 14:29//Mt. 26:33; Mk. 14:31//Mt. 26:35; Mk. 14:68//Mt. 26:70; Mk. 14:71//Mt. 26:74.

that where Mark has Peter point out the cursed fig tree, Matthew has disciples asking a question.⁶⁹⁶

As might be expected from a gospel that is considerably larger, Matthew's gospel has passages that are lacking in Mark and that give direct speech of a single named member of the Twelve. In five cases, there is direct speech of Peter in material unique to Matthew.⁶⁹⁷ In two cases, Mark indicates that Peter spoke but does not give direct speech; the parallel material in Matthew does have direct speech of Peter.⁶⁹⁸ In one case, Mark indicates that disciples asked about a parable, but Matthew gives direct speech of Peter's request for an explanation of the parable for 'us'.⁶⁹⁹ And in three cases, Matthew has, and Mark does not have, direct speech of Judas.⁷⁰⁰

The preceding differences between characterization of Peter in Matthew and in Mark are not great. Outside of Judas in Matthew, and Judas and John in Mark, Peter is the only named member of the Twelve who speaks alone in either gospel. For both Matthew and Mark, then, there is some evidence to conclude that Peter is something of a spokesman or leader, but it should be noticed that this evidence is not based on the content of what Peter says, but on the simple fact that Peter speaks much in both gospels and none of the other members of the Twelve, outside of Judas and John, is named specifically in giving a line of direct speech.

696. Mk. 11:20-21//Mt. 21:19-20.

697. Mt. 14:28, 30; 17:25, 26; 18:21.

698. Mk. 8:32//Mt. 16:22; Mk. 14:70//Mt. 26:72.

699. Mk. 7:17//Mt. 15:15.

700. Mt. 26:14, 25; 27:4.

Even from a redactional standpoint, there is not much basis in this evidence to think that Matthew has an especially high view of Peter (outside of Mt. 16:16-19) given that much of Matthew's material in which Peter has direct speech is the same as or similar to Mark or has a Markan parallel that, though not having direct speech of Peter, indicates that the content was basically the same as the direct speech in Matthew.

As for Matthew's having Petrine direct speech in his special material, such would be unsurprising, if not expected, in a gospel having thousands of extra words; in light of the extra material without a Markan parallel, maybe the more remarkable thing is that such material only has three pericopes with direct speech of Peter,⁷⁰¹ none of which are overall very favorable to Peter. In the one, he steps out onto the water in faith, but then starts to sink and Jesus indicates that he had inadequate faith. In another, what he proposes as a limit for forgiveness is shown to be nowhere near how much Jesus would have him forgive.

Until this point, it has been shown that no other single named member of the Twelve outside of Judas in Matthew, and Judas and John in Mark, is given any direct speech in these two gospels. In this, one may say that Peter was something of a spokesman of disciples. But since amount of speech is no necessary indicator of an author's positive or negative esteem of a character, this evidence cannot rightly be used to say that such a conclusion about Peter being a spokesman is a wholly positive or wholly negative thing. Even the blind can lead the blind⁷⁰²;

701. Mt. 14:28-30; 17:24-27; 18:21.

702. Mt. 15:14.

being a leader is not a positive thing if one leads others in the wrong direction.⁷⁰³ We may therefore turn to the content of what is said about Peter or to differences in content between Matthew's portrayal of Peter and Mark's portrayal.

(b) A Comparison of Mark's Characterization of Peter with Matthew's Characterization of Peter

Let us turn first to the question of differences between the content of Matthew's characterization of Peter and the content of Mark's characterization. In a volume dedicated to examining Peter in the New Testament, one chapter looks at Peter in Mark, and the next looks at Peter in Matthew with specific comparison to scenes in Mark.⁷⁰⁴ That volume contends that there is no significant difference in treatment of Peter in comparing Matthew's parallel material with Markan material in regard to Mk. 1:16, 17-18, 29-31; 3:14-16; 9:2-13; 10:28-30; 14:27-31; 14:32-42, 54, 66-72.

What counts as a significant difference may be debatable, but some comments would be worth making in regard to some of these passages and their counterparts in Matthew. Though in Mk. 3:16, the list of disciples simply lists Peter first, Mt. 10:2 has *πρῶτος* preceding *Σίμων*, though *Σίμων* is still the first name in the list. What is to be made of this *πρῶτος*? It would be unnecessary if all it were doing is indicating that Peter was the first in the list. Such would be obvious. What, then, is it for?

703. Mt. 16:23.

704. See Brown, R., K. P. Donfried, & J. Reumann, *Peter in NT*, pp. 57-107.

Two options exist. One is that it signifies something of Peter's importance or status.

Hagner remarks that the *πρῶτος* preceding *Σίμων ὁ λεγόμενος Πέτρος* "implies not just the first called but the first in rank (cf. 16:18). Peter plays a most prominent role in the Gospel as the spokesman for the apostles but most importantly as the rock (hence, 'Peter') upon which Jesus promises to build his Church".⁷⁰⁵ Hagner links this *πρῶτος* with the assertion in Mt. 16:18 that on this 'rock' Jesus would build his church and thinks that it has to do with Peter's rank. Similar to Hagner are Davies and Allison, who say that *πρῶτος* "refers not to Peter's having been the first called nor to his being the first to see the risen Lord nor to his being the first on the list. Rather does it indicate his privileged status. He is, ... the first among equals, the chief of the apostles."⁷⁰⁶

A second option is given by Kingsbury. Kingsbury says that Matthew uses Mt. 4:18 and Mt. 10:2 "to establish 'the salvation-historical primacy' of Peter."⁷⁰⁷ Kingsbury later remarks that

when Matthew in 10:1-4 presents the circle of Jesus' disciples as at last being complete by citing all their names, he, unlike Mark, assimilates the wording at the beginning of the list to that of the pericope on the call of the initial disciples. ... Matthew, with his list of the Twelve, not only shows that the successive calling of disciples has finally issued in the formation of the Twelve, but also recapitulates the exact order in which he has previously depicted the call of the first four disciples. This suggests that he attaches great importance to this order, and Peter, who is of course one of the Twelve, is the "first" in this line (4:18). Hence, Matthew makes it clear that he conceives of Peter's "primacy," to which he directs attention in 10:2, as being 'salvation-historical' in nature.⁷⁰⁸

705. Hagner, Donald A., *Matthew 1-13*, pp. 265-266.

706. Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C., *Matthew 8-18*, p. 154.

707. Kingsbury, "Figure of Peter", p. 74.

708. Ibid., pp. 70-71. Note also his statement on p. 76:

As Matthew's salvation-historical scheme and his redactional use of the name of Peter in the passages 4:18 ..., 10:2 ..., 16:16 ..., and 16:18 ... show, Peter is the 'rock', not by virtue of his being elevated to an office above, or apart from, the other disciples, but by reason of the fact that he was the "first" of the disciples whom Jesus called to follow him.

According to Kingsbury, it is not coincidental that Matthew puts Peter first in his list of the Twelve nor coincidental that he precedes Peter's name with *πρῶτος*. Kingsbury sees both being involved in Matthew's depiction of Peter having some sense of 'salvation-historical' primacy.

Though more Matthean scholars would probably side with Hagner, Davies, and Allison than Kingsbury, one point is valid for whichever of the two paths would be taken. The word *πρῶτος* is an ordinal and a comparative descriptor. It would indicate some sense of primacy or superiority of one thing in comparison to another. The question under consideration, though, is the plausibility of traditional interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c in comparison to Peter elsewhere. A comparison of Peter with other disciples does not do much to help that traditional interpretation if Matthew's characterization of disciples is not close to the level that would be needed to support traditional interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c or Mt. 18:18. If an analogy may be used, a 5'9" Asiatic basketball player might be superior in height and playing ability in basketball to his shorter friends. In that sense, what is said of Peter in regard to disciples might apply to the 5'9" Asiatic in regard to his friends. But that does not mean the Asiatic is anywhere near the level of height and ability that he would need to best a Michael Jordan when Jordan was in his prime. The same goes for the comparative descriptor *πρῶτος* in Mt. 10:2 in regard to Mt. 16:19b-c.

If the *πρῶτος* of Mt. 10:2 is going to be significant positive evidence in support of traditional interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c, there must be a sufficiently positive portrayal of the disciples in Matthew's characterization of them given that *πρῶτος* is a comparative descriptor. Attention has already been given to Matthew's characterization of disciples (see above), and it

comes nowhere close to what would be necessary to support the traditional interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c or Mt. 18:18. Therefore, the fact that Mt. 10:2 has *πρῶτος* where Mark does not is not something that provides significant support for traditional interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c.

Other differences in the above cited passages are also notable. Mk. 10:28-30 indicates that Peter did not know what to say. In not having such a statement, Matthew's gospel might be thought to portray Peter more positively⁷⁰⁹.⁷¹⁰ In Mk. 10:28-30, Peter says simply that 'we' had left all to follow Jesus. The wording is the same or very similar in Matthew, but Matthew adds the question what there would be for 'us'. Such a self-interested question might be taken by some to reflect negatively on Peter. In Mk. 14:66-72, Peter denies Jesus a second time, but in Matthew, it said that he denies him with an oath.⁷¹¹ None of the above differences are very significant. The judgment of the Brown, Donfried, and Reumann volume on Peter in the New Testament thus seems right for these passages.

The Brown, Donfried, and Reumann work on Peter in the New Testament gives five cases for which Matthew does not have an explicit reference to Peter that is found in Mark⁷¹² and remarks that "The five incidents ... betray no significant different in theological outlook."⁷¹³ As before, these differences between Matthew and Mark are largely insignificant. Mk. 1:35-38 indicates that Peter and his companions went and looked for Jesus. No significant difference is

709. Cf. Mt. 17:4-5.

710. Cf. Sheridan, "Disciples and Discipleship in Matthew and Luke", pp. 245-246.

711. Mt. 26:72.

712. Cf. Mk. 1:35-38; Mk. 5:37//Mt. 9:23; Mk. 11:12-14, 20-24//Mt. 21:19-22; Mk. 13:3-4//Mt. 24:3; Mk. 16:7//Mt. 28:7.

713. Brown, R., K. P. Donfried, & J. Reumann, *Peter in NT*, p. 76.

made to the characterization of Peter in Matthew's not having this. Mark 5:37-43 has the first of Mark's three 'inner group' scenes, the others being found in Mk. 9:2-13 and Mk. 14:32-42, with Mk. 13:3-5 having the group of three plus Andrew. Matthew does not mention the inner three specifically in the parallel scene to Mk. 5:37-43 (cf. Mt. 9:23).⁷¹⁴ The fig tree material of Mk. 11:12-14, 20-24 has Peter call attention to the cursed fig tree, but Matthew does not include the mention of Peter and just mentions disciples. Similarly, Mk. 13:3 mentions the inner three plus Andrew, but Mt. 24:3 makes reference to disciples, mentioning no disciple explicitly by name. Kingsbury thinks it is significant that Matthew does not have two of Mark's references to the three members of the inner group of disciples (if Mark's naming the three and Andrew in Mk. 13:3 counts as a reference to the three and if Matthew's simple 'disciples' in Mt. 24:3 does not).⁷¹⁵ Outside of that, none of these differences are significant to the characterization of Peter.⁷¹⁶

One prominent difference may be the absence of mention of Peter in Matthew's scene of the angel at the tomb. Mk. 16:7 has the angel instructing the women to tell disciples *and Peter* that Jesus would go ahead of disciples to Galilee, but the angel who speaks to the women in Matthew simply says to tell disciples. If Mark ends with 16:8, one possible explanation for the absence of mention of Peter in Matthew would be that Matthew has an appearance scene to the eleven in the end of Matthew's gospel that Mark does not have in the end of Mark's gospel.⁷¹⁷

714. Cf. Ibid., pp. 58-60, 76-77.

715. Cf. Kingsbury, "Figure of Peter", p. 73 and Mt. 9:23 and Mk. 5:37-38.

716. Cf. Brown, R., K. P. Donfried, & J. Reumann, *Peter in NT*, p. 77.

717. Cf. Ibid., p. 77. On that page, it is said that Mark's special mention of Peter in this scene may be related to his omission of post-resurrectional appearances. Matthew (28:16-20) does have a narrative of the appearance of the risen Lord to *the Eleven* on a mountain in Galilee, and that may partially explain

The Brown, Donfried, and Reumann volume says, "Having narrated the story of Peter's denials, Mark is reminding his readers that Peter was restored to favor by the risen Jesus who accorded to him an appearance."⁷¹⁸

Although Matthew's not having the angel specifically mention Peter might appear on the surface to be significant, it might be that the endings of the two gospels account for the difference. If the endings do not account for it, the fact that Peter is not mentioned specifically by Matthew's angel, nor in the Galilean appearance scene, might strike one as having a lower view of Peter on one level. The last that one hears specifically of Peter in Matthew is at the time of his denials. In contrast, after Peter's denials, Mark at least has the angel specifically mention Peter in a message telling of the gathering of disciples with their master.⁷¹⁹ Even with these conjectures, it seems appropriate to conclude that the difference here between Matthew and Mark may not be significant in the characterization of Peter, and definitely not so in regard to assessing the plausibility of traditional interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c.

In regard to differences between Matthew and Mark in characterization of Peter outside of Mt. 16:16-19, this leaves one case where Matthew has a mention of Peter that is absent in the

why Matthew (28:7) does not have the angel make a distinction between Peter and the disciples when he speaks to the women about who will see Jesus in Galilee.

718. Ibid., pp. 71-72.

719. Cf. Ibid., p. 77.

Markan parallel,⁷²⁰ one case where Matthew has Peter ask a question that is absent in both Mark and Luke,⁷²¹ and three passages unique to Matthew.⁷²²

If one begins by focusing on Mt. 15:15//Mk. 7:17 and Mt. 18:21-22, it may be noticed that in both of these scenes, Matthew has Peter asking a question that is absent in both Mark and Luke, and the question shows a lack of understanding on Peter's part. In Mt. 15:15, Peter asks for the parable to be explained. In Mt. 18:21-22, he asks about how many times to forgive a brother if the brother repeatedly sins against Peter. In asking if it would be up to seven times, Peter's lack of knowledge is corrected by Jesus, who indicates that one would need to forgive far more than that. In both of these situations, one in which Matthew mentions Peter and Mark does not, and the other in which Luke does not have any disciple asking the question, Matthew's Peter shows a lack of understanding about a parable or about forgiveness. This is a more negative view of Peter.

Of the three passages unique to Matthew, Mt. 16:16b-19 will be left to the side for the moment given that it contains the saying in Mt. 16:19b-c whose interpretation is contested. The present goal is to evaluate the plausibility of traditional interpretation of that saying based on characterization of Peter elsewhere in the gospel. It thus seems appropriate, for now, to leave to one side the larger passage in which the saying is found. Mt. 14:28-31 contains the scene of Peter walking on the water and being saved after starting to sink. There is both a positive reaction from

720. Mt. 15:15//Mk. 7:17.

721. Mt. 18:21-22, though confer Lk. 17:1-4.

722. Mt. 14:28-31; 16:16b-19; 17:24-27. Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 77-78.

Peter and a lack of adequate faith. Peter reacts by referring to Jesus as Lord and at least initially trusts Jesus enough to request that it be granted that Peter walk on the water and then Peter actually steps out. Yet Peter fails for lack of faith. More can be said about the passage, but for the present purpose, it may be noted that it does not take a very high level of understanding or wisdom to see someone walking on water and infer that the person might be able to grant that ability to someone else. And the objection against the plausibility of traditional interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c is that the understanding that would be required is far out of proportion to the characterization of Peter elsewhere in the gospel. Mt. 14:28-31 does not significantly alter that argument.

Mt. 17:24-27 is the final passage to be considered in Petrine passages in Matthew outside of the pericope in which Mt. 16:19b-c is found. The Brown, Donfried, and Reumann volume says that "Matthew takes it for granted that those wanting to know about 'the teacher' would approach Peter."⁷²³ Though this passage may portray Peter as a leader in some sense, it does not ascribe to him any exceptional knowledge that would make traditional interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c significantly more plausible. In fact, though Peter says that his teacher pays the tax, Jesus actually makes the point that sons of the king are exempt from payment of tax in Mt. 17:26.

The preceding discussion's comparison of Petrine material in Matthew and Mark, and the examination of some material unique to Matthew, shows such material does not significantly

723. Ibid., p. 104.

improve the portrayal of Peter in comparison to Mark. It also gives support to the conclusion that there is nothing in Matthew's characterization of Peter outside of Mt. 16:16-19 that makes typical interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c plausible. This conclusion has left out the material in Mt. 16:16-19, the passage in which Mt. 16:19b-c is found, and it still remains to examine characterization of Peter in that passage.

(c) Peter as Typical Disciple

Before we examine some of the material in Mt. 16:16-19, though, another task merits attention. It has been contended in the past that Matthew's characterization of Peter is such that Peter is a representative or typical disciple. Bornkamm remarks that "In Matthew's gospel, too, Peter figures as the representative and speaker of the disciples; in this sense he has for them exemplary significance".⁷²⁴ Kingsbury says that Matthew makes Peter "'typical' or 'representative' of the disciples", and taking disciples in Matthew to be "representative of the member of Matthew's church," Kingsbury agrees with Strecker and says that "the figure of Peter in Matthew's gospel provides the Christians of Matthew's church with an example of what it means, either positively or negatively, to be a follower of Jesus."⁷²⁵

In support of his thinking that "Peter functions as spokesman for the disciples or as representative of them and of later Christians", Kingsbury offers a list of similarities between Peter and other disciple(s) in Matthew that he thinks supports the view that Peter's place "in

724. Bornkamm, G., *Authority*, p. 47.

725. Kingsbury, "Figure of Peter", p. 72.

Matthew's eyes is squarely within the circle of the disciples."⁷²⁶ In this, Kingsbury was wanting to support his view that Matthew situates Peter firmly with a group of disciples. Kingsbury, though, does not break down his list by whether or not such similarities could also be found in Mark. If all the similarities were also to be found in Mark, then it might be contended that Matthew was simply taking on Mark's characterization of Peter's relationship to other disciples (if Matthew used Mark) and that Kingsbury's list accordingly does not do much to demonstrate a special interest from Matthew in situating Peter within a group of disciples. Given this consideration, one would do well to break down Kingsbury's material by whether or not the same similarities between Peter and disciple(s) in Matthew's gospel can also be found in Mark.

That, however, is not the only breakdown wanted. The purpose of the present section aims to evaluate the plausibility of traditional interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c in light of Matthew's characterization of Peter in other passages. Given that Mt. 16:16b-c is tied up with material in Mt. 16:16-19, and given that Mark does not have the words of Jesus in Mt. 16:16-19, another breakdown of the material would be between similarities in Matthew when Mt. 16:16-19a is excluded, and similarities when the material is included.

This helps in explaining the following lists. List A looks at similarities between Peter and disciple(s) that are also found in Mark's gospel. Given this paper's focus on characterization of disciples outside of Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18, List B looks at similarities between Peter and other disciple(s) in Matthew's gospel outside of Mt. 16:16-19, the passage in which Mt. 16:19b-c

726. Ibid., p. 72.

is found. List C looks at similarities between Peter and disciple(s) if material in Mt. 16:16-19 is considered.⁷²⁷

A. Similarities Between Peter and Other Disciple(s) Common to Matthew and Mark

A.1. Peter is called by Jesus,⁷²⁸ and so are other disciples.⁷²⁹

A.2 Peter experiences the transfiguration,⁷³⁰ and so do the other two members of the 'inner group' of disciples.⁷³¹

A.3 Peter declares that he would not deny Jesus even if Peter were to die,⁷³² and disciples express the same or similar sentiment.⁷³³

A.4 Peter fails to stay awake and watch,⁷³⁴ and at least one of the other members of the inner group also fails.⁷³⁵

A.5 Peter flees from those who came to the area of Gethsemane and then denies Jesus,⁷³⁶ and other disciples flee and leave Jesus to his captors.⁷³⁷

B. Similarities Between Peter and Other Disciple(s) in Matthew (if Mt. 16:16-19 excluded)

B.1 If Mt. 28:17 refers to disciples doubting, then some disciples doubt,⁷³⁸ and so does Peter.⁷³⁹

B.2 Peter requests that a parable be explained,⁷⁴⁰ and so do disciples.⁷⁴¹

B.3 Peter exhibits fear and lack of adequate faith in a lake scene and cries out to be saved,⁷⁴² and disciples show a lack of adequate faith and request that they be saved in a scene of danger on the lake.⁷⁴³

727. A significant amount of the material below is from Kingsbury. Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 71-74.

728. Mk. 1:16-18//Mt. 4:18-20.

729. Mk. 1:16-20//Mt. 4:18-22; Mk. 2:13//Mt. 9:9.

730. Mk. 9:2-7//Mt. 17:1-5.

731. Mk. 9:2-7//Mt. 17:1-5.

732. Mk. 14:31//26:35.

733. Mk. 14:31//26:35.

734. Mk. 14:37-38//Mt. 26:40-41.

735. Compare Mk. 14:37, 40, 41 with Mt. 26:40, 43, 45.

736. Mk. 14:50//Mt. 26:56; Mk. 14:66-72//Mt. 26:69-75.

737. Mk. 14:50//Mt. 26:56.

738. Mt. 28:17.

739. Mt. 14:28-31.

740. Mt. 15:15.

741. Mt. 13:36; cf. Mk. 7:17//Mt. 15:15.

742. Mt. 14:30-31.

743. Mk. 4:38-40//Mt. 8:25-26; cf. in non-lake scenes Mt. 16:8; 17:20.

B.4 Peter receives a precept that deals with payment of money,⁷⁴⁴ and disciples receive a precept about giving of money.⁷⁴⁵

B.5 Jesus interacts with Peter's mother-in-law,⁷⁴⁶ and he does so with the mother of the sons of Zebedee.⁷⁴⁷

B.6 Jesus rebukes Peter when Peter does not have in mind things of God, but things of men,⁷⁴⁸ and he also indicates to disciples that if they do not change and become like little children, they would not enter the kingdom of heaven.⁷⁴⁹

Further, Jesus says that Peter is a σκάνδαλον to him,⁷⁵⁰ and he also makes it clear that he thinks disciples can be σκάνδαλον to another disciple or to other(s).⁷⁵¹

C. Similarities Between Peter and Other Disciple(s) in Matthew (if Mt. 16:16-19 is included)

C.1 Peter confesses that Jesus is the Son of God,⁷⁵² and so do disciples.⁷⁵³

C.2 Jesus says that Peter is blessed,⁷⁵⁴ and he says that disciples are blessed.⁷⁵⁵

C.3 Peter would bind and loose,⁷⁵⁶ and so would disciples.⁷⁵⁷

C.4 Peter is the recipient of divine revelation,⁷⁵⁸ and so are other disciples.⁷⁵⁹

C.5 Peter receives a maxim from Jesus that deals with forgiveness,⁷⁶⁰ and so do disciples.⁷⁶¹

List A shows that some of the similarities between Peter and other disciple(s) are not unique to Matthew. Given that, if one were to judge by nothing else, and if Matthew was using

744. Mt. 17:24-26.

745. Mt. 6:1-4.

746. Mk. 1:29-31//8:14-15.

747. Mt. 20:20-24.

748. Mk. 8:33//Mt. 16:23.

749. Mt. 18:1-3.

750. Mt. 16:22-23.

751. Mt. 18:1-10.

752. Mt. 16:16.

753. Mt. 14:33; Mk. 4:10//Mt. 13:10; compare Mk. 7:17 to Mt. 16:16.

754. Mt. 16:17.

755. Mt. 13:16-17.

756. Mt. 16:19b-c.

757. Mt. 18:18.

758. Mt. 16:17.

759. Cf. Mt. 11:25//Lk. 10:21; Mk. 4:11//Mt. 13:11; Mt. 13:16-17.

760. Mt. 18:21-22.

761. Mt. 6:14-15; 18:35.

Mark, it might be thought that similarities were due not so much to an intentionality on Matthew's part to situate Peter among a group of disciples, but to a more mundane intention to incorporate Markan material into Matthew's gospel.

List B works against this idea. It is as big or bigger than list A, and it looks at similarities between Peter and disciple(s) that are found in Matthew. It gives much more credence to Kingsbury's view that Matthew intentionally tried to situate Peter in a group of disciples.

List C may be the most surprising of all of them. This group looks at similarities in Matthew's gospel that one would find by including material of Mt. 16:16-19 in one's assessment. What is surprising is that this passage, which is often viewed as elevating Peter, actually gives as much material for situating Peter within the group of disciples as Mark and at least nearly as much material as when one considers material in Matthew outside of Mt. 16:16-19. While some would appeal to Mt. 16:16-19 to support viewing Peter as authoritative or superior in some sense over against other disciples, Kingsbury might thus turn around and point out that it gives quite a bit of material to bolster his case that Peter is to be seen as representative or typical of other disciples.

Given the distribution of the three groups, one may state that the evidence does give some support to Kingsbury's view that Matthew intended to situate Peter within the group of disciples. Kingsbury adds still more considerations in support of his view that Matthew intended to characterize Peter as part of a group of disciples. Though in two places Matthew and Mark both

refer to the three members of the inner group,⁷⁶² there are two places where Mark explicitly calls attention to the three members of the group and Matthew does not,⁷⁶³ something that, Kingsbury thinks, points to "Matthew's firm resolve to anchor Peter within the circle of the disciples."⁷⁶⁴

Kingsbury finds still further evidence for Matthew rooting Peter among disciples in the fact that Matthew differs from Mark,⁷⁶⁵ Luke,⁷⁶⁶ and John⁷⁶⁷ in making no explicit mention of Peter in his post-resurrection material. Kingsbury concludes that "In these pericopes, therefore, Matthew tempers the traditional view of Peter in order to enhance the prominence of all of the disciples."⁷⁶⁸

The preceding evidence provides some support for the claim that Matthew intended to portray Peter such that he was representative or typical of other disciples in some way. If one thinks that the case is convincing and that Matthew intended to characterize Peter as a typical or representative disciple, what significance does this have for assessment of the plausibility of traditional interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c?

Two responses deserve attention. One is that this portrayal of Peter discourages one from taking a different view of the binding and loosing in Mt. 16:19b-c than one takes for Mt. 18:18.

762. Cf. Mk. 9:2//Mt. 17:1; Mk. 14:33//Mt. 26:37.

763. Mk. 5:37-38//Mt. 9:23; Mk. 13:3//Mt. 24:3.

764. Ibid., p. 73. In Mk. 13:3, the three members of the inner group are mentioned, but so is Andrew, and Mt. 26:37 refers to Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, which clearly means James and John, but does not actually mention their names.

765. Mk. 16:7.

766. Lk. 24:34.

767. Jn. 20:2-20.

768. Ibid., p. 74.

If Jesus gives a nearly identical saying both to Peter and to other disciples, then, if all else were equal, Peter's being just like other disciples in some respects would encourage one to interpret the two nearly identical sayings in the same way.

The other response that deserves mention is that this sense of Peter being like other disciples is, as it would be with the 'first' of Mt. 10:2, a comparative characterization. It is not absolute, but is dependent for the content of its characterization on how Matthew characterizes other disciples. If Matthew were to always characterize the rest of the disciples quite negatively, then Peter's being typical of the disciples would not be a very positive thing. He would embody a negative characterization of other disciples. There is nothing inherently positive or negative in one person being a type or representative of others who have similar characteristics.

One must therefore go back to Matthew's characterization of disciples if Peter's being a typical or representative disciple is going to give him the extraordinarily high capacities that traditional interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c would require of him. As has been argued, though, the characterization of other disciples in Matthew is simply not sufficient in this regard. Thus, Peter's being a typical or representative disciple in Matthew does not give significant support to traditional interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c.

3. Matthew's Characterization of Peter in Mt. 16:17-19a

The previous section examined Matthew's characterization of Peter and disciples outside of Mt. 16:16-19 and Mt. 18:18 with an eye towards what significance that characterization has for interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18. That characterization provides strong evidence against interpreting Mt. 16:19b-c as giving Peter a broad and sweeping authority for determining what is right and wrong for other disciples and imposing it on them, and it provides strong evidence against interpreting Mt. 18:18 as giving disciples a similar authority.

In regard to characterization of Peter, what is missing in this analysis is a serious examination of material in Mt. 16:16-19a. This omission is on purpose, but the conclusion from material elsewhere highlights the importance of Mt. 16:16-19a for interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c. If typical interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c is going to be plausible, much of its plausibility would have to come from Mt. 16:16-19a. Mt. 16:17-19a, though, focuses on Peter, and so will not do much to change the argument in regard to Mt. 18:18 outside of the similarity between Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18. Can Mt. 16:16-19a negate an argument from characterization of Peter elsewhere that traditional interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c is implausible?

Consideration of the text of Mt. 16:16-19 shows that there is no clean and justifiable separation between Mt. 16:17-19a and Mt. 16:19b-c. Text of Mt. 16:19b-c is connected to Mt. 16:19a with a καί, suggesting or indicating that these two passages should be considered together. Further, some account should be given of how Mt. 16:19b-c fits with what comes

before it given that Jesus' words in Mt. 16:17-19 are presented as one unit. In light of these considerations, the proposal of this thesis would be strengthened by providing a convincing explanation of Mt. 16:19a and its relation to the proposed meaning of Mt. 16:19b-c, and by providing an integrated explanation of how these two passages fit with text of Mt. 16:17-18. Further, Marcus has contended that what is found in the pericope of Mt. 16:5-12 supports the view that Peter is given authority for authoritative promulgation of Christian halakhah, and Davies and Allison have appealed to what is found in Mt. 28:16-20 in support of their view.⁷⁶⁹

This section will consider in turn argument(s) made from Mt. 16:5-12; 28:26-20; 16:17; and 16:18 with specific attention to the relevance of these passages for interpretation of Mt. 16:19a and/or Mt. 16:19b-c. Attention will then be given to consideration of Mt. 16:19 itself, which contains the binding and loosing statement in Mt. 16:19b-c and a statement about giving Peter keys of the kingdom of heaven in Mt. 16:19a. Two views predominate in regard to interpretation of Mt. 16:19a. On the one side, one may look to someone such as France, who says that

The keys are those of the storehouses, to enable him to make appropriate provision for the household, not those of the outer gate, to control admission. The traditional portrayal of Peter as porter at the pearly gates depends on misunderstanding "the kingdom of heaven" here as a designation of the afterlife rather than denoting God's rule among his people on earth.⁷⁷⁰

On the other side, there is the view that 'keys' are for entrance into the kingdom of heaven for those outside of it. Allison cites Mt. 16:19 and asks, "Is not the apostle a gatekeeper before

769. See below.

770. France, R. T., *Matthew NICNT*, p. 625.

the entrance to a kingdom, just as in traditional images of him standing before the doorway to heaven?"⁷⁷¹

Even if one were to take the view of Allison that keys in Mt. 16:19a are keys for entrance, the interpretation of this thesis does not necessarily follow from that conclusion. Like Davies and Allison, Hagner thinks that keys in Mt. 16:19a are keys for entrance, but he then takes the binding and loosing statement to be about a "sense of right or wrong conduct".⁷⁷² It will not be sufficient, therefore, merely to establish that keys of the kingdom of heaven in Mt. 16:19a are keys for permitting or forbidding entrance. Mt. 16:19a is both distinct from yet connected to Mt. 16:19b-c. In light of this, the following discussion will give specific attention to the relevance of Mt. 16:5-12, 17, 18; 28:16-20 for these two views about Mt. 16:19a, and also will give attention to the relevance of some of these passages for Mt. 16:19b-c.

(a) Mt. 16:6, 17; 28:16-20

Marcus, and also Davies and Allison, think that Jesus' warning against teaching of Pharisees and Sadducees in Mt. 16:5-12 is relevant to Mt. 16:19. Marcus says that "the immediately preceding pericope (16:5-12) concerns the *teaching* of the Pharisees and Sadducees, to which, presumably, the exegesis of the law revealed to the Christian community is contrasted."⁷⁷³ Similarly, given the content of Mt. 16:5-12, Davies and Allison's commentary

771. Allison, Dale C. (2010). *Constructing Jesus: Memory, Imagination, and History*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, p. 179.

772. Hagner, Donald A., *Matthew 14-28*, pp. 472-473. Cf. also Evans, Craig A., *Matthew*, pp. 314-315.

773. Marcus, "Gates of Hades", p. 451-452.

thinks that it would make good sense "in the very next paragraph, to tell a story in which Jesus replaces the Jewish academy with his own 'chief rabbi'".⁷⁷⁴

What bearing, if any, does Mt. 16:17 have on interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c? To start, one may consider the words of Marcus and those of Davies and Allison. For Mt. 16:19, Marcus says that "The halakic interpretation, which sees 'binding and loosing' as promulgation of the true, divinely revealed torah, fits best the context within chap. 16, because 16:17,20 suggest that *revelation* is the major theme of our pericope."⁷⁷⁵ In support of their interpretation, Davies and Allison say "that revelation and doctrinal content are otherwise the major themes of our pericope" and that, in light of Mt. 28:16-20, which commands disciples to make disciples and teach them what Jesus has commanded, two "pre-eminent tasks our gospel envisages for Peter are those of proclamation and instruction".⁷⁷⁶

(i) Mt. 16:6 (Mk. 8:15//Lk. 12:1)

What is to be made of these claims? To start, it may be said that these considerations are not sufficiently discriminating. Put differently, they do not disallow the proposal offered in this thesis; the arguments above, if they work at all, work as well for this thesis as for Marcus, Davies, and Allison. One might thus readily acknowledge that revelation and doctrinal content is

774. Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C., *Matthew 8-18*, p. 639.

775. Marcus, "Gates of Hades", p. 451. His footnote 44 (pp. 451-452) gives an additional consideration: "In promising to Peter, who has just been granted a revelation of Jesus' identity, the further revelation of the true torah, Jesus is following through on the principle he had enumerated in 13:12: 'To him who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance.'"

776. Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C., *Matthew 8-18*, p. 639.

a major theme of the pericope, and that it does make sense for Jesus to contrast the teaching against which he warns in Mt. 16:5-12 with his own teaching in Mt. 16:13-19. It will be argued below that Mt. 16:19 does deal with the same doctrine and teaching as Mt. 18:18, that of divine influence in repentance, so one might simply claim that the focus of Mt. 16:5-12 on teaching and the focus of Mt. 16:17 on doctrine is indeed in support of this thesis' proposal. In contrast to the teaching of Pharisees and Sadducees that persons can and do truly repent and be righteous apart from some action of God in them, against which Jesus warns in Mt. 16:5-12, Jesus gives his own teaching in Mt. 16:19 to his own appointed leader, who is to contradict such Pharisees and Sadducees with the teaching that persons will not truly repent and be righteous without some action of God in them. Even if one were to accept that the warning against teaching of Pharisees and Sadducees in Mt. 16:5-12 were relevant to interpretation of Mt. 16:19, such reasoning could be used to advance the proposal of this thesis and thus does not favor the view of Davies and Allison over the view of this thesis.

Further, in Mt. 16:5-12, Jesus is obviously not warning against all parts of teaching of Pharisees and Sadducees. The fact that there were significant differences in viewpoint between the two groups encourages one to look for shared belief(s) among persons in both groups against which Jesus would warn. Such shared belief(s) would be smaller than a much larger body of beliefs held by the respective parties. An affirmation that a man can and does truly repent and truly be righteous apart from some act of God in that man is such a shared belief between Pharisees and Sadducees.

This view of the Pharisees and Sadducees is supported by Josephus, who describes the theology of Pharisees and Sadducees basically as one that denied the doctrine of divine influence in repentance. Key texts in this regard are *Jewish Antiquities* 18:12-18 and 13:172-173 and *War* 2:162-166. Martyn remarks that "Without pausing Josephus could even differentiate three Jewish groups from one another by crediting them with different ideas about what is determined by 'fate' — fundamentally Josephus intended a reference to God — and 'what is up to human beings'".⁷⁷⁷ Watson says that "Josephus can differentiate the three Jewish sects by referring to their divergent views on divine and human agency. The fact that he uses inappropriate Stoic terminology to do so does not mean that the differences were unreal."⁷⁷⁸ A little later, Watson says the following:

If Josephus means "God" when he refers to Fate, his Essenes and his Sadducees constitute an almost Pauline antithesis as they ascribe significant occurrence in the world respectively to divine or to human agency. Whatever the merit of this typology, the mere fact that Josephus can use it indicates that Paul, too - on the basis of a quite different ideology and idiom - might have been capable of contrasting a gospel in which all things are ascribed to God with a practice in which all things are held to lie within our own power.⁷⁷⁹

In reading the above mentioned texts from Josephus in light of the comments of Watson and Martyn, it is evident that for Josephus both Pharisees and Sadducees held that men could and would be righteous apart from some act of God in them, that they could and would be righteous on their own. This would be consistent with the proposal that Jesus criticized these two groups

777. Martyn, J. Louis. (2006). "Epilogue: An Essay in Pauline Meta-Ethics". In Barclay, John M. G. & Simon J. Gathercole (Eds.), *Divine and Human Agency in Paul and His Cultural Environment*. Library of New Testament Studies 335 (pp. 173-183). London: T & T Clark. , p. 173.

778. Watson, Francis, *Paul, Judaism, and Gentiles*, p. 18.

779. Ibid., p. 18.

on the basis of that very belief and that Jesus made the opposite claim a central part of his public ministry. In regard to its characterization of Pharisees and Sadducees, the proposal of this thesis regarding Jesus' warning against yeast of Pharisees and Sadducees is very plausible historically.

This explanation also works for the parallel passage in Mk. 8:15 and for a similar passage in Lk. 12:1. The Lukan passage contains a warning similar to what is in Mt. 16:6, though Lk. 12:1 says that the yeast of Pharisees is hypocrisy. This statement fits easily with the explanation that the denial of the doctrine of divine influence in repentance by Pharisees and Sadducees meant that they were not true children of God. Given that Jesus emphasized that a person would come to true repentance only through God's work, the denial of this doctrine by Pharisees ensured that God would not work in them to bring such true repentance, as that would be aiding them in claiming for themselves the glory that rightfully belongs to God.⁷⁸⁰ Despite outward affirmations and shows of outward piety, Jesus could consequently adopt a hermeneutic of suspicion and claim that they were not truly righteous. At the same time, they advocated and promoted that they and others should be righteous. Thus, on the one hand, they advocated righteousness outwardly, and yet on the other, their denial of the doctrine of divine influence in repentance meant that they in practice prevented righteousness and were not themselves righteous. Such is the hypocrisy of Lk. 12:1.⁷⁸¹

780. See Isa. 42:8; 48:11.

781. The use of the description of their teaching as 'yeast' may also be an especially appropriate description. Like yeast that was worked into dough (Mt. 13:33//Lk. 13:21) and caused bread to rise such that the yeast made it appear that there was more than was actually there, the denial of the doctrine of divine influence in repentance would lead to outward shows of piety from an unrepentant heart.

Given that it is obvious that Jesus was not speaking of beliefs of Pharisees or Sadducees in total in Mt. 16:6, but referring to no more than beliefs shared between the groups, it would be moving far beyond the scope of Mt. 16:5-12 to say that in the next pericope Jesus gives Peter a sweeping, unrestricted authority for making judgments about what is right and wrong. Marcus' judgment that Mt. 16:5-12 would be contrasted with exegesis of the law in Mt. 16:19 seems to make an unwarranted leap.⁷⁸² The limited scope of Pharisees' and Sadducees' shared denial of the doctrine of divine influence in repentance in Mt. 16:6 does not justify the sweeping (and apparently unlimited?) scope of the supposed authority granted in Mt. 16:19. In contrast, the proposal of this thesis fits with what is historically known about the shared beliefs of Pharisees and Sadducees regarding repentance, namely, that they thought that people could truly repent and be righteous without some act of God in them, and, in the very next pericope after Jesus' warning against such teaching, it has Jesus emphasize that true repentance comes from a work of God in the person. If it were true that the warning against teaching of Pharisees and Sadducees in Mt. 16:5-12 encourages the reader to view Mt. 16:19 as setting up a contrasting teaching, the proposal of this thesis is more historically plausible and specific than that provided by Marcus, Davies, and Allison. Also, it does not have the problem of positing an interpretation of Mt. 16:19 that is discordant with Matthew's characterization of disciples and of Peter outside of Mt. 16:17-19 and Mt. 18:18.

782. Cf. Marcus, "Gates of Hades", pp. 451-452.

(ii) Mt. 28:16-20

As with Mt. 16:6, Mt. 28:16-20 can support the proposal of this thesis, which means that the appeal of Davies and Allison to this passage is also not sufficiently discriminating. If Mt. 28:16-20 suggests that Peter's two tasks are proclamation and instruction, it may be said that Mt. 16:19 focuses on two particular and important doctrines that Peter is to instruct and proclaim, the doctrine of divine influence in repentance and the doctrine that Jesus is God's anointed, the Christ.⁷⁸³ These will be two 'keys' for kingdom entrance in Mt. 16:19a, and one of them, the doctrine of divine influence in repentance, is emphasized in Mt. 16:19b-c. Mt. 28:16-20 does not favor Davies and Allison's interpretation of Mt. 16:19 over the interpretation of this thesis.

Further, Mt. 28:16-20 commands disciples to teach what Jesus has commanded. The passage itself does not say that Jesus' teaching is particularly focused on correct interpretation of the law in contrast to religious leaders' wrong interpretation. If that is to be in Mt. 28:16-20, it has to be read into the text or brought to the text from elsewhere. In Mt. 28:16-20, the commission is also to many disciples, and thus in itself does not encourage Peter being set on an interpretive pedestal of authority above other disciples.⁷⁸⁴

783. Cf. here, 1 Pet. 1:2, 12.

784. Kingsbury seems more sensible when he remarks that

We speak of "those engaged in teaching" because, in Matthew's eyes, Jesus Messiah is the "one teacher" of his followers (23:8-10), with the result that Matthew does not at all associate the disciples with the function of teaching until the exalted Jesus in 28:20 commands them henceforth to do it. But even at this, what the disciples are given to teach is narrowly defined as "all that *I* have commanded you" (28:20). (Kingsbury, "Figure of Peter", p. 79, fn. 38)

Kingsbury's interpretation does not require pulling from Mt. 28:16-20 a support for binding interpretation of the law that is not clearly there, nor Peter's having a special interpretive prominence. Mt. 28:16-20 is consistent with this thesis' interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18, and is thus no help in

(iii) Mt. 16:17

Similar to Mt. 16:5-12 and Mt. 28:16-20, Mt. 16:17 does not favor the interpretation of Mt. 16:19 offered by Davies and Allison over that of this thesis. Marcus contends that the halakic interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c fits the context of chapter 16 the best, "because 16:17,20 suggest that *revelation* is the major theme of our pericope."⁷⁸⁵ But as before, the reason here is so general that it does not serve to advance Marcus' interpretation over the interpretation of this thesis, and Marcus must also take the questionable step of moving from a statement of Christological revelation to a statement about revelation conceived of much more broadly. Mt. 16:17 does not have a statement that is about just any revelation or doctrinal content. The doctrinal content of Peter's confession was Christological. Basing a blanket authorization in Mt. 16:19 for a wide swath of potential non-Christological doctrinal decisions on a Christological confession in Mt. 16:17 simply by appeal to revelation or doctrinal content being a focus of the pericope would be to engage in unwarranted equivocation.

The statement that Peter is blessed and that his knowledge of Christ's identity was revealed to him by Jesus' Father is noticeable for its emphasis on divine revelation, but the value of this affirmation may be questioned. Peter's confession includes the acknowledgement that Jesus is the Christ and that Jesus is the Son of the living God. Two things may be said about this confession. First, Peter's confession deals with the identity of Jesus, which is quite different than

favoring the interpretation of Luz and the interpretation of Davies and Allison over the interpretation of this thesis.

785. Marcus, "Gates of Hades", p. 451.

many of the subjects on which Peter is supposedly granted authority to pronounce judgment in Mt. 16:19b-c. It does not necessarily follow that having knowledge about the identity of Jesus leads to adequate knowledge about these other subjects.

Second, Matthew's gospel provides a simple explanation of the means of the revelation of Jesus' identity that was given to Peter, and that method of revelation does not provide the knowledge necessary for the authority supposedly granted to Peter in Mt. 16:19b-c. We may look, for example, at the pericope of Jesus walking on the water,⁷⁸⁶ and find that Matthew has disciples confessing that Jesus is the Son of God. Here the miraculous activity is enough to elicit from disciples the confession that Jesus is the Son of God. Matthew's attitude about miraculous activity of Jesus' ministry is that miracles come from God,⁷⁸⁷ and the statement of disciples that he is the Son of God shows disciples in his story thinking the same way. The explanation of the revelation that Jesus is the Son of God can be as simple as that Peter, like other disciples in Mt. 14:22-32, witnessed God's miraculous activity in Jesus' ministry and accordingly thought that Jesus was the Son of God.⁷⁸⁸

786. See Mt. 14:22-32.

787. Cf. Mt. 9:1-7; 12:22-28; see also Mt. 28:16-20.

788. Even Brown, R., K. P. Donfried, & J. Reumann, *Peter in NT*, p. 87, states that "There remains the problem of how this insight can be reconciled with the fact that all the disciples make almost the same confession as Peter in 14:33." The statement on the same page that "The existence of previous confessions (yet see note 188 above) betrays the fact that the exuberant expression of Jesus' enthusiasm for Peter's confession is scarcely in its original sequence" is far too confident. It simply does not follow that the existence of an earlier confession makes material in Mt. 16:17-19 ahistorical, and the use of "exuberant expression" and "Jesus' enthusiasm" would simply prejudice the reader by an interpretation of the affective state of Matthew's Jesus that is not required by the text.

This may also go some way in explaining the confession that Jesus was the Christ; he through whom God works as many miracles before Mt. 16 as Matthew's Jesus does is obviously God's anointed one. There is, of course, a titular sense of Christ in Matthew, but it would be inappropriate to completely disassociate title and function in this case. It is going beyond what the text provides to say that the statement about the revelation given to Peter about the identity of Jesus gives much support to traditional interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c.

These considerations discourage one from adopting the statement of the Brown, Donfried, and Reumann volume that "The revelation expressed in his confession was a personal gift of God to Peter, and so he was not just the spokesman of a common faith",⁷⁸⁹ and from adopting Haenchen's statement that "Petrus ist hier nicht mehr der Sprecher der Jünger, der ihren gemeinsamen Glauben in Worte faßt, sondern er ist als Offenbarungsempfänger erhöht zu einer Stellung, die keiner der Jünger mit ihm teilen kann."⁷⁹⁰ Mt. 16:17 does not clearly state that Peter received this revelation in a way that others did not, nor that Peter is elevated by such revelation above other disciples. These interpretations read into the text what it does not clearly state, and can accordingly be left to the side without incurring an exegetical deficiency.

789. Ibid., p. 87.

790. Haenchen, Ernst. (1966). *Der Weg Jesu*. Berlin: Töpelmann, p. 301. My translation, which was made after seeing, and maybe with some help from, some of the translation in Brown, R., K. P. Donfried, & J. Reumann, *Peter in NT*, p. 87: 'Peter is here not merely a spokesman of disciples, who expresses their common faith in words, but he is a receiver of revelation exalted to a place, which not one of the disciples with him can share.

(b) Mt. 16:18

Mt. 16:19a is preceded by the statement in Mt. 16:18 that Jesus would build his church on 'this rock', which is Peter. France connects this statement in Mt. 16:18 with Mt. 16:19 when he says that "A change in metaphor highlights the responsible role Peter will play in the development of this new *ekklēsia*."⁷⁹¹ Similarly, Hagner thinks that with the commissioning of Peter as a rock on which Jesus' church would be built comes an authority that is symbolized by the keys of the kingdom.⁷⁹² Though it is true that the statement about building Jesus' church on Peter does elevate Peter, it does not follow from this that Mt. 16:18 favors the view that the keys of the kingdom are keys for doors internal to the kingdom, or that Mt. 16:18 favors the view that Mt. 16:19b-c grants Peter a broad authority over disciples. Several reasons point away from thinking Mt. 16:18 favors one or both of these views.

First, Jesus does not say that Peter will build Jesus' church, but that Jesus will build Jesus' church on Peter. Of course, it is obvious that Peter would be used in this, but the subject of the verb for building in Mt. 16:18 is Jesus, not Peter. One possibility is that Jesus builds his church by giving Peter revelation regarding the decisions he is to make in his binding and loosing activity, but this does not seem fully satisfactory. A different proposal seems preferable. According to Matthew's theology, the one who comes after the Baptist is one who will baptize with the Spirit,⁷⁹³ a view that finds some support in the words of Jesus in Mt. 11:9-13 and in Mt.

791. France, R. T., *Matthew NICNT*, p. 625.

792. Hagner, Donald A., *Matthew 14-28*, p. 472.

793. Mt. 3:11.

18:19. If the exalted Jesus is the one who will baptize with the Spirit, and if, according to Mt. 16:19, 18:18, and other passages,⁷⁹⁴ a person will not truly repent absent the work of the Spirit in the person, then the growth of the church will come through the true repentance of the baptizing work of Jesus' spirit. In this interpretation, the wording of Mt. 16:18, in which the subject of the building activity of the church is Jesus and not Peter, is significant. It would express the conviction that the church grows as the Spirit of the exalted Jesus brings people to true repentance, something that would occur through the ministry of Peter, but without which Peter would have no success in growing the true church. Taken this way, Mt. 16:18 rightly indicates that it is Jesus who builds the church, and the verse would also support the interpretation that the 'keys of the kingdom' in Mt. 16:19a are keys for entrance and that Mt. 16:19b-c is affirming the doctrine of divine influence in repentance.

Second, the 'building' language of Mt. 16:18 better supports taking Mt. 16:19a as keys for entrance and Mt. 16:19b-c as affirming the doctrine of divine influence in repentance. In Mt. 16:18, 'building' a church is a picture of growth of the church. It would seem odd to tell Peter that he is to be the foundation of the church's growth and then in the next verse use 'keys of the kingdom', which would naturally be thought of as dealing with this growth of the church, to speak of something that has little or nothing to do with bringing people into the church.

794. The present thesis does not have room to include a full development of a new interpretation of much of Mt. 21:23-22:14. In that interpretation, the doctrine of divine influence in repentance is central. But see Mt. 5:16; 6:9-10; 15:13-14.

A third reason is pertinent to interpretation of Mt. 16:19a and Mt. 16:19b-c. The role of being a foundation rock in the building of the church does not necessitate nor imply authority over other persons in the future church. That would have to be read into the text. This is supported by the observation that, provided he were to have a sufficiently influential role in the propagation and advancement of the church as one of its early leaders, the language of building a church could still be used of Peter even if he were not invested with some special authority over persons in the church.⁷⁹⁵ Such pivotal leadership in the early church would not require the type of knowledge necessary for the authority supposedly granted in Mt. 16:19b-c.

Fourth, the use of the building metaphor might be as insignificant as an indication of temporal priority. In the same way that foundation stones are laid first and other parts of the building afterwards, Peter might be the rock on which others are laid in the sense that he would be active at the beginning of the church, a church that others would carry on and propagate in periods long after Peter's lifetime.⁷⁹⁶ Fifth, Matthew never speaks of the kingdom elsewhere as having different rooms or compartments for which Mt. 16:19a would speak of the corresponding keys. The idea of 'keys' as administrative keys for things within the kingdom comes from somewhere, but not from within the Gospel of Matthew.

Sixth, outside of Mt. 16:16-19, Matthew's Jesus never gives Peter a prominent authority over other members of the twelve, and there is much evidence in Matthew's gospel that would

795. Cf. France, R. T., *Matthew NICNT*, pp. 620-622 and Carson, D. A., *Matthew 13-28*, pp. 372-374. Blomberg (Blomberg, Craig L., *Matthew*, p. 255) says that "Peter's primacy is more chronological, in the unfolding events of early Christianity, than hierarchical."

796. Mt. 24:14.

discourage such an interpretation. Mt. 19:28 is a debatable passage and does not require the level of knowledge necessary for traditional interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c, nor does it give one disciple authority over others.

In light of the reasons given above, it is unnecessary to think that Mt. 16:18 gives significant support to an interpretation of Mt. 16:19 in which Peter is granted broad authority over those who are already disciples. The evidence points in a different direction. Jesus will build his church on Peter in Mt. 16:18, and not the other way around, because, as found in Mt. 16:19b-c, the Spirit of Jesus will bind or loose sin from the individual prior to Peter's doing so. This doctrine of divine influence in repentance that is promulgated in Mt 16:19b-c is one of the keys to the kingdom of heaven in Mt. 16:19a.

(c) Mt. 16:19a

It has been contended that Mt. 16:5-12, 17-18, and 28:16-20 fit with or support the proposal that Jesus emphasized the doctrine of divine influence in repentance, or do not give significant support to the view that Mt. 16:19 grants Peter a broad authority over those already in the church. It is now time to consider Mt. 16:19 itself. The following discussion will examine evidence that 'keys of the kingdom of heaven' in Mt. 16:19a are keys for permitting or forbidding entrance, and the next section will examine the relation of Mt. 16:19b-c to Mt. 23:13 and Lk. 11:52. It will be seen that these three verses are best explained with the doctrine of divine influence in repentance, a doctrine that this thesis contends is advocated in Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18.

(i) The relevance of Matthew's kingdom language for understanding the 'keys of the kingdom'

Evidence that these keys are for permitting or forbidding entrance into the kingdom of heaven comes from Matthew's usage of kingdom language. The word βασιλεία occurs fifty-three times in Matthew outside of Mt. 16:19a. Some of these are not in reference to the kingdom of God/Heaven, or speak generally of kingdom(s).⁷⁹⁷ Others are spoken by non-Jesus character(s),⁷⁹⁸ and some are part of the 'the kingdom is like' introductions to parable material.⁷⁹⁹ In other cases, βασιλεία has an active sense, as in the idea of the βασιλεία coming.⁸⁰⁰ Outside of Mt. 12:25 (on which, see below), none of these uses will be of significant help in understanding the phrase 'keys of the kingdom' in Mt. 16:19a. The use of βασιλεία in Mt. 16:19a is not part of a 'kingdom is like' introduction to parable material, nor is it being used in an active sense in the way that it is in some of the verses above.

Other passages use βασιλεία in the genitive as a modifier of a noun in a similar way that the genitive of βασιλεία is used in Mt. 16:19a. There is the gospel of the kingdom,⁸⁰¹ the mysteries or secrets of the kingdom,⁸⁰² and the message or word of the kingdom.⁸⁰³ For the

797. Mt. 4:8; 12:25, 26; 24:7 (2x).

798. Mt. 3:2; 18:1; 20:21.

799. Mt. 13:24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47; 20:1; 22:2; 25:1.

800. Mt. 4:17; 6:10; 10:7; 11:12; 12:28.

801. Mt. 4:23; 24:14; 9:35.

802. Mt. 13:11.

803. Mt. 13:19.

present question of whether Mt. 16:19a is referring to key(s) for entrance into the kingdom of heaven, though, a strong argument can not be made either way from these verses.

All together, these are twenty-seven of the fifty-three occurrences of βασιλεία outside of Mt. 16:19a. In none of them is there any significant support for the kingdom being something in which one disciple has authority over another. These verses do not support the view that the granting of the 'keys of the kingdom' in Mt. 16:19a is a granting of authority to Peter over persons in the church.

If one looks to the remaining twenty-six uses of βασιλεία in Matthew,⁸⁰⁴ all of which are on the lips of Jesus and refer to the kingdom of God/heaven, it is remarkable that twenty-two⁸⁰⁵ of these twenty-six uses view the kingdom from the standpoint of a dichotomy of being basically inside the kingdom or outside of it, or in some sense of having or not having it. One enters or does not enter the kingdom.⁸⁰⁶ The kingdom is something that one has or does not have, or something that one can inherit (or not inherit) or seek (or not seek).⁸⁰⁷ One is in the kingdom or outside of it.⁸⁰⁸ One is a son of the kingdom or a son of the evil one.⁸⁰⁹ In these twenty-two cases, the focus is on a status of being in or out, of having or not having, or of some similar dichotomy. Such data, and the usual function of keys for permitting or forbidding entrance, makes simply

804. Mt. 5:3, 10, 19 (2x) 20; 6:33; 7:21; 8:11, 12; 11:11; 13:19, 38, 41, 43, 52; 18:3, 4; 19:14, 23 (2x), 24; 21:31, 43; 23:13; 25:34; 26:29.

805. Mt. 5:3, 10, 20; 6:33; 7:21; 8:11, 12; 11:11; 13:19, 38, 41, 43; 18:3; 19:14, 23 (2x), 24; 21:31, 43; 23:13; 25:34; 26:29.

806. Mt. 5:20; 7:21; 18:3; 19:23 (2x), 24; 21:31; 23:13.

807. Mt. 5:3, 10; 6:33; 13:19; 19:14; 21:43; 25:34.

808. Mt. 8:11, 12; 11:11; 13:41, 43; 26:29.

809. Mt. 13:38.

implausible the contention that 'keys of the kingdom' in Mt. 16:19a is not about being inside or outside of the kingdom.

The remaining four occurrences⁸¹⁰ of βασιλεία do not materially affect this conclusion. Mt. 5:19 refers to the least in the kingdom of heaven and to the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, but such judgments are accorded respectively to those who "loose" commandments of the law and teach the same to others and to those who keep such commandments and teach others to keep them. Mt. 18:4 indicates that one who humbles himself like "this child" would be greatest in the kingdom of heaven. If the 'least' of Mt. 5:19 is referring to disciples in the kingdom and not to non-disciples in some broader sense of 'kingdom', then these verses do fit into a mold that makes distinctions between disciples within the kingdom. But in the one case it is only a greatest/least distinction, and in the other a 'greatest' distinction, neither of which are close to the supposed elevation of Peter and supposed granting of authority to him in Mt. 16:19. Neither of these two verses speak of authority, and what makes the difference between greatest and not-greatest is not authority, but obedience and teaching obedience in the one case (or lack of such things), and humility in the other. The last of these four remaining occurrences of βασιλεία is in Mt. 13:52. That verse compares every scribe discipled or instructed (μαθητευθεὶς) in the kingdom of heaven to a ruler of a house who brings from his treasury new and old things. This and the other verses do not significantly alter the above judgment that Matthew's usage of

810. Mt. 5:19 (2x); 13:52; 18:4

βασιλεία makes implausible the view that 'keys of the kingdom' is not about being inside or outside of the kingdom. From this evidence, one would judge that Allison is right, not France.

Though it may be only a small consideration, one may also note the perspective articulated in Mt. 12:25. Jesus indicates that a kingdom divided against itself would not stand. Here a distinction is made between parts within a kingdom, and the attitude is that conflict within the kingdom goes in the direction of the kingdom's ruin. If Peter were given keys of authority over persons within the kingdom, keys that presumably were to be used for barring access to certain rooms or places, this seems somewhat similar to the idea of one part of the kingdom being divided against another part, and thus might not fit perfectly with traditional interpretation of Mt. 16:19.

(ii) Why does Matthew use the plural 'keys'?

In Mt. 16:19a, Matthew uses the plural 'keys'. Luz says that "Whoever has the keys is either the gatekeeper or—what is more probable with several keys—the manager who has authority over his Lord's rooms and buildings."⁸¹¹ Luz appears to think that the plural 'keys' favors interpreting them to be keys over rooms and buildings within the kingdom. In a footnote of his sentence where he affirms that keys are for storehouses and not for an outer gate, France appeals to Luz in support of his view.⁸¹²

811. Luz, Ulrich, *Matthew 8-20*, p. 364.

812. France, R. T., *Matthew NICNT*, p. 625. Footnote 37 of that page says, "Luz, 2:364, points out that the plural 'keys' is more suited to the steward than to the porter controlling a single entrance."

Luz's statements raise the question why there is the plural 'keys' in Mt. 16:19a. His answer, and that of France, is Matthew used the plural 'keys' in light of his desire to speak of Peter being granted authority over those already in the disciple community. Apparently, the idea is that having more than one key makes it less likely that 'keys of the kingdom of heaven' is referring to keys for entrance. Such reasoning fails to be persuasive. It attempts to force a metaphor of keys to conform to reality in a way that is unnecessary, and even if it were not necessary, one might just reply that in the world of the metaphor, the use of the 'keys' implies that one must pass through multiple doors to enter the kingdom of heaven. Not much is gained by appealing to the plural 'keys' as if it determined if 'keys' are for entrance of those outside the kingdom or administration over those inside.

On the assumption that the keys are for entrance into the kingdom of heaven, an alternative explanation for the plural 'keys' is provided by Matthew's insistence that there will be more than one necessary requirement for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. The first requirement will be true repentance, which is the same as having one's sin loosed by heaven in Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18, or the same as being planted by the Father,⁸¹³ or by the Son.⁸¹⁴

A second necessary requirement will be acceptance of and commitment to the resurrected Christ. Matthew repeatedly emphasizes that it is response to Christ that determines kingdom entrance. Jesus is clear in different parts of the gospel that it will be response to or confession of him that determines eschatological fate. He who puts Jesus' teaching into practice weathers the

813. Cf. Mt. 15:13-14

814. Cf. Mt. 13:37.

storm, while he who does not is destroyed.⁸¹⁵ He who acknowledges Jesus before men would be acknowledged by him before 'my Father' in heaven,⁸¹⁶ and he who disowns Jesus would be disowned by him before 'my Father' in heaven.⁸¹⁷ He who loves father, mother, son, or daughter more than Jesus is not worthy of him,⁸¹⁸ and he who does not take up his cross and follow Jesus is not worthy of him.⁸¹⁹ He who does not fall away or stumble (σκανδαλισθῆναι) on account of Jesus is blessed.⁸²⁰ No one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him,⁸²¹ and the Son gives rest for weary souls.⁸²² He who is not with the Son is against him, and who does not gather with him scatters.⁸²³ Members of his generation would receive judgment in light of the fact that they did not repent when a greater than Solomon or greater than Jonah was in their midst.⁸²⁴ He who does not deny himself and take up his cross and follow Jesus would lose his life.⁸²⁵ The Son of Man came to give his life as a ransom for many.⁸²⁶ The vineyard tenants who refused and killed the Son would be liable to judgment.⁸²⁷ Those who did

815. Mt. 7:24-27.
816. Mt. 10:32.
817. Mt. 10:33.
818. Mt. 10:37.
819. Mt. 10:38.
820. Mt. 11:6.
821. Mt. 11:27.
822. Mt. 11:28-30.
823. Mt. 12:30.
824. Mt. 12:39-42.
825. Mt. 16:24-25.
826. Mt. 20:28.
827. Mt. 21:33-45.

not come to the wedding banquet of the Son were killed or did not enjoy its food.⁸²⁸ Disciples have one teacher, the Christ.⁸²⁹

It is more in keeping with Matthew's repeated emphasis, and with the emphasis in Mt. 16:15-18, simply to take the statement on the keys of the kingdom and binding and loosing as a furtherance of the Christological emphasis for future kingdom entrance. At least for the post-resurrection period towards which Mt. 16:19a looks, an essential part of the message of the kingdom was Christological, who Jesus was, and the binding or loosing of Mt. 16:19 described the pardon or judgment that came from people's varied responses to Jesus, something for which evidence can be found even in the positive and negative response of people within Matthew.

The reason that Jesus speaks of binding and loosing is that Peter's own confession of his Christological identity has called to mind a truth that he elsewhere repeatedly affirms. Upon his response to Jesus will a man's fate hang, and that response will be a critical factor in determining whether he enters the kingdom or is kept out of it.⁸³⁰ This stands in great continuity with major emphases of the gospel, and has no need of seeing in Mt. 16:19 a new and remarkably bold statement from Jesus to his disciples that is incongruent with the characterization of disciples elsewhere in the gospel.

The statement that Jesus would give the keys of the kingdom to Peter fits nicely with this. Jesus at this point in the gospel had not made a clear and explicit prediction to his disciples about

828. Mt. 22:1-14.

829. Mt. 23:8.

830. Mt. 10:32-33; 25:31-46.

his death and resurrection, though Mt. 9:15 and the passage immediately after Peter's confession makes warranted the conclusion that this was in the mind of Matthew's Jesus (to say nothing of the historical one either way). Matthew's Jesus knew that his own disciples had yet more to learn about his identity, a knowledge that came from his death and resurrection, and it was accordingly appropriate to speak of this giving of keys as in some sense a future event.⁸³¹ Peter's own opposition to Jesus in the very next passage confirms this.⁸³² Peter will be given a key in the future given that his Christological confession in Mt. 16 was not matched by an adequate understanding of Christ's identity and role.

Given the above explanation, the reason Matthew uses the plural 'keys' is that there is more than one necessary requirement of entrance into the kingdom, at least for a post-resurrection period. One of the two keys of kingdom will be the gospel or good news of the kingdom,⁸³³ which is the doctrine of divine influence in repentance, that man does not repent absent some work of God in him.⁸³⁴ The second key will have to do with Christ's identity and his role in giving his life as a ransom for many from sin.⁸³⁵

To understand the keys of the kingdom in Mt. 16:19 in this way allows the interpreter to link this verse to the statement in Mt. 16:18 that Jesus would build his church on Peter, and to Peter's Christological confession in Mt. 16:16-17. Through a Christological confession consistent with but more robust than that of Mt. 16:16-17, and through the doctrine of divine influence in

831. Cf. the remark in Morris, Leon, *Matthew*, p. 425.

832. Mt. 16:21-28.

833. Mt. 4:23; 9:35; cf. Mt. 11:5.

834. Cf. Mt. 15:13-14; 16:19b-c; 18:18; Mt. 21:23-22:14; 23:13, 15.

835. Cf. Mt. 20:28; 26:28.

repentance expressed in Mt. 16:19b-c, Peter will have two keys of the kingdom in Mt. 16:19a with which he will be used in the building of Jesus' church in Mt. 16:18. Some will accept Peter's message and join the church, yet one or the other part of Peter's two-fold message will be rejected by some, meaning that some will be bound and others loosed in Mt. 16:19b-c.

This explanation does not deny that the rock referred to in Mt. 16:18 is Peter, but one must also remember that the Peter as rock on which the church will be built is the Peter who has just made a Christological confession. It is inappropriate to separate the man from the confession. The church will be built on Peter as confessor of Christ, not Peter *comme lui-même seul*. A dichotomy between the man and his message would be distorting.

On this interpretation of Mt. 16:16-19, the passage stands in continuity with a repeated emphasis on the evangelistic task of disciples. Their task is to be fishers of men,⁸³⁶ to be salt and light,⁸³⁷ to preach the gospel of the kingdom in the whole world,⁸³⁸ and to make disciples of many nations⁸³⁹.⁸⁴⁰ Mt. 16:16-20 fits well into this emphasis.

One more comment may be made here. Given this explanation of Mt. 16:16-19, the statement that Peter's Christological knowledge was not revealed to him by man, but came from 'my Father' in heaven may be significant. There may be here an echo of the statement in Mt. 15:13-14. That passage says that every plant not planted by 'my Father' would be uprooted.

836. Mt. 4:18-20.

837. Mt. 5:14-15.

838. Mt. 24:14; 26:13; cf. 10:5-6.

839. Mt. 28:16-20.

840. Carson, D. A., *Matthew 13-28*, p. 373.

Given the importance of response to or confession of Christ for a man's eschatological fate, the Father's granting revelation of Christ's identity may mean that eschatological salvation depends in some way on the Father's revelation. In that sense, the Father would have some role in the 'planting' of persons who would not be uprooted.

(iii) Old Testament background material to Mt. 16:19a

More than one scholar appeals to Old Testament background material in support of understanding the statement about keys of the kingdom as keys for persons already in the kingdom. France indicates that Mt. 16:19 takes up language of Isa. 20:20-22 such that Peter would be, like Eliakim, a steward⁸⁴¹: what he shuts others would not open and what he opens others would not shut. Jeremias says that "in the usage of the Bible and later Judaism handing over the keys does not have the sense of appointing as porter."⁸⁴² He then refers to Isa. 22:15, 22; Rev. 1:18; 3:7; 11:6, and concludes that "handing over the keys implies appointment to full authority."⁸⁴³ Notably, Jeremias thinks that this full authority includes both control over council chamber or treasury and power for forbidding or allowing entry.⁸⁴⁴

What may be noted about many of the Old Testament scriptural passages used by France or Jeremias is that they are not conclusive. Mt. 16:19 does not contain the statement that what Peter shuts others would not open, and that what he opens others would not shut. The only

841. Isa. 22:15.

842. Jeremias, Joachim, κλείς, p. 750.

843. Ibid., p. 750.

844. Ibid., p. 750.

significant link is with the key of the house of David in Isa. 22:22 and the 'keys of the kingdom of heaven' in Mt. 16:19a. Such a link is not strong. To this it might be said that in addition to Isa. 22:22 mentioning a key of the house of David, which would correspond somewhat to 'keys of the kingdom of heaven' in Mt. 16:19a, the opening and shutting statements of Isa. 22:22 would correspond to the binding and loosing statements of Mt. 16:19b-c. There would thus be a much closer link to Isa. 22:22 than if just the 'key'/'keys' link were present.

Though this would be a stronger link, this cannot appropriately be used against an argument that says that Mt. 16:19b-c is not about giving Peter authority. The link between the opening and shutting statements of Isa. 22:22 and the binding and loosing statements of Mt. 16:19b-c is only a link if the Mt. 16:19b-c is about some Petrine authority, but that is the very point in debate. One does not win an argument by assuming the point in contention. The question then is whether one would expect to find a link between Isa. 22:22 and Mt. 16:19a without assuming that point of contention. This is not the same question as whether one would expect to find a scriptural allusion for Mt. 16:19a or a scriptural concept or idea behind it. The mere fact that Isa. 22:22 uses 'key' and Mt. 16:19a uses 'keys' does not create the expectation the one verse draws on the other, even if it is more likely than not that a given passage in Matthew would have some scriptural background. It is true that Matthew's Jesus interprets events or gives many sayings that are grounded in Old Testament text, but it does not follow from this that the particular text of Mt 16:19 is grounded in the particular text of Isa. 22:22.

Though such a practice might encourage one to think that there is some plausibility in thinking that Jesus' words in Mt. 16:19 are rooted in some scripture somewhere, it could be

replied that there are Old Testament ideas or concepts that line up well with material in Mt. 16:19 as interpreted in the alternative proposal of this thesis.⁸⁴⁵ Also, Matthew's practice or the practice of Matthew's Jesus of interpreting events or giving sayings with some connection to Old Testament material does not require close catchwords linking two verses together.

Some other considerations in regard to Isa. 22:22 may be added to those above. Isa. 22:15, 22 does not show that the steward would not have the responsibility of forbidding or admitting entry. The characterization of the steward as being in charge of the palace does support France's view that being a steward involves authority over things within a house, but it does not preclude being in charge over who enters that house. One would think that being in charge over what happens within a house naturally entails being in charge of who enters that house. France thus presents a false dichotomy. Further, the statement about opening and shutting does not answer the question of the extent of the opening or closing activity, nor the question whether such opening and shutting is for an entrance door to a house or for some other door. If one were to go with France's false dichotomy, the language of Isa. 22:15, 22 by itself would not clearly favor France's view over the alternative position.

It is also notable that Isa. 22:15 differs from Mt. 16:19a in that it has the singular 'key' and not the plural 'keys' of Mt. 16:19a. If one were only to think of one door for the one key, the more likely referent would be the most important door of the house, the door for permitting or

845. Cf. at least some of the following: 1 Sam. 16:7; Psalms 7:10; 15:2; 17:3; 19:14; 24:4; 26:2; 44:21; 51:10, 17; 66:18; 73:1; 86:11; 119:36, 58, 80; 125:4; 139:23; 148:14; Proverbs 3:1; 4:21; 6:21; 11:20; 16:1, 5, 9; 17:3; 19:21; 21:1, 2; 24:12; 27:19; Isaiah 10:12; 29:13; 57:15; Jeremiah 3:10, 15; 4:14; 9:26; 11:20; 16:12; 17:5; 17:10; 20:12; 24:7; 29:13; 32:39; Ezekiel 11:19; 18:31; 28:2, 5, 17; 36:26; 44:7, 9; Hosea 5:4; 10:2; Joel 2:12, 13; Obadiah 3; Malachi 2:2. Cf. also Psalm 118.

forbidding entrance. In this respect, Isa. 22:15 actually supports the opposite of France's conclusion.

This is bolstered by one of the only passages, if not the only one, in the Hebrew Bible in which a man over the house features prominently in a narrative. In Gen. 43, the steward of the house meets Joseph's brothers at or near the entrance of the house (in LXX, *πυλῶνι τοῦ οἴκου*, 'gate of the house'; in BHS, *פֶּתַח הַבַּיִת* 'entrance of the house'), and after meeting them, the Porter goes with them to interior parts of the house. If there is only one key of the house, this would encourage one to think that it is for the entrance, or at the least, this would discourage France's dichotomy between control over affairs in the house and control over who enters. Increasing the number of keys from one to more than one does not seem to detract from the idea that one of those keys would be for forbidding or permitting entrance.

Rev. 3:7 also uses language of Isa. 22:22. This passage of Revelation refers to the words of him who is holy and true and who holds the key of David; then the passage says that what he opens others will not shut and that what he shuts others will not open. As with Isa. 22:22, the passage does not seem to clearly favor the view that the keys are for authority over those already in the house rather than authority for permitting or forbidding entrance, if a dichotomy were to force one to choose between the two. Some of what was said in regard to Isa. 22:22 applies to Rev. 3:7. Revelation was also probably written after Matthew's gospel, though, which would lessen the weight of evidence provided by Rev. 3:7.

Jeremias' position seems more sensible, but a number of his passages can be taken to support the idea that keys of the kingdom of heaven are for permitting or forbidding entrance. In Rev. 1:18, Jesus says that he is the living one, that he was dead and is now alive, and holds the keys of death and Hades. This statement about the keys of death and Hades could be taken to mean authority over what happens within the region of death and Hades, but it seems more plausible to think of power over death in the sense of ability to escape from it (or that ability plus the power to allow others to do so). The statement occurs just before the statement that he was dead and is alive for ever and ever, so the focus seems to be on the fact of his escaping from death, not on particular affairs within the realm of death. In this respect, Rev. 1:18 seems to support the view here that 'keys of the kingdom of heaven' in Mt. 16:19a are for permitting or forbidding entrance to the kingdom of heaven. This is strengthened by the observations that Rev. 1:18 uses the plural 'keys' for death and Hades as Mt. 16:19a uses the plural 'keys' for the kingdom of heaven.

Another passage mentioned by Jeremias is Rev. 11:6. The only significant linguistic connection between this verse and Mt. 16:19a is that this verse contains the verb κλείω, which links it to some degree with the nominal κλειῖδας in Mt. 16:19a. In Rev. 11:6, it is said that the men would have authority to shut heaven such that it would not rain on the earth in time that they are prophesying. Even if the linguistic connection were not weak, and even if the two passages did not differ in that Rev. 11:6 uses the word for authority while Mt. 16:19a does not, it is notable that the contrast is again a dichotomous one. It is a contrast between rain making it to earth or not. This easily supports the view that the keys of the kingdom of heaven in Mt. 16:19a are keys

of forbidding or permitting entrance. If reference to this verse was meant to support the view that Mt. 16:19a is focused on authority in general rather than authority of forbidding or permitting entrance, the verse does not seem to give much support to that view in contrast to the proposal of this thesis.

Such a dichotomous viewpoint is found in rabbinic material cited by Jeremias. Even if anachronism were not a concern, Jeremias' mention of three keys in the hand of God—one for rain, one for conception, capable of opening the womb of a woman, and one for reviving or quickening the dead—does have the sense of authority, but each of these subjects is also dichotomous.⁸⁴⁶ It rains or it does not rain. A woman can conceive or is barren. The dead revive or do not revive. These examples thus fit well with interpreting 'keys of the kingdom of heaven' in Mt. 16:19a through the dichotomy of forbidding or permitting entrance.

One other consideration is worth mentioning. Even though Jeremias says that "in the usage of the Bible and later Judaism handing over the keys does not have the sense of appointing as porter",⁸⁴⁷ he does not conclude from this that handing over the keys does not include authority in regard to forbidding or permitting entrance. "He who has the keys has on the one side control, e.g., over the council chamber or treasury, cf. Mt. 13:52, and on the other the power to allow or forbid entry, cf. Rev. 3:7"⁸⁴⁸

846. Cf. Ibid., p. 750.

847. Ibid., p. 750.

848. Ibid., p. 750.

This breadth of authority allows the possibility that the scope of Mt. 16:19b-c is not necessarily as broad as the scope of Mt. 16:19a. If France is right about the keys in 16:19a, it might be the case that, whereas 16:19a focuses on the household authority held by Peter in his possession of the keys, Mt. 16:19b-c narrows its focus to the function of just one of those keys, a key for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. In such a case, and if the 'keys of the kingdom of heaven' in Mt. 16:19a had to do with granting Peter full authority, it might even be proposed that the main intent with the keys saying in Mt. 16:19a was to raise the idea of full authority that would then be applied in a statement of more limited scope in Mt. 16:19b-c, a statement focusing on forbidding and allowing entrance into the kingdom. If Mt. 16:19b-c focuses on just a one key for permitting or forbidding entrance, the earlier proposal about the two keys for entrance could just be fused together such that the key to the kingdom of heaven would be the combination of the doctrine of divine influence in repentance and the Christological confession.

Jeremias also points to another consideration. He says that "The power of the keys consists in full authority to bind and loose", and then that it is "judicial" and "the authority to pronounce judgment on unbelievers and to promise forgiveness to believers", and concludes that "In sum we may say that the power of the keys is authority in the dispensing of the word of grace and judgment."⁸⁴⁹ In light of such thinking, one could grant France's assertion about 16:19a dealing with authority over a household while still insisting that 16:19b-c is not about broad authority to declare what is right and wrong nor about authority to give binding interpretation of the law. Jeremias thinks of full authority in a particular area, and an area at least somewhat

849. Ibid., p. 751-752.

different than that of France. Even if the present thesis does not agree with all of Jeremias' view, here he at least seems closer to the mark than France.

(iv) France's separation of different aspects of the kingdom of heaven

In his section on Mt. 16:19, France remarks that "The traditional portrayal of Peter as porter at the pearly gates depends on misunderstanding 'the kingdom of heaven' here as a designation of the afterlife rather than denoting God's rule among his people on earth."⁸⁵⁰ This separation between an afterlife and God's rule among his people on earth seems to be unwarranted in light of the repeated connection that Matthew's Jesus makes between eschatological fate and one's life on earth. Jesus says that unless one has a righteousness greater than Pharisees and scribes, one would not enter the reign of heaven.⁸⁵¹ Only those who do the will of the Father would enter the kingdom of heaven.⁸⁵² The former of these two passages seems to refer to the eschatological kingdom of heaven, and the latter certainly does. Matthew thus quite clearly connects what one does on earth with eschatological fate. Matthew does not sever the connection between the kingdom of heaven among God's people and eschatological fate; neither should France.

850. France, R. T., *Matthew NICNT*, p. 625.

851. Mt. 5:20.

852. Mt. 7:21.

(v) Consistency in the use of Mt. 23:13

In a footnote in his section on Mt. 16:19, France indicates that in Mt. 23:13 the sense of inclusion and exclusion is prominent, and also indicates that the means by which Pharisees and scribes shut people out "is by their teaching",⁸⁵³ but he then remarks that

It is perhaps pressing the similarity of metaphors too far to discover a deliberate link: ... "Keys" as such are not mentioned in 23:13 (κλείω can mean 'shut' without necessarily including the idea of locking), though a similar passage in Luke 11:52 speaks of the 'key of knowledge'.⁸⁵⁴

Despite the words for loosing, binding, and the law being absent in 23:13, Luz wants Mt. 23:13 to support his interpretation of 16:19b-c as dealing with interpretation of the law, with the only significant linguistic basis within Matthew being that the κλείετε of Mt. 23:13 is similar to the κλεῖδας of 16:19a. At the same time, France does not link κλεῖδας of Mt. 16:19a with the κλείετε of Mt. 23:13. This has the convenient result that the focus of Mt. 23:13 on shutting out of the kingdom does not impact his view that the κλεῖδας of 16:19a are for authority over those already in the kingdom, not primarily for permitting or forbidding entrance to those outside the kingdom.

France and Luz are going in opposite directions. If the κλείετε of Mt. 23:13 should impact interpretation of Mt. 16:19a, then it is more likely that the κλεῖδας of Mt. 16:19a are keys for permitting or forbidding entrance into the kingdom given that Mt. 23:13 focuses on shutting out of the kingdom and on not entering it. If Mt. 23:13 should not impact interpretation of Mt.

853. Ibid., p. 625, footnote 40.

854. Ibid., p. 625-626, footnote 40.

16:19a, then Luz's appeal to Mt. 23:13 for interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c as dealing with interpretation of law is to be disallowed. It would seem at least somewhat inconsistent to appeal to Mt. 23:13 to support the interpretation that Mt. 16:19a has to do with a broad teaching authority supposedly granted to Peter, and at the same time to refuse to let the focus of Mt. 23:13 on not entering the kingdom not impact how one understands 'keys of the kingdom of heaven' in Mt. 16:19a.

(d) Mt. 16:19 in Light of Mt. 23:13 and Lk. 11:52

Even if one were to grant that 'keys of the kingdom' in Mt. 16:19a were for permitting or forbidding entrance into the kingdom of heaven for those on the outside, the interpretation of this thesis for Mt. 16:19b-c would not automatically follow. A number of commentators have appealed to Mt. 23:13 and attempted to connect the supposed teaching of Pharisees that shuts out (κλείετε) persons from the kingdom of heaven in Mt. 23:13 to the supposed teaching activity of Mt. 16:19b-c and the 'keys' (κλεῖδας; notice the lexical similarity) in Mt. 16:19a. In this way, Mt. 23:13 is linked to Mt. 16:19 by the κλείετε/κλεῖδας similarity, and the focus of Mt. 23:13 on Pharisees' teaching can be contrasted with the supposed authoritative teaching of Peter in Mt. 16:19b-c. In what follows, it will be seen that Mt. 16:19 can be linked to Mt. 23:13 (and also to Lk. 11:52), but from this, it does not follow that Peter is granted teaching authority over others in the church. An alternative proposal, one which explains the relationship of Mt. 16:19a to Mt. 16:19b-c, will be put forth. This proposal also supports interpreting 'keys of the kingdom' as keys

for entrance over the view of France that the keys are for administration of those already in the kingdom.

(i) Luz, Davies, and Allison on Mt. 16:19 and Mt. 23:13

One of the biggest factors in interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c has been the link between this passage and Mt. 23:13. One example among others can be found in Davies and Allison's commentary. They say that

Peter is the authoritative teacher without peer. This harmonizes with the dominant rabbinic usage and, more importantly, with 23:13: ... Here, as the context proves, the scribes shut the door to the kingdom by issuing false doctrine. The image is closely related to 16:19, and the inference lies near to hand that just as the kingdom itself is taken from the Jewish leaders and given to the church (21.43), so are the keys of the kingdom taken from the scribes and Pharisees and given to Peter.⁸⁵⁵

It is evident from this that Mt. 23:13 is a significant factor for the interpretation provided by Davies and Allison. They contend that Mt. 16:19a and 16:19b-c "probably have to do with teaching authority" and that Mt. 16:19a is most naturally thought of "as being explicated by what follows: to have the keys is to have the power to bind and loose."; in support of connecting keys and teaching, they refer to Lk. 11:52, a passage with some similarity to Mt. 23:13.⁸⁵⁶ The appeal to Mt. 23:13 is not unique to Davies and Allison. Marcus also appeals to Mt. 23:13.⁸⁵⁷ Luz also links his interpretation of Mt. 16:19b-c to Mt. 23:13. He says that Mt. 23:13 "is simply a counterimage to v. 19a" and that its "focus is obviously on their interpretation of the law that is

855. Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C., *Matthew 8-18*, p. 639.

856. Ibid., p. 635

857. Marcus, "Gates of Hades", p. 452.

incapable of distinguishing between essential and marginal issues.⁸⁵⁸ Luz goes on and says that one may conclude from 23:13 that "it is Peter's task to open the kingdom of heaven for people, and to do it by means of his binding interpretation of the law."⁸⁵⁹ After stating that the path to the kingdom of heaven is by binding interpretation of the law, Luz goes further. He says the following in regard to Peter:

He is to interpret God's will as Jesus has revealed it in order to lead people into that narrow path at the end of which the narrow gate opens to the kingdom of heaven (cf. 7:13-14). Thus the commandments of Jesus that Peter proclaims and interprets are the key to heaven. "Simon is" the keeper of the keys and "rock as surety and guarantor of the teaching of Jesus." On this basis it is also correct when many authors see in the perspective of our text the "service of Peter" in the church "in the constant uncompromising advocacy of the teachings of Jesus."⁸⁶⁰

Luz, Davies, and Allison make a simple equation between parts of Mt. 16:19, with Mt. 16:19a explaining 16:19b-c. This fits to some degree with Lk. 11:52 and Mt. 23:13. Lk. 11:52 refers to the 'key of knowledge' that experts of the law have taken away. Not only is 'key of knowledge' similar to 'keys of the kingdom' in Mt. 16:19a, but the statement containing it in Lk. 11:52 is parallel to the statement in Mt. 23:13 that Pharisees shut the kingdom of heaven to people, and each statement is immediately followed by the claim that the respective persons do not enter or have not entered the kingdom and hinder or prevent (or have hindered or prevented) others from doing so. It would seem that taking away the key (κλεῖδα) to knowledge goes hand

858. Luz, Ulrich, *Matthew 8-20*, p. 365.

859. Ibid., p. 365. Luz's appeal to 23:13 is similar to Marcus (Marcus, "Gates of Hades", p. 452), who said that "the authority to bind and loose is connected in 16:19 with possession of the keys (*kleidas*) of the kingdom of heaven, and in 23:13 the power to open and shut (*kleiein*) the kingdom is in the hands of the interpreters of the law."

860. Luz, Ulrich, *Matthew 8-20*, p. 365.

in hand with shutting (κλείετε) the kingdom of heaven to people. This encourages the interpretation of Mt. 23:13 that the means by which Pharisees shut the kingdom to others is bad teaching.⁸⁶¹ The κλεῖδα/κλείετε link between Lk. 11:52 and Mt. 23:13 connects these two verses to Mt. 16:19 given that Mt. 16:19a refers to the keys (κλεῖδας) of the kingdom. Given that the κλεῖδα/κλείετε statements of Lk. 11:52 and Mt. 23:13 have to do with some type of teaching, one would be encouraged by these two verses to think of the use of κλεῖδας in Mt. 16:19a in terms of teaching. This finds still more support in the binding and loosing statements immediately after Mt. 16:19a, since binding and loosing are so strongly associated with rabbinic teaching.

(ii) An Alternative Proposal for Mt. 16:19 and Mt. 23:13

There is much here to encourage an interpretation of Mt. 16:19 similar to that of Luz, Davies, and Allison, but despite the strength of the evidence, several reasons discourage one from adopting interpretation(s) of these scholars. One important consideration is that much of the argument works for the interpretation of this thesis; that is, the evidence above can be used in support of more than one interpretation.

This thesis contends that in Mt. 18, Jesus emphasizes that if someone truly repents, it will be through some sort of divine influence. The same explanation works for Mt. 23:13, Lk. 11:52,

861. Hagner (Hagner, Donald A., *Matthew 14-28*, p. 473) also makes reference to Mt. 23:13 when he writes that

In its primary meaning, the phrase "binding and loosing" refers to the allowing and disallowing of certain conduct, based on an interpretation of the commandments of the Torah, and thus it concerns the issue of whether or not one is in proper relationship to the will of God (contrast the reference to the Pharisees' misuse of their authority [note implied keys!] in 23:13).

and Mt. 16:19. One might readily agree that in all three cases, Matthew is thinking of teaching. In Mt. 23:13 and Lk. 11:52, it is the teaching of Pharisees or experts of the law that is condemned, but whereas Luz, Davies, and Allison do not give specific doctrines in teaching of Pharisees or experts of the law that is to be condemned (surely not all of it is to be condemned!), this thesis proposes a new and specific proposal regarding their teaching. Pharisees and experts of the law affirmed that people could truly repent or truly be righteous without some divine influence or activity in them, and thus they disagreed with Jesus on this particular issue of doctrine.

Such a disagreement would explain not only the basis for the condemnation of Mt. 23:13 and Lk. 11:52, but also the motive for it. It is an emphasis of Isaiah⁸⁶² that God does not share his glory with another. If Pharisees and experts in the law denied the doctrine that one would never come to true repentance or true righteousness without an act of God in the person, then they would be arrogating to themselves glory for their (supposed) righteousness and repentance when glory ought to be given to God for repentance and righteousness. God will not bring about true repentance and true righteousness in such a person.

Thus, not only would Pharisees and experts in the law shut themselves out of the kingdom of heaven by holding fast to their teaching that denies the doctrine of divine influence in repentance, but others who adopt their teaching, maybe partly in respect for the religious position in society of Pharisees and experts in the law, would also be blocked from real

862. See Isa. 42:8; 48:11.

repentance and righteousness. This would give Jesus not only a theological basis to criticize Pharisees as being sons of hell,⁸⁶³ but would also give him a strong incentive to actively undermine and criticize Pharisees in public out of his pastoral and evangelistic concern for the souls of Jewish laity. If such laity sided with the religious leaders in denying the doctrine of divine influence in repentance, they would unintentionally withhold themselves from true repentance and thus would be heading down a path to eschatological destruction. Jesus' attack on Pharisees, scribes, and Sadducees was accordingly born out of his evangelistic concern for the eternal fate of souls, both for Jewish laity and for their leaders whom Jesus criticized. In this respect, the words of Mt. 23:13 and Lk. 11:52 are quite correct. Pharisees take away the key to knowledge,⁸⁶⁴ shut the kingdom of heaven in other's faces,⁸⁶⁵ do not enter themselves⁸⁶⁶ and hinder or prevent others from entering by their teaching.⁸⁶⁷

Not only does this explain Mt. 23:13 and Lk. 11:52, but it also explains Mt. 16:19. Not denying the doctrine of divine influence in repentance is a necessary key to the kingdom of heaven, though not the only necessary one. If one denies that doctrine and claims that one would repent on one's own apart from God's work in the individual, then this would ensure that God would not act to bring about true repentance and true righteousness, since doing so would aid a person in claiming for himself or herself the glory that rightly belongs to God. The doctrine of divine influence is thus a 'key' to the kingdom of heaven in Mt. 16:19a. This is immediately

863. Mt. 23:15.

864. Lk. 11:52.

865. Mt. 23:13.

866. Lk. 11:52 and Mt. 23:13.

867. Lk. 11:52 and Mt. 23:13.

confirmed in Mt. 16:19b-c, which emphasizes, as in Mt. 18:18, the doctrine of divine influence in repentance, that the sin's being bound or loosed on earth is posterior to its being bound or loosed in heaven.

Further, what is being proposed for Mt. 23:13 is exactly the same as what Jesus does in Mt. 21:23-22:14. Though the justification for this statement is too lengthy to be included here, contemporary scholars have failed to see that much of Jesus' criticism in Mt. 21:23-22:14 is based on the theological conviction that God will not bring true repentance to religious leaders (or others) who deny that repentance only comes when God works in a person. On the basis of their denial of that doctrine, Jesus criticizes religious leaders as not doing the will of the Father nor entering the kingdom of heaven,⁸⁶⁸ as not producing fruit,⁸⁶⁹ and as ones who will not participate in the eschatological banquet.⁸⁷⁰ He thus does the same thing in Mt. 21:23-22:14 that this thesis proposes he is doing for Mt. 23:13, and in both cases his words are based on the doctrine that this thesis proposes is advanced in Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18.

In light of the above explanation, one can agree with Luz, Davies, and Allison that Mt. 16:19b-c explicates Mt. 16:19a, and that Mt. 16:19, Mt. 23:13, and Lk. 11:52 all deal with teaching. But it does not follow that Mt. 16:19b-c has to do with granting Peter authority to impose halakhic decisions over other disciples. This leaves us with two possible explanations for

868. Mt. 21:28-32.

869. Mt. 21:33-46.

870. Mt. 22:1-14.

Mt. 16:19, both of which incorporate the links to Mt. 23:13 or Lk. 11:52 and which have Mt. 16:19b-c explicating Mt. 16:19a.

4. Conclusion

The alternative proposal for Mt. 16:19 in this thesis is superior to the view promoted by Luz, Davies, and Allison. Several reasons can be given in favor of this alternative proposal. First, the argument to this point has shown that the characterization of disciples and of Peter outside of Mt. 16:16-19 does not give significant support for the view that Peter would be granted a broad authority over other disciples in Mt. 16:19b-c. To the contrary, it contains much that would discourage such a view. If there are two explanations for Mt. 16:19, only one of which accords with the characterization of Peter and disciples elsewhere in the gospel outside of Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18, then that explanation would in that respect be preferable to the one that does not so agree with characterization of Peter and disciples outside of Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18. The proposal of this thesis agrees with the characterization of Peter and disciples outside of Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18. The interpretation of Luz, Davies, and Allison does not. Also, while the proposal of this thesis has significant continuity with Jesus' theology of divine influence in other parts of the Jesus tradition, the interpretation of Davies, Luz, Allison, Marcus and others has no significant basis in Jesus tradition in Matthew, and little or no basis in other Jesus tradition.

VIII. Appendix C: An Alternative Proposal for the Semantics of Greek Indicative Verbs

One challenge to the argument for a heaven first order of binding and loosing is presented by Stanley Porter's verbal aspect theory. Porter maintains that the indicative mood of Greek does not grammaticalize tense. That is, it does not grammaticalize temporal reference. His *magnum opus* makes his case for this position,⁸⁷¹ and he has specifically addressed the periphrastic future perfects of Mt. 16:19.⁸⁷² There are two reasons that some attention needs to be given specifically to Porter. The first is that with much effort and expenditure of words he has erected a considerable theoretical edifice that he uses against the interpretation of the periphrastic future perfects offered in this thesis. The second is that a number of contemporary scholars have cited some or all of Porter's 'Vague Verbs' article in their sections that address issue of the periphrastic future perfect in Mt. 16:19b-c or Mt. 18:18.⁸⁷³

871. See Porter, Stanley E., *Verbal Aspect in NT Greek*.

872. Porter, "Vague Verbs"

873. Blomberg, Craig L., *Matthew*, p. 255; Osborne, Grant R., *Matthew*, p. 629; Nolland, John, *Matthew*, pp. 657, 680-681; Davies, William David, & Jr. Allison, Dale C., *Matthew 8-18*, pp. 639, 646; Hagner, Donald A., *Matthew 14-28*, p. 474 says to see Porter's discussion, and the only work of Porter on p. 462 of the accompanying bibliography section is Porter's 'Vague Verbs' article. Pennington, Jonathan T., *Heaven and Earth*, p. 147 cites Porter's vague verbs article.

Porter marshals different arguments against thinking that the language of Mt. 18:18 indicates heavenly action preceding earthly action. After saying that the mode in Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18 "is one of projection - with the expectation of fulfilment - of a hypothetical event, that is binding and loosing", Porter then says that

Attempts to establish future temporal implicature (that is, future temporal implications of a particular stretch of discourse in context) on the basis of the future verb form alone are not acceptable, since the future form in Greek is best understood as semantically conveying a modal sense related to that of the subjunctive.⁸⁷⁴

Porter insists that the future indicative verbal form does not grammaticalize temporal reference, a claim that gains much of its plausibility from his broader insistence that "there is no formal category of (absolute) tense in Greek,"; for him there is "no reason to posit an exception for the Future."⁸⁷⁵ Porter ties his denial of temporal reference of the future to his view that the present indicative form and aorist indicative form do not grammaticalize temporal reference. His view of the perfect goes with his view of the present and aorist indicatives. Porter says that his understanding of the periphrastic agrees with that of Turner, who, according to Porter, thought of "perfect in its original sense as being stative"; he glosses a binding saying with "shall be in a state of being bound or having boundness", and says that there is no

explicit reference by verb form alone to when this event might occur. Not only is any presupposition of a rigid temporal scheme unsupportable, but any undue emphasis on the permanence of the state (i.e. «once for all») cannot be posited here on the basis of the participle alone. This lessens the importance of much of the debate regarding the permanence of the Petrine office. The state is *in effect*, without alluding to the time of its inception or termination.⁸⁷⁶

874. Porter, "Vague Verbs", p. 160.

875. Porter, Stanley E., *Verbal Aspect in NT Greek*, p. 407.

876. Porter, "Vague Verbs", pp. 160-161.

Porter's judgment is similar to that of McKay, who said that "The future perfect likewise signals a state and not the comparative time of two actions. This is clear enough in Mt xvi 19, ἔσται δεδεμένον and ἔσται λελυμένον, and in the plurals of these in Mt xviii 18."⁸⁷⁷ Even Fanning did not think that the wording of Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18 required a heaven-first order.⁸⁷⁸

Here is another part of Porter's verbal aspect theory, the view that a perfect indicative does not grammaticalize temporal reference, that it expresses a state without implying an anterior event at which time a person or thing entered into that state. In this, Porter disagrees with many grammarians. The main body of this thesis contended that the perfect generally does indicate both a state *and* an anterior event. Fanning would agree with this general double sense of the perfect, but would think that Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18 contain exceptions. Were Porter's theory about the Greek indicative verbal form correct, it would undercut some of the argument for the heaven-first order of binding and loosing in Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18. His theory thus needs attention.

One may acknowledge at the outset that Stanley Porter's *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament, with Reference to Tense and Mood* was a milestone in Greek linguistics, a massive tome whose thorough research and documentation and sharp writing heralded a brilliant young scholar. His bold proposal about the Greek indicative form stood against generations of

877. McKay, K. L. (1981). "On the Perfect and Other Aspects in New Testament Greek". *Novum Testamentum*, 23, 289-329, p. 323.

878. Fanning, "Verbal Aspect in NT Greek", pp. 322-323.

Greek grammarians. His theory, though, has failed to win universal assent. Buist Fanning, a contemporary of Porter who himself wrote on Greek verbal aspect around the same time as Porter, reached different conclusions.⁸⁷⁹ The differing views of the two scholars led to discussion in a volume edited by Porter and D. A. Carson entitled *Biblical Greek Language and Linguistics: Open Questions in Current Research*. Though Fanning acknowledges value in Porter's work, he disagrees with "Porter's strict insistence that the Greek verbal forms carry no temporal value at all", does not think that Porter's view "offers the kind of ground-breaking contribution to the field that he has claimed for it," and finds Porter's case "unpersuasive"; Fanning says that "Porter has made the best case for this view that anyone can make, but it is not persuasive."⁸⁸⁰ Fanning also maintained that "the linguistic evidence is overwhelming that in the indicative forms the tenses carry a double sense of time and aspect together".⁸⁸¹

Porter's main response to Fanning's view that indicative forms grammaticalize both temporal reference and verbal aspect is that there are cases where the verbal form is present but the temporal referent is not. Citing Robertson's statement that "Since the pres. ind. occurs for past, present and future time it is clear that 'time' is secondary even in the ind.", Porter says that "it may be concluded that Greek does not grammaticalize present reference in the Present tense form, since the same form may be used with a variety of temporal and non-temporal references."⁸⁸² After stating that "It is possible, though highly unlikely that Greek would fail to

879. See Ibid..

880. Fanning, Buist M., *Approaches to Verbal Aspect in NT Greek*, p. 58.

881. Ibid., p. 58.

882. Porter, Stanley E., *Verbal Aspect in NT Greek*, p. 78.

grammaticalize tense in only one tense category", Porter provides examples of Aorist usage that refers to something other than the past and says that "the range of usage of the Aorist form indicates convincingly that Greek does not grammaticalize temporal reference in the Aorist, even in the Indicative".⁸⁸³ Moving then to the perfect, Porter says that it "reveals the same situation".⁸⁸⁴ Accordingly, Fanning is at least largely on target when he says that "Porter's basic argument" against the double grammaticalization of time and aspect in the indicative "is as follows: examples of the present or aorist or perfect can be found which refer to past, present, or future or to omnitemporal events; therefore these forms cannot be said to grammaticalize time."⁸⁸⁵

If the Greek verbal form does not grammaticalize temporal reference, then whence would come an indication of time on Porter's view? His answer is deixis. He says, "In this sense *aspect* is non-deictic, whereas temporal reference is deictic ..., since verbal aspect may and essentially does function apart from temporal specification."⁸⁸⁶ and he then gives Lyons' definition of deixis without dissent. Lyons says that

"By deixis is meant the location and identification of persons, objects, events, processes and activities being talked about, or referred to, in relation to the spatiotemporal context created and sustained by the act of utterance and the participation in it, typically, of a single speaker and at least one addressee".⁸⁸⁷

This is a verbose definition, but it does seem to assume or require much information about the situation where a verb form is used other than the verb form itself; deixis includes

883. Ibid., pp. 78-79.

884. Ibid., p. 79.

885. Fanning, Buist M., *Approaches to Verbal Aspect in NT Greek*, p. 58.

886. Cf. Porter, Stanley E., *Verbal Aspect in NT Greek*, p. 99, but see all of pp. 98-102.

887. Lyons, J. (1977). *Semantics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 637.

words that are not the verb but that are found in a sentence where the verb is used.⁸⁸⁸ Not only does deixis include words in a sentence other than the verb, but it requires or includes information about the language user's and the text's location, at the time of writing or speaking, in society, history, and space. Porter's section treating different kinds of deixis seems to give some support to this point.⁸⁸⁹

1. Porter's Rationale for Rejecting the View of Fanning and Ancient and Modern Greek Grammarians

It is evident from the foregoing that Porter and Fanning are interpreting linguistic data in two different ways. Whereas Porter's verbal aspect theory is an additive approach in which the verbal form gains a temporal reference from the context in which it is located (context adds temporal reference, hence "additive"), Fanning appears to raise the idea of a subtractive approach (context subtracts the temporal reference most commonly associated with the verbal form, hence "subtractive"), or at least one in which a verbal form's temporal reference is different from one use to another. Fanning has the following.

Porter is ready to acknowledge that many or most aorist indicatives can be found in contexts narrating past events and many or most present indicatives are used in instances describing events going on in the present.[Footnote 3: So the practical impact of his view is minimal, despite his broader claims.] But such temporal indications come, he argues, from deictic markers used along with the verbs or by standard association with certain contexts. But the same argument can be made more easily for the opposite point: the broadly evidenced time values do attach

888. Cf. Porter's reference to linguistic indicators on p. 101 of Porter, Stanley E., *Verbal Aspect in NT Greek*.

889. Ibid., pp. 98-107.

directly to the indicative tenses, and occasional exceptions can be explained by other influences. I think he has missed the pattern evidenced by the vast body of usage in New Testament Greek in favor of a few anomalous instances. I understand Porter's argument that the typical or most frequent occurrence may not go to the heart of what the form expresses, but I believe he has been misled by trying to formulate a theory which brooks absolutely no exceptions.⁸⁹⁰

Fanning does think that "the linguistic evidence is overwhelming that in the indicative forms the tenses carry a double sense of time and aspect together"⁸⁹¹, but the quote above has him envisioning the sense of time being lost or changed due to other factor(s). He says of Porter's sort of analysis that it "is too simplistic", and asks if there is

any thing going on in these examples which causes departures from otherwise consistent patterns of temporal meaning? While they cannot be discussed in detail here, I argue that his examples are exceptional and that hard cases make bad law. A theory of Greek present and aorist which centers its evidence on things like historical presents, gnomic aorists and dramatic aorists has the wrong end of the stick.⁸⁹²

Fanning allows that temporal reference is absent or changed in some of Porter's examples, but he contends that it would be easier to argue that the exceptional cases are cases where the verbal form's double sense of time and aspect is lost or changed rather than argue that in the great majority of cases the verbal form gains its temporal reference from context.

Porter finds such reasoning unpersuasive mainly because he is attempting to elucidate the semantics of the Greek verbal form.⁸⁹³ For such an attempt, the claim that "the best

890. Fanning, Buist M., *Approaches to Verbal Aspect in NT Greek*, pp. 58-59.

891. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

892. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

893. Though the present author is convinced that such 'semantics' as defined by Porter is a fiction, it would be cumbersome to always notice this; if this section refers to such 'semantics' without qualification, one may keep in mind that the present author thinks that there is no such thing in fact.

understanding or approximation of the semantic range of a grammatical category is its majority usage (extensional meaning)"⁸⁹⁴ is unpersuasive. He says that

This argument is flawed for several reasons. (1) Because it artificially limits its explanatory power, this explanation is incapable of adequately describing any grammatical category fully and thus fails to account for actual counter-examples, especially those that do not fall within the statistical probability (see Louw, "Waarde," 25). (2) It gives undue weight to that which occurs often instead of that which can and does occur, even if in small numbers. (3) It fails to recognize that there is no necessary correlation between a grammatical category's semantics and the number of times it is used. If an adequate semantic category is to be defined, sufficient attention must be paid to all potential uses, including those which are infrequent; to characterize them as odd or deviant is to place greater stress on primary usage than is warranted. The most convincing and adequate grammatical explanation must encompass the widest range of uses under a single explanatory head (intensional meaning), relegating the fewest number to the category of those beyond comprehension. (4) This approach has been seduced by tense terminology. As mentioned above, it is often tempting to see the typical function that motivates the form name as *the* function, i.e. to treat a short label as far more informative and exhaustive than it really is. A more adequate explanation recognizes at least a functional difference between semantics at the level of code and pragmatics at the level of text (Gregory/Carroll, *Language*, 75-85; see my chapt. 3). This work attempts to explain the Greek verbal network at the level of code (the speakers' shared meaning-system encoded in grammatical, syntactical and lexical items), though it must be remembered that instances of language are always instances of pragmatic usage. The connection between these two is made through the concept of verbal implicature, defined as "something that can be inferred from the use of a certain linguistic category or type of expression, although it cannot be regarded as belonging to its proper meaning" (Dahl, *Tense*, 11).⁸⁹⁵

It is clear from this quote that Porter thinks that his project of defining the semantics of the Greek verbal form renders void or irrelevant Fanning's appeal to majority usage. If one must give sufficient attention to "all potential uses", then the presence of counter-examples would

894. Porter, Stanley E., *Verbal Aspect in NT Greek*, pp. 102-103.

895. Ibid., pp. 102-103.

mean that Fanning's subtractive approach does not succeed as a description of the Greek verbal form's semantics, even if it is of some use in describing the usage of Greek verbal forms in practice. If one judges by Fanning's own admission, there are cases of actual usage in which the temporal reference is absent or changed, and if semantics is defined as that which encompasses all usages, then Fanning's admission would disqualify his subtractive approach from providing a successful description of the semantics of the Greek verbal form.

Although Porter indicates above that an adequate semantic category must pay sufficient attention to all potential uses, it is clear from his work that "sufficient attention" means that explaining all potential uses is a *sine qua non* of an adequate semantic explanation for Greek indicative verbs. When Porter indicates in the above quote that a traditional view of Greek indicative verbs "fails to recognize that there is no necessary correlation between a grammatical category's semantics and the number of times it is used", it is important to recognize that for him, semantics deals with what is universally true. In this respect, consider Porter's own words.

Two factors must be distinguished here. The first is a unifying semantic category (or essential or basic-typological meaning at the level of code) of tense usage and the second is a pragmatic category (or secondary meaning at the level of text) (Dahl, *Tense*, 9-11). I am primarily concerned with defining the essential semantic component(s) of tense usage in Greek, i.e. use of the tense forms at the level of code or network which allows various pragmatic manifestations at the level of text. ... A helpful category here is implicature, by which is meant "the distinction between the meaning of a linguistic item, in terms of its conventionalized semantic representation, and the implicatures that can be drawn from the use of a linguistic item in a particular context" (Comrie, *Tense*, 23, cf. 18-26; Lyons, *Semantics*, 592-96. ...) ⁸⁹⁶

896. Ibid., pp. 82-83.

Notice that Porter speaks of "essential semantic component(s)", of "unifying semantic category (or essential or basic-typological meaning at the level of code)", and of differentiating the "level of definition and application". Such language is typical of Porter. Further on, he says of two authors, Carson and Smith, that they

fail to make explicit a crucial distinction between semantics and pragmatics. ... there is only a single Aorist form, ...it is best seen as delimiting a specific essential semantic quality. Smith ... is misleading to deny that the Aorist has some essential semantic quality, and to forbid any further descriptive categories which may be used to describe the function of the Aorist in various pragmatic contexts. ... a distinction between the meaning of an entire proposition in context and the individual semantic value of its component parts must be made.⁸⁹⁷

Porter's two references here to "essential semantic quality" and his reference in the earlier quote to a "unifying semantic category (or essential or basic-typological meaning at the level of code)" confirm that Porter thinks of semantics as dealing with what is universally true. It is even more clear when he says that "Implicatures can be cancelled, whereas the essential meaning cannot."⁸⁹⁸ The presence of counter examples would thus be fatal to a semantic theory of the Greek verb. Since Fanning's subtractive approach admits examples where temporal reference is absent or changed, Porter would contend that Fanning's subtractive approach is deficient as a theory of the semantics of the Greek verbal form.

By the same reasoning, the view of prior grammarians would also be deficient if intended to explain semantics of Greek indicative verbs. It is this reasoning that explains the somewhat

897. Ibid., p. 184.

898. Ibid., p. 104.

surprising fact that Porter even criticizes ancient Greek grammarians for their treatment of the Greek verbal form.⁸⁹⁹ Of Dionysius, he says that, "Dionysius's scheme is clearly temporally oriented"⁹⁰⁰. Of Stoic grammarians, he says that

Most obviously, the Stoics have failed to develop a complete system that elucidates all the verbal forms and functions ..., since they are bound within a temporal framework similar to Dionysius's. ... And their categories make no reference to past-referring Presents or Perfects, present-referring Imperfects and Pluperfects, as well as non-Indicative usage.⁹⁰¹

Elsewhere, Porter says of Stoic grammarians,

Although the Stoic grammarians included analysis of kind of action, most of the hellenistic grammarians, while recognizing the importance of morphologically-based verbal categories, emphasized a primarily time-based framework ..., which failed significantly in its treatment of the Aorist, Present and Future tenses.⁹⁰²

2. Justifying Porter's Semantic Project with Systemic Linguistics

Granted Porter's insistence that an adequate semantic category must have a meaning that is universally true, it would seem clear that Porter's verbal aspect theory is preferable to the views of Fanning and ancient Greek grammarians. But the insistence that a particular feature of language, in this case Greek indicative verbal forms, must have an essential and invariant meaning needs some justification. Such justification is needed at least for two reasons. The first

899. There is not room for a significant exposition of the views of ancient Greek grammarians. Porter has already given an exposition and discussion of their views; his treatment may be consulted for more information than is provided here. Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 18-22.

900. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

901. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

902. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

is that other features of language do not themselves have invariant and essential meanings. Silva in his evaluation of Porter and Fanning says that he wonders whether "the desire to come up with a clear cut, comprehensive definition of aspect" is "misguided" and in light of the "the fluidity of language" thinks such a goal "unrealistic".⁹⁰³ Silva says that for Porter, "the problem comes to expression by his unwillingness to admit exceptions: proposal after proposal is rejected on the grounds that it does not explain every instance",⁹⁰⁴ while for Fanning, Silva says that he "often speaks about the need to identify an 'invariant' meaning for the various aspects."⁹⁰⁵ This Silva likens to past failures at understanding other features of language. Of the issue of vocabulary, Silva says that "the desire to tie the meaning of individual words to one 'basic' idea has rightly been abandoned by most scholars" and of syntax, he says that "the attempt to identify the one unifying meaning of, say, the genitive case misled a previous generation of grammarians (notably A. T. Robertson) to describe Greek on the basis of Sanskrit."⁹⁰⁶ Silva then follows with the question, "If we recognize that the semantic information conveyed by the cases can be strikingly diverse, can we expect to come up with a definition of verbal aspect that is invariant or unexceptionable?"⁹⁰⁷ Silva's question is legitimate. If other features of language do not have an essential and invariant meaning, why would one think that verbal forms do?

903. Silva, Moisés. (1993). "A Response to Fanning and Porter on Verbal Aspect". In Carson, Don A. & Stanley E. Porter (Eds.), *Biblical Greek Language and Linguistics: Open Questions in Current Research*. Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 80 (pp. 74-83). Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press. , pp. 78-79.

904. Ibid., pp. 78-79.

905. Ibid., p. 79.

906. Ibid., p. 79.

907. Quotes from Ibid., pp. 78-79.

Though this question might seem to have some force initially, Porter might think that he can distinguish his view of Greek indicative verbs from other features of language by the use of systemic linguistics. Porter might reply to Silva that it is this very thing that sets his verbal aspect theory apart and renders it immune to the claim that Greek indicative verbal forms are similar to Greek vocabulary and Greek cases in their arbitrariness and their mutability. Porter says that

When interpreting an author's subjective selection of a particular verb tense, interpretation is objective in the sense that the form the author utilizes is the grammatical realization of a specific set of semantic features selected from the possible meaning choices in the system network (cf. realization statement).⁹⁰⁸

Shortly thereafter, Porter defines verbal aspect as "a synthetic category (realized in the forms of verbs) used of meaningful oppositions in a network of tense systems to grammaticalize the author's reasoned subjective choice of a conception of a process."⁹⁰⁹ Porter here refers to "possible meaning choices in the system network" and "meaningful oppositions in a network of tense systems". It appears that it is the "oppositions" in his system network that, Porter thinks, allow him to separate choices of verb forms from other features of language that do not have invariant meanings. If one could construct a system network for nouns, it would need to include far more items than Porter's network, and it would not convince many that people actually use such a system in naming objects in the world. The assignment of a name to an object is not because that name, and only that name, captures the essence of that object (if objects have essences). The situation may not be so bad for Greek cases, but it is still worse than the situation

908. Porter, Stanley E., *Verbal Aspect in NT Greek*, pp. 87-88.

909. Ibid., 88.

for Greek indicative verbs. But unlike nouns and Greek cases, predication is quite limited in its features. A verb is either assertive or non-assertive. That is mood, or what Porter calls attitude. A verb is either finite or not. Porter's semantic network incorporates binary choices such as these; his network includes consideration of aspect, finiteness, remoteness, and attitude.⁹¹⁰

The semantic binary oppositions of such factors set verbs apart from other features of language. Porter goes further, though, and indicates that Greek verbal forms correspond well with the binary oppositions of his semantic network, a network which lacks temporal reference. He thinks that the binary oppositions in his network line up with formal categories in hellenistic Greek.

This network of verbal systems accounts for all formal choices of individual verb forms found in hellenistic Greek. If the co-selection feature of [+expectation] with [+contingency] or [+stative] is included, the network should be complete for classical Greek as well.⁹¹¹

Such correspondence between Porter's semantic possibilities and formal realizations is considered by Porter to be a virtue of his theory, and its supposed absence a problem for the traditional view of the Greek indicative verb.

The scheme also clears away several confusing factors often introduced in descriptions of the Greek language (e.g. how disparate temporal functions can be implicated from the same form), by labelling clearly the exact semantic relationships among the features, and hence the semantic features of the formal realizations. The distinction between semantics and pragmatics is thus vindicated, since the Greek code, or what the individual forms mean, stands behind the range of applications to which a form may be put by the individual speaker, including various temporal references.⁹¹²

910. Ibid., p. 109.

911. Ibid., p. 96.

912. Ibid., p. 97.

Notice Porter's critique here that his scheme lacks what he deems a confusing factor in the views of others. The correspondence between his network of semantic possibilities and Greek verbal forms allows Porter, he thinks, to claim that his analysis of the Greek verb can avoid the variability to which Silva points, and also to claim that his network of semantic possibilities is set apart from the view that Fanning and others would have. He thinks that in their view of the Greek verb, different temporal references are obtained from the same form. But if difference in meaning depends on distinction in form, how would one draw from the same verbal form two different temporal references? Porter does not think that there is an adequate answer, whereas the putatively perfect match between the possibilities in his semantic network with Koine Greek verbal forms does allow his theory to avoid saying that different temporal references are taken from the same form. Accordingly, Porter might contend that the problem of variability in meaning to which Silva pointed need not necessarily negatively affect his theory, though it would affect theories of Fanning and others.

The perfect alignment of Porter's semantic network with Koine Greek verbal forms and the failure of other theories of the Greek verb to avoid attributing different meanings to the same form is a foundational element for Porter's claim that a Greek verbal form has an "essential semantic quality" or a "unifying semantic category (or essential or basic-typological meaning at the level of code)". Such a claim can not appropriately be made if there are other viable competing theories of the semantics of Greek indicative verbs, but Porter has contended that other theories about the Greek verb that have been put forth are inadequate. His theory is thought

to be the only viable explanation of the Greek verb. Accordingly, Porter speaks of a shared-meaning system. He says that

Code refers to the shared meaning-system encoded in grammatical, syntactical and lexical items, such that the utterances speakers produce, despite individual variations, are 'describable in terms of a particular system of [linguistic] rules and relations' (Lyons, *Introduction*, 52, ...) ⁹¹³

In another place he says that "the relation of semantics to pragmatics, or the code shared by Greek users and their resultant texts, is best formulated in terms of implicature, which accounts for patterns of tense-form usage." ⁹¹⁴ Such reference to a shared code or a shared meaning-system correlates with Porter's view that Greek verbal forms have an invariant meaning. If there were different and viable semantic networks that could underlie Greek authors' choice of verbal forms, then one could not automatically and appropriately assume that two writers do in fact have a shared code or shared meaning-system for some Greek verbal form(s), nor that the verbal form of one writer meant the same to that writer as the same verbal form used by another writer. Porter's language about a shared-meaning system, a shared code, an essential semantic quality, essential semantic component(s), or unifying semantic category thus crucially depends on his theory's matching of semantic network possibilities with Greek verbal forms to be the only viable theory.

In the knowledge of this author, there has been no challenge to the core claims of Porter's verbal aspect theory in this respect since his theory was first put forth. In what follows, it will be argued that there is a semantic network that aligns a network of semantic possibilities with Greek

913. Ibid., p. 15.

914. Ibid., p. 108.

verbal forms just as well as Porter's theory, but that includes temporal reference as part of the semantic network that Greek verbal forms realize. It thus would not follow that there is only one viable semantic network that Greek users could use. In regard to the question whether Greek verbal forms grammaticalize temporal reference, Porter would therefore not be justified in claiming that there is an essential meaning to the Greek verbal form or that Greek users have his shared meaning-system or shared code. His semantic network would be only one of at least two viable semantic networks, and that is all that is needed for Silva's concern about variability in meaning to be relevant. As long as Greek users had two viable semantic networks to map onto Greek verbal forms, then it would not be justifiable to assume *a priori* that two particular Greek users, to say nothing about all other Greek users, actually did choose the one semantic network over the other. Further, the existence of two viable semantic networks would force one to admit that Porter's interpreting the language of some Greek user through one semantic network rather than another is a subjective choice that the linguistic data does not require him to make.

3. A New Challenge to Stanley Porter's Verbal Aspect Theory

If semantics as defined by Porter were to exist, this chapter will put forth an alternative proposal for the semantics of the Greek indicative verb. Before considering this new proposal, some clarifying comments about's Porter's project need to be made. This clarification will be important in considering a possible objection to the new proposal. Recall from earlier that Porter is "primarily concerned with defining the essential semantic component(s) of tense usage in

Greek, i.e. use of the tense forms at the level of code or network which allows various pragmatic manifestations at the level of text."⁹¹⁵ Porter attempts to distinguish between "semantics (the meaning of a form) and pragmatics (what the form means in context)", which he says "is a useful one to differentiate between the level of definition and application. In fact," he says, "I would go further and contend that application cannot occur until the semantic framework is firmly in place."⁹¹⁶ When he says that pragmatics is what the form means in context, he has a broad concept of what "context" is. He says that "it must be remembered that instances of language are always instances of pragmatic usage."⁹¹⁷ To claim that instances of language are always instances of pragmatic usage is to claim that there are no actual cases where Porter's "semantics" occurs on its own. If there is such a thing as "semantics", it always occurs with "pragmatics". This is important. Porter acknowledges the contentious nature of his semantics/pragmatics distinction when he says that

Although many systemic linguists do not make this distinction, and it is a point of contention among a number of linguists outside this model (e.g. Lyons, *Semantics*), it is useful to distinguish semantics from pragmatics, or "what the forms mean" (semantics) from "what speakers mean when they use the forms" (pragmatics)[Footnote 17: Within systemic linguistics, the semantics/pragmatics distinction is often not made, though Gotteri ('When,' 9) finds it a "useful fiction." ...]⁹¹⁸

915. Ibid., p. 82.

916. Porter, Stanley E. (1993). "In Defence of Verbal Aspect". In Carson, Don A. & Stanley E. Porter (Eds.), *Biblical Greek Language and Linguistics: Open Questions in Current Research*. Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 80 (pp. 26-45). Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press. , pp. 43-44, note 1.

917. Porter, Stanley E., *Verbal Aspect in NT Greek*, p. 103.

918. Ibid., p. 15.

This quote is instructive. Notice that Porter defines pragmatics as involving "what speakers mean when they use the forms" and that this is set in contrast to semantics, which he defines as "the meaning of a form" or "what the forms mean". If pragmatics is what is meant by speakers, and if semantics deals with something else that has meaning, then Porter is saying that there can be meaning apart from actual language users using a language. This interpretation of Porter is confirmed elsewhere. Porter acknowledges that his representation of a network of semantic features does not require that the language user "actually makes a conscious choice at every juncture, since use of a language by a native speaker lies beyond the scope of what this model strives to delineate."⁹¹⁹ Here Porter indicates that his project is not actually concerned with actual use of language by language users.

That Porter's project is not concerned with how language users actually thought of their use of language finds further confirmation in what he says about mentalism. Porter says, "The range of usage of the imperfective and perfective aspects is more difficult to explain, although an adequate model which avoids strict mentalism can be constructed."⁹²⁰ Note here his denigration of strict mentalism. Porter says in another place,

Not only does this formulation seem to be derived from a theory of *Aktionsart* in trying to describe the objective status of the process itself, something McKay is sensitive to and elsewhere rejects (1237 n. 1), but it seems to be formulated around a mentalist view, i.e. trying to reconstruct the psychological conception of time within speaker's minds.⁹²¹

919. Ibid., p. 9.

920. Ibid., p. 105.

921. Ibid., p. 104.

This latter quote is remarkable. It seems that "trying to reconstruct the psychological conception of time within speaker's minds" is considered to be a vice, and this implies that Porter thinks that a better linguistic theory is one that avoids such an attempt. It was not an accident that Porter, who was well versed in linguistic literature, used the phrase 'strict mentalism' or 'mentalist view'. Note how Lyons defines mentalism in his work on semantics, a work to which Porter refers often. Lyons says the following:

the fact that there might be wide agreement among a number of persons reporting upon the results of their introspection is not a sufficient guarantee that these reports are trustworthy. Unless this introspective evidence concurs with evidence derived from an examination of their actions, the behaviourist argues, it is useless (or at least potentially misleading); and, if it does concur with the more reliable, publicly accessible evidence of observation, it is superfluous. Psychology, then, should restrict itself to what is directly observable; it should be concerned with overt behaviour, not with unobservable mental states and processes. The rejection of mentalism* (in this sense of the term) lies at the very heart of the movement known as behaviourism*, founded by J. B. Watson.⁹²²

On Lyons' construal, mentalism includes an author's intentionality and processes that occur within the mind of a language user. In one sense, intentionality and mental processes are not publicly accessible but are features of mind that are not directly observable (even if indirectly one may outward physical manifestations that occur as a result of intentionality or mental processes). Elsewhere, Porter again returns to the issue of mentalism and notes his aversion to grappling with its difficulties. In his section on systemic display of a Greek verbal network, he says that

922. Lyons, J., *Semantics*, pp. 120-121.

Componential analysis provides a succinct and useful means of noting the semantic features accumulated in a trip through the systems within the network from broader to more delicate distinctions. To avoid the major difficulties over mentalism and hypotheses about where meaning resides (universalism), no claim is made for the components apart from their use as relational terms within a given network to summarize conveniently in notational form the relations among members (see Lyons, *Structural Semantics*, 80).⁹²³

What is important here is that Porter has expressly eschewed taking into account internal mental processes of language users and has confined his analysis to the study of the linguistic data itself. A new proposal for the semantics of Greek verbal forms cannot therefore be discredited vis-à-vis Porter's theory by claiming that, by focusing solely on the linguistic data, it has failed to consider internal mental processes of language users.

With this said, we now turn to a new proposal for the semantics of the Greek verb (if semantics are not actually a fiction; see below). It is not the case that there is only one possible semantic network, a fact that even Porter in some way supports, even if inadvertently. Porter does not say that it is not possible to encode temporal reference in a verb form. It would be absurd to say so. His argument, rather, is that Greek users in practice did not do so. But if it is possible that someone encodes temporal reference in a grammatical form, then the semantic network of binary oppositions that would underlie that person's use of verbal forms would be a semantic network that has a factor that is absent in Porter's semantic network. It would have the semantic factor of temporal reference. Porter's semantic network is consequently not the only possible semantic network that can underlie a person's choice of verb forms. One cannot

923. Porter, Stanley E., *Verbal Aspect in NT Greek*, p. 93.

therefore assume *a priori* that all Greek users' choices of verbal forms were expressions of only the semantic possibilities offered in Porter's semantic network, much less that this was the case for just one Greek user. If it is to be done, it must be done *a posteriori*; there is no ground for saying *a priori* that language users have a shared meaning system in virtue of having semantic networks that are exactly the same.

Porter might respond by claiming that, though this might be a possibility before examination of evidence, it is not what happened in practice, and that the linguistic data, which includes such examples as aorists supposedly not referring to the past, contradict it. In contrast, Porter might think, his theory still perfectly fits a semantic network on top of Greek verbal forms such that each form has a determinate meaning. There is, according to Porter, a one-to-one alignment between possibilities in his semantic network and verbal forms, which would mean for him that in his system there is no ambiguity about what a verbal form means. But for traditional grammarians, he thinks this one-to-one alignment is absent, something which, he says, results in confusion about "how disparate temporal functions can be implicated from the same form".⁹²⁴ If some Greeks thought of their choice of verbal forms as encoding temporal reference, it is also obvious, according to him, that something other than temporal reference was being encoded by the same form in some exceptional cases, because the indicative form was being used of a time with which it was not most often associated (e.g., an aorist not referring to the past).

924. Ibid., p. 97.

Porter uses this fact to contend that temporal reference is not encoded by the Greek indicative verbal form, but basing *this* contention on *this* fact depends on the assumption that in no sentence is temporal reference encoded by both a verbal form on the one hand, and by the verbal form's deixis on the other. That is, Porter's argument depends on the assertion that temporal reference is encoded either by the verbal form (a view of traditional grammarians), or by the verbal form's deixis (the view of Porter), but not by both. This appears to be the operative assumption in his words that the traditional view of Greek grammar creates confusion about "how disparate temporal functions can be be implicated from the same form" and in his emphasis that the Aorist form "is best seen as delimiting a specific essential semantic quality".⁹²⁵ Porter seems to assume here, and without argument, that people who think that a verbal form encodes temporal reference are bound to the view that it is the verbal form, and only that form, that is to explain temporal reference. If the verbal form does not always grammaticalize time, he says, then the alternative is that the temporal reference must come from deixis.

This is a false dichotomy. Porter is assuming that temporal reference either comes from verbal form, or from deixis, but not both. Since, he says, it does not always come from verbal form, it must come from deixis. Porter wins by process of elimination, he thinks, against Fanning and against other traditional grammarians. But why think this? Indeed, it seems a peculiar dichotomy for Porter. He does not make the assumption because he thinks a verbal form is incapable of grammaticalizing temporal reference. It would be absurd to say so, and he clearly thinks that it is possible that a verbal form grammaticalizes temporal reference. His argument,

925. Ibid., p. 184.

rather, is that Greek users in practice did not do so. Yet at the same time, the correlate of his central claim about Greek indicative verbal forms is that temporal reference comes from deixis, from contextual factors and linguistic data other than the verbal form. If Porter admits that it is possible that deixis encodes temporal reference, and possible that a verbal form does so, why not think that in the same sentence, both a verbal form and the verbal form's deixis are encoding temporal reference, but that in exceptional cases, the two temporal referents do not match up?

Porter's entire argument depends on those situations in which there would be this conflict of temporal reference, on situations where Greek clauses refer to a time different from that time that is usually associated with the main verb of the clause. The clause has an aorist indicative verbal form, but the clause is not referring to the past. A clause has a present indicative verbal form, but it is referring to the past. In every one of these cases, Porter is able to know that the temporal reference of the verb is not that with which the verb is most often associated because of the context in which the verb occurs.

Porter concludes from this that the verbal form does not encode temporal reference, but this would be too hasty a conclusion. If both deixis and verbal form can encode temporal reference, then what one does with these exceptional cases is itself a subjective choice, at least provided that one does not consider testimony of ancient Greek grammarians. Porter chooses to affirm that the Greek verbal form does not encode temporal reference, and so his method of dealing with this data is to deny that there is a conflict of temporal reference. But that is not the only one way of interpreting these exceptional cases. Another is to affirm that there is a conflict of temporal reference, and that it is our informed judgment as readers that results in us choosing

one temporal reference over the other. The very fact that there are these two different ways of looking at these exceptional cases means that Porter's analysis of them is not objective. It is subjective, and so, as a result, is his verbal aspect theory. Silva's concern about variability in meaning returns.

The proposal here is that the semantics of a verbal form and the temporal reference of the form's deixis contradict each other, and that it is the reader who makes an informed judgment to choose one temporal reference over another. The past temporal reference of the aorist indicative is overlooked because the reader chooses to interpret the text in accord with the present temporal reference of the verb's context. Or the present temporal reference of the present indicative is disregarded in favor of the past temporal reference of the context in which the present indicative is found.

4. The Significance of This Proposal for the Semantics of the Greek Verb

This proposal is able to avoid previous criticisms that Porter has leveled against Fanning and others. One may note that Porter's entire argument against Greek indicative verbs encoding temporal reference rests on situations in which there would be a conflict of temporal reference, on situations where Greek clauses refer to a time different from that time that is mainly associated with a verb in the clause. The clause has an aorist indicative verbal form, but the clause is not referring to the past. A clause has a present indicative verbal form, but it is referring to the past. In every one of these cases, Porter is able to know that the temporal reference of the

verb is not that with which the verb is usually associated because of the context in which the verb occurs.

Porter concludes from this that the Greek verbal form does not encode temporal reference, and Fanning concedes that the Greek verb loses its temporal reference. It is at this point where Porter criticizes Fanning. If semantics deals with an essential meaning of the verbal form that is universally true, then the mere concession of Fanning that the verb loses its temporal reference in some cases is a concession that the semantics of Greek indicative verbs as defined by Porter does not include temporal reference.

The same criticism cannot be set against the proposal articulated here. There is a significant difference between an objection to Porter in which an indicative verb loses its sense of time, and an objection claiming that the verbal form continues to have its temporal reference and that this temporal reference conflicts with the temporal reference of the verbal form's deixis. Rather than saying with Fanning that the Greek verb loses its temporal reference, one may continue to insist that the Greek verbal form is encoding temporal reference even in sentences that refer to a different time than the time with which that Greek verb is normally associated. By refusing to make Fanning's concession, this proposal can still qualify as a proposal about the semantics of the Greek indicative verbal forms, and thus this proposal avoids Porter's charge about "how disparate temporal functions can be implicated from the same form".⁹²⁶ In this alternative semantic proposal, Greek indicative verbs always maintain their temporal reference,

926. Ibid., p. 97.

even in situations when the temporal reference of the verb's deixis conflicts with the temporal reference of the verbal form itself. This proposal about the temporal encoding of the verbal form can accordingly affirm Porter's definition of semantics and yet deny that his claim about Greek indicative verbs necessarily follows from the data.

This means that there are two possible systems of meaning that a Greek user can use, and accordingly demonstrates that one cannot assume *a priori* that Greek users have the shared-meaning system that is necessary for Porter to confidently declare that Greek indicative verbal forms encode aspect and not also temporal reference. The existence of these two systems poses a question whether the selection of one or the other is arbitrary. It is not, because the evidence of ancient Greek grammarians is decisively in favor of the alternative semantic proposal offered here in which Greek indicative verbs do encode temporal reference.

This proposal would work even for the most exceptional cases of Greek verbs. There are certain, stereotyped perfect indicative verbs that at least nearly always are the basic equivalent in usage to a present indicative. Fanning refers to a limited set of verbs that he thinks "acquired a *present stative* meaning with no implication of a prior action which produced the state ... Of the verbs which are commonly thought to possess this sense, three occur frequently in the NT: οἶδα, ἔστηκα, and πέποιθα/πέπεισμαι."⁹²⁷ Although Fanning also raises the idea of perfects being with an aoristic sense,⁹²⁸ these verbs used in the sense of a present stative will be sufficient for

927. Fanning, "Verbal Aspect in NT Greek", p. 299.

928. Cf. Ibid., pp. 299-303. On pp. 299-300, Fanning has, A fourth category of the perfect, over which there is a dispute, is the use of the tense as an equivalent to the aorist: that is, as a simple narrative tense to report past occurrences without attention paid to their present consequences. It is certain that the perfect suffered

illustrating the proposal offered here. As a simplification, suppose that all these particular verbs (or clauses in which they are found) always have a present temporal reference and that there are no cases where one would find a double temporal reference. On this assumption, rather than saying with Fanning that these verbs lack a double temporal reference in all of their uses, one may take a cue from Porter and simply affirm that the verbal form's deixis would always indicate a present temporal reference, and the reader adjudicates the disagreement by disregarding the past temporal reference that the perfect verbal forms continue to have in these instances and by favoring the temporal reference of the verbal form's deixis. Under this interpretation of the data, the semantics of the perfect indicative would continue to have a double temporal reference. It would just be that the reader always disregards the double temporal reference of the perfect indicative for these particular verbs in making sense of temporal reference of clauses in which the verbs are found.

5. Eight Objections

Some possible objections can be brought against the above proposal for Greek indicative verbal forms. This section will seek to address them. Eight objections may be considered: a language error objection, an absurdity objection, a *reductio ad absurdum* argument, an argument

this confusion with the aorist in late Koine and Byzantine Greek, and the path towards this is made easier by the fact that the true perfect shares with the aorist the feature of denoting a past occurrence in summary. But the question remains whether this aoristic use of the perfect appears in the NT.

from unfalsifiability, an argument from explanatory scope, an argument from the principle of parsimony (or an Ockham's razor argument), and an argument from irrelevance.

(a) Language Error

The activity of choosing between different encoded meanings is common enough in cases of language error. A text might have a plural noun but an adjective in the singular, or a masculine noun with a feminine adjective. In either case, the reader does not conclude that something is both singular and plural at the same time or that it is grammatically bigender. The reader looks for the choice between singular and plural, or between masculine and feminine, that makes the best sense. This is, though, an activity that is done by the reader, and it is the very same activity that is being proposed in regard to choosing between the temporal reference of an indicative verb and the temporal reference of the verb's deixis.

If one were to apply Porter's reasoning to these cases, the proposal would be that, since there is a feminine adjective modifying a masculine noun (or a singular adjective modifying a plural noun), a feminine ending does not encode feminine grammatical gender (or a singular ending does not encode singular number). Though this is the reasoning that Porter uses in regard to verbs, it would obviously not be a convincing analysis of these features of language. We would rightly not conclude that a feminine adjective modifying a masculine noun means that a feminine ending does not encode feminine grammatical gender. We would also rightly not conclude that a singular adjective modifying a plural noun means that a singular adjective does not encode singular number. In the same way, so too we should not conclude that an indicative

form is not encoding a temporal reference because that temporal reference is different than that of the verbal form's deixis and of the clause in which the verbal form is found.

Porter might respond that a feminine adjective accompanying a masculine noun (or a singular adjective modifying a plural noun) is an "error" of language and that a proper description of a language is to be constructed on its correct uses and not on its errors. In contrast, cases of a Greek indicative form being used for a time other than the time with which that Greek verbal form is most often associated are clearly intended by users of Greek as a normal and accepted part of the language. Thus, those cases do need to be considered in giving a proper description of Greek indicative verbs.

Some remarks to this possible reply merit attention. First, though one may agree that the mismatched adjectives and nouns are language 'errors' and that the verbal examples are not, Porter needs to provide a theoretical basis for this judgment. Second, on the terms Porter has set out for his project, it is not legitimate to refer to the intentionality of the authors of Greek texts or to what they were thinking when they wrote the verbal examples in order to ground this judgment about the mismatched adjectives and nouns being 'errors' and the verbal examples not being 'errors'. Porter has expressly eschewed an attempt to deal with author's intentionality or their mental states. It would be methodologically inappropriate to critique an alternative proposal by appealing to the very thing that Porter says does not need to be considered. Given this, it would not be justifiable to say that the intentionality of authors or what they were attempting to do makes one thing an error and the other thing a datum to be explained as acceptable usage.

If the intentionality or mental states of authors are excluded, it seems that there are only two other factors left to be made a theoretical basis for differentiating the verbal examples from the case of a feminine adjective modifying a male pronoun (or from the case of a singular adjective modifying a plural noun). One factor would be the frequency of occurrence, and the other would be how we as readers read texts. It might be said that the occurrence of a feminine adjective modifying a masculine noun (or a singular adjective modifying a plural noun) happens much less frequently than the verbal examples where an indicative verb is being used in a clause whose temporal reference is other than that temporal reference with which the verb is most often associated. Two things can be said in response to this. First, it gives no objective method of discerning what is the dividing line between "error" and accepted usage. Such a division would be arbitrary. Second, Porter has expressly asserted that the number of occurrences of some linguistic feature is irrelevant to a proper description of its semantics. If one may quote Porter,

there is no necessary correlation between a grammatical category's semantics and the number of times it is used. If an adequate semantics category is to be defined, sufficient attention must be paid to all potential uses, including those which are infrequent; to characterize them as odd or deviant is to place greater stress on primary usage than is warranted.⁹²⁹

One needs only to substitute "error" for Porter's "odd" or "deviant", and this quote shows that for Porter, the number of occurrences is not to be used in constructing a linguistic item's semantics. This leaves how we as readers actually read Greek texts as the remaining criterion for distinguishing between the disagreements of gender and number and the disagreement of temporal reference. Here, the claim would thus be that, because we as readers think that the

929. Porter, Stanley E., *Verbal Aspect in NT Greek*, p. 103.

disagreeing grammatical gender or disagreeing number are 'errors' and that it is not an "error" when Greek indicative verbs occur in clauses that refer to a time different from the time with which the verb of the clause is most often associated, we can ignore the former in constructing a semantics of a grammatical gender or number, and yet must take into account the latter in constructing a semantics of Greek indicative forms.

This attempt to differentiate Porter's verbal examples from mismatched nouns and adjectives is not objective and gives no principled basis for saying that the one is an error and the other not. It accordingly does not succeed: if mental states and intentionality of authors are to be ignored, and if number of occurrences is irrelevant, then there is no relevant difference between the feminine adjective modifying the masculine noun, the singular adjective modifying the plural noun, and the verbal form's encoded temporal reference disagreeing with the temporal reference of its deixis.

Thus, if Porter is going to call a conflict in the encoding of different values for number or grammatical gender an error, he must also say that we find errors in cases where a clause refers to a time other than that time with which its verb is most often associated. But that would be to prove too much, because we as readers agree that they are not errors, or because, if we were to think them errors and thus not to be considered in a proper description of the language, it would remove the examples on which Porter builds his case that Greek indicative verbs do not grammaticalize temporal reference.

Alternatively, if Porter refuses to say that the disagreements of encoded gender or number are errors, then it also follows that it is not an error when a verbal form encodes one temporal reference and its deixis encodes another. But here Porter would have proved too much again. Porter's reasoning is such that even one example of an aorist indicative referring to the present disqualifies past temporal reference from being part of the "essential" meaning of the aorist indicative and from being included in a semantic proposal about the aorist indicative. If Porter has no theoretical basis for differentiating mismatched nouns and adjectives from such a verbal example, then the same reasoning would require him to conclude that one example of a feminine adjective modifying a masculine nouns means that the feminine adjectival ending does not encode feminine grammatical gender. Similarly, applying Porter's reasoning would lead to the conclusion that a singular adjective modifying a plural noun means that a singular adjectival ending does not encode singular number. But no adequate Greek grammarian would believe these things. Porter would have proved too much.

Further, if Porter says that it is not an "error" to have the verbal form's temporal reference conflict with the temporal reference of its deixis, then the objection from language "error" have disappeared. The result of this is that Porter would have to move from a descriptive statement about how readers read texts to a normative statement about how they should. If it is not an "error" to think of a verbal form encoding a temporal reference different than its deixis, then one person can say that he reads Porter's exceptional cases as if there were a conflict of temporal references. Porter says that he reads these cases as if there were only the one encoded temporal reference of the verbal form's deixis, and Porter uses the descriptive statement about how he

reads these cases in support of his normative statement about how the other person should read them. But without any objective basis to move from a description about his reading to a normative statement about the other person's reading, one looks in vain for adequate justification of this move from description about Porter's reading to prescription for the other person's reading.

In fact, the move would seem to assume the point in question. If the question at issue is how to read Greek indicative verbs, it is methodologically backwards to start with how we already in fact do read them or to assert that because one person reads them one way, others must also do the same. If this is the method to be taken, one would wonder why Porter concludes that someone else should adopt Porter's reading rather than Porter adopt the other person's reading.

Couched in such terms, this would be an argument from how readers read texts. If the argument is to be made on this level, it would be unjustifiable not to consider how native Greek speakers read texts. Porter and most of the rest of us are not native speakers of Koine or classical Greek, but surely the evidence of how ancient Greek grammarians analyzed Greek verb is evidence of how they, as readers, read texts. And here again, we return to them. If one is going to argue about how one should read texts from how we do in fact read texts, then the best evidence is how Greeks themselves read it. But, as ancient Greek grammarians indicated in their analysis, they read Greek indicative verbs as being temporally-based. It would seem that the reading of ancient Greek grammarians should trump our reading if the argument about how to read texts is based merely on how readers actually do read texts. At least one reason for this stems from the fact that we do not have access to the oral medium of ancient Greek speakers. There was no

audio or video recording back then, or to use Porter's words, there is a "skewing of registers (the oral level is completely missing)".⁹³⁰ Ancient Greek grammarians did have access to this register, and thus had more information to use in gauging how people of their time understood oral and written communication.

Another response can be made to this objection. One might suppose that there were not any examples of 'errors' of a feminine adjective modifying a noun or a singular adjective modifying a plural noun, or that Porter could find some objective way to distinguish these 'errors' from his exceptional cases. He might then say that our choosing only one temporal reference for the clause in these exceptional cases shows that in our reading, we do not in fact treat them as having two encoded temporal references. Since we choose the temporal reference of the verbal form's deixis in these cases, it shows that we do not treat the verbal form as encoding temporal reference in our reading of the clause.

At best, this argument would show that we as readers do not treat the verbal form as encoding temporal reference, but even if this were shown, this would negate this chapter's proposal about the semantics of Greek indicative verbal forms. This would be an argument from a description about how we as readers read texts to the normative claim about how we should read texts. In addition to being methodologically untenable, it fails to take cognizance of the fact that semantics as Porter has defined it opens the way to different *loci* of meaning. There is the meaning that a verbal form can have in itself apart from our reading of the text. That is

930. Ibid., p. 4.

semantics, the meaning a verbal form has outside of any actual instance of language use. And then there is the meaning that we as readers derive in our reading of the text. Porter does not demonstrate that these are one and the same. One may even ask if he can do so given his definition of semantics. But if Greek verbal forms have a meaning apart from actual instances of language use, and if we derive temporal reference of a clause in our process of reading, then there seems no necessary reason why the temporal reference that a verbal form has apart from uses of language should be the same as the temporal reference of the clause that we derive in our process of reading.

Given this, the entirety of Porter's argument would reduce to a move from a descriptive statement about how a text is read to the normative claim about how it should be read, which would reduce to a claim that someone should adopt Porter's view because Porter adopts Porter's view. The subject may be approached from a different angle. If someone dissents from Porter's interpretation of Greek verbs, it will not be argumentatively helpful to say that the person should interpret verbs like Porter because the person (so Porter says) interprets verbs like Porter; as long as the argument is being carried out based on how texts are read in practice, then this amounts to winning an argument by denying the contrary evidence of how someone else claims to read a text. Without any objective basis to adopt such a hermeneutic of suspicion, this would only amount to special pleading on Porter's part. It would be biased sociology or auto-biography, or would be an argument from authority. It is not worth any weight.

Provided that verbal forms can have meanings on their own apart from consideration of their authors, then there seems to be no good reason to think that our interpreting a clause as

having one temporal reference requires that the meaning a verbal form can have on its own apart from our activity as readers must be the same. The two different meanings are different and separable. If Porter responds that this is not the case, that it is in fact the meaning we derive in our activity as readers that determines the meanings verbal forms have on their own, then not only would this be a change from his definition of semantics, but it would return us to the unjustified methodology of one reader basing his normative claim about how another reader should read a text based on the descriptive claim about how the one reader reads the text. If that were the case, then it would be appropriate to ask why Porter's reading gets to be the base of the normative claim about reading.

Further, it seems that if the normative claim about how we should read a text is going to be based on the descriptive claim about how one reader reads a text, and if this is going to be used to define an essential meaning of a linguistic item that cannot change, then one must by necessity and by arbitrary definition limit whose descriptive reading is the base for the normative claim. It is quite clear from the scholarly disagreement regarding temporal reference of verbs that different readers have read verbs differently. If a description about the reading of ancient Greek grammarians were to be used as the base for the normative claim about how others should read texts, then we would have indicative verbs that encode temporal reference. It thus depends on whose reading is chosen as the base for the normative claim. Accepting input from multiple readers would mean that the meaning of a verbal form would be changeable and thus not essential and always present, or that the verbal form would have contradictory meanings.

Porter might respond that this proves his point, since between him and ancient Greek grammarians, the encoding of temporal reference is not a common denominator, and thus not part of the essential meaning of a verbal form. But surely this is backwards, and open to abuse as a form of argument. Any reader might claim that he reads a verbal form or something else as not having some meaning, and if the argument is only to proceed on grounds of how we read texts, without any other objective reference point, then that reader's reading has just as much a claim to be included in consideration of a semantics of some linguistic form as does the reading of Porter or ancient Greek grammarians. This would be a path to abolishing meaning of language, not clarifying it. Arguments about how we should understand language that make reference only to how we as readers do make sense of language destroy the very thing they are offered to explain.

(b) Absurdity

Another possible objection needs consideration. It might be claimed that a verbal form and its deixis encoding different temporal references is absurd. Of course it would be absurd, but this is not a valid objection to what is being proposed. First, absurd here does not mean impossible (if semantics as Porter has defined it were not a fiction). It is already acknowledged that deixis can encode temporal reference and that verbal form can do so. The claim of absurdity would rather be that it would be absurd to think that a language user would use contradictory temporal references. Such users are not schizophrenic, choosing to use a verbal form pointing to one period of time and then changing their mind in another part of the sentence. They intend to refer to one period of time with their sentences, and thus would not attempt to refer to one period

of time with a verbal form and another with the rest of the sentence. Here is where it is relevant to remember what Porter's theory is actually doing. He is not attempting to explain how language users actually think of their use of language. He avoids such mentalism and sticks to the linguistic data itself. It is therefore inappropriate to object to a rival theory by appeal to what would or would not be absurd for the language user.

We would consequently be left only with a claim that it would be absurd for us as readers to think that a verbal form encodes one temporal reference and that its deixis encodes another. Such a claim fails to be persuasive. Aside from verbal indicative forms that do have a double temporal reference, it is not being claimed here that we as readers read the clause itself in which the verbal form is found as having two different and conflicting temporal references. At least in some cases, that would be absurd even for a reader. What is being claimed is that different parts within the sentence have different temporal references, and that the reader chooses one temporal reference or the other for the entire sentence. That is not absurd. That we interpret a sentence as having only one temporal referent does not require that its different components all have the same temporal reference, nor that the temporal reference of the entire sentence is the same as the temporal reference of *all* of its constituent parts. One might readily agree that the sentence does have one temporal reference while still maintaining that a particular part of the sentence does not have the same temporal reference as another part. None of this is absurd.

(c) Reductio Ad Absurdum

Though this proposal might seem open to a *reductio ad absurdum* argument, such an argument cannot actually be justified. Given what has been put forth so far, one might propose that the present indicative always has a past temporal reference and that at least nearly always we choose the present temporal reference of the verbal form's deixis over the past temporal reference of the present indicative itself and accordingly interpret a sentence with a present indicative as if the sentence refers to the present. Is this not absurd? It is not easy to see why it would be so if one judges the proposal on Porter's terms. To start, one may notice that on either theory of the semantics of the present indicative form, whether we think that there is a conflict of a past-referring present indicative with a present temporal reference of the verbal forms' deixis, or that there is just a present temporal reference of the verbal form's deixis, the end result is the same. There is no difference in exegesis or understanding of the sentence with the present indicative. The same is true for other verbs, which would impel one to ask whether there is any value at all or any real significance in Porter's proposal about semantics of Greek verbal forms as he has defined semantics. Given that the end result in interpreting the temporal reference of the clause would be the same, the absurdity is not to be found in different interpretations of a sentence of Greek text.

Perhaps one would try to locate the absurdity in saying that no language user would be so schizophrenic as to intend to encode conflicting temporal references in his sentence, with his choice of verbal form encoding one temporal reference and his choice of words in the deixis indicating another. But this is to return us to ground that was covered earlier. Porter has explicitly

eschewed such mentalism and has insisted that the linguistic data be interpreted without recourse to the mental processes or intentions of the language users themselves. This must be so given his definition of semantics. Though this author thinks semantics as defined by Porter is a fiction, Porter has defined his theory as dealing with what linguistics items mean apart from actual uses of a language by a person. To appeal to what would be absurd for a language user to do would be going beyond the very definitional limits of semantics that Porter has set up.

It seems that if there is going to be a successful claim of *reduction ad absurdum* in this proposal that the present indicative encodes past temporal reference, the only remaining place to locate the absurdity is with the reader, and this again brings us to ground already covered. If there is such a thing as meaning apart from actual instances of language usage, and if Porter is proposing a theory of the semantics of the Greek verbal form, there seems nothing absurd in saying that a verbal form and its deixis both encode temporal reference, and that in case of conflict, our informed judgment as readers decides which temporal reference to prefer.

A major point of this appendix is to show that there is another viable model of the semantics of the Greek indicative verbal form that is temporally based. It might seem somewhat inconsistent that Porter so strictly insists on his theory being about what verbal forms mean apart from any instance of language use (if that is possible, though this author thinks it is not), and yet quite willingly applies his theory to actual instances of language use, even going to the point of accusing grammarians actually involved in explaining the meaning of verbal forms in actual usage that they are wrong. Is it valid to use a theory that talks only about a supposed meaning apart from actual usage to correct explanations of meanings of actual usage? Why does Porter

feel free to move from his semantics to make assertions about pragmatics? It seems that the only viable basis Porter would have in defense of this move would be to say that there are no other viable competing accounts of the semantics of Greek indicative verbs. Thus, he might say, his account has to be the account that explains the meaning of actual usage. But this appendix has shown that there are other possible accounts of semantics of Greek verbs, one of which would even have the present indicative always encoding past temporal reference. In the end, these other accounts would make no difference in exegesis, but they would give us successful temporally-based accounts of the semantics of the Greek indicative verb.

Two further points can be made. If it seems odd to propose that the semantics of the Greek verb is such that the 'essential' meaning of the present indicative is past temporal reference, this is because of the nature of semantics as Porter has defined it, something that can have meaning apart from actual uses of the language by person(s). It is that false supposition that permits such a seemingly outlandish proposal to be as viable as Porter's verbal aspect theory.

A second point heads off a potential criticism. Porter might contend that a proposal of the semantics of the Greek verb in which the present indicative encodes past temporal reference is deficient because it does not account for the present indicative being used so often in sentences or clauses that refer to the present. This fails to be a persuasive criticism. The proposal put forth here is about the semantics of the Greek verb, a supposed meaning that the present indicative has apart from actual instances of language use. Porter cannot disprove this proposal by appealing to actual instances of usage, for it may simply be replied that in most cases of the present indicative, the conflict of the past temporal reference of the present indicative with the present

temporal reference of the verbal form's deixis is favored by us as readers. On Porter's account, in every one of the cases, we would conclude that a clause or sentence has a present temporal reference because of the verbal form's deixis. To get from Porter's account to the proposal here, all that one needs to do to achieve a different semantics of the Greek verb is assert that the present indicative always encodes a past temporal reference that just happens to be overridden in every one of the cases where we would conclude from the verbal form's deixis that the clause or sentence does not refer to the past. This, of course, makes Porter's theory about the semantics of the Greek verb largely irrelevant to exegesis and to understanding of actual usages of Greek verbs. There are two different possible accounts of the Greek verb, one of which is temporally based and which cannot be disproven by counter-examples that, Porter thought, worked against a temporally-based analysis of the Greek verb.

This chapter is not seriously proposing that actual language users did think of the Greek present indicative as encoding past temporal reference. It does, though, hold out a proposal about the semantics of the Greek verb (if there is such a thing) that is very much like what ancient and modern Greek grammarians have long thought. The aorist, plurperfect, and imperfect indicatives would encode past temporal reference. The present would encode present temporal reference, and the perfect would encode present and past temporal reference. The future would encode future temporal reference. In short, Greek indicative verbs would be temporally-based. Porter has no way to disprove this claim.

(d) Unfalsifiability

Given the above discussion, another possible objection the proposal of this chapter is that it is unfalsifiable. Granted Porter's claim that deixis encodes temporal reference, there does not seem to be any counter-example that would successfully refute even the claim that the present indicative encodes past temporal reference. This paper has no successful response to such a charge other than to point out that, if this is a deficiency, the same deficiency appears to be true of Porter's semantic proposal and possibly of other possible theories about the semantics of Greek verbs. The problem of unfalsifiability seems characteristic of the proposal that verbal forms can have meaning apart from actual usage of language by language users.

In support of the claim that Porter's verbal aspect theory appears to be unfalsifiable, suppose that there were no actual usages of present indicatives referring to anything other than the present, that there were no aorist indicatives referring to anything other than the past, and so on. Would this prove that Greek indicative verbs are temporally based? No. It would be consistent with that claim, but Porter might simply insist that it is possible that the verbal form's deixis is still the factor that is giving temporal reference, and that the perfect correlation between indicative forms and certain temporal references is not a necessary correlation. It would just happen to have turned out that way, but might have been different (which difference is actually found in Koine Greek literature as we have it). He could insist on this even with ancient Greek grammarians claiming that Greek verbs were temporally based. There just does not seem to be anything that can disprove Stanley Porter's verbal aspect theory, nor anything to disprove an alternative semantic proposal in which Greek verbs do encode temporal reference. The fact is

that the counter-examples from actual uses of language that Porter has attempted to use in arguing for his theory really do not favor his proposal about the semantics of the Greek verb over another proposal for the semantics of the Greek verb. The temporally-based proposal of this chapter accounts for actual usages just as well as Porter, and suffers from the same defect of unfalsifiability as does Porter's theory. That defect is a defect of thinking that there is meaning apart from actual usages of language by language users. It seems an inherent defect of (the fiction of) semantics as Porter defines it. The one advantage that the temporally-based proposal of this chapter has is that it agrees with the temporally-based analyses of Greek indicative verbs by ancient Greek grammarians who were analyzing their own native language.

(e) Explanatory Scope

Another objection is one of explanatory scope. Porter might claim that this alternative proposal does not have the same explanatory scope as his theory. What has been said prior to this point should be sufficient to rebut this charge, but it may be worth addressing it explicitly here. To the extent that Porter bases his objection to the traditional view of Greek indicative verbal form on those cases where the indicative form is referring to some time other than with which that form is mainly associated (and his entire argument does rest on those cases), Porter's theory actually does not have a broader explanatory scope than the proposal offered in this chapter. As long as the indicative verbal form of a sentence occurs in sentences having a temporal reference with which that verbal form is mainly associated, the traditional view is vindicated, and at least has parity with Porter's view in regard to explanatory scope.

But the argument to this point has also demonstrated that Porter's exceptional cases can also be explained by the proposal of this chapter. If a sentence refers to a time other than that with which the verb is usually associated, one might simply claim that the verbal form continues to have its semantic temporal reference and that in such cases the reader chooses to prefer the temporal reference of the verbal form's deixis. This author is unaware of there being any counter-example in Porter's work that would make this explanation untenable. Given that the proposal offered here has an explanatory scope that is just as broad, if not broader, in comparison to to Porter's theory, the choice of his theory continues to be subjective or, worse, to be deficient in light of the temporally-based analysis of ancient Greek grammarians. Porter's verbal aspect theory does not have a broader explanatory scope than the proposal of this appendix.

(f) Principle of Parsimony / Ockham's Razor

Another possible argument that might be brought against the proposal of this chapter for the semantics of Greek indicative verbal forms comes from the principle of parsimony, or Ockham's razor. One should not multiply explanatory entities beyond what is necessary to account for the data. Porter's account only posits temporal reference being encoded by a verbal form's deixis, whereas the proposal of this chapter would require encoding temporal reference twice and would require the reader to weigh the two temporal references. If Porter's theory can account for the linguistic data, it might be thought that positing a second temporal reference and an additional weighing of temporal references in cases of conflict is actually preferable given a principle of parsimony.

One can make a start against this objection by first noting that it is not a valid use of Ockham's razor to say that, because the proposal of this chapter adds to Porter's theory the additional assertion that Greek indicative verbal forms encode temporal reference, this chapter's proposal is therefore more complex and accordingly significantly less plausible. It is not significantly more plausible to insist upfront that a theory about a body of linguistic data is more plausible because it claims there is less information communicated in that body of linguistic data rather than more. A proper answer to that question is an *a posteriori* one.

Granted that conclusion, it is not certain that an examination of linguistic data would make it significantly more plausible that some body of linguistic data communicates more rather than less information. Greek, and other languages, frequently encoded redundant information. A definite feminine article may be followed by an adjective in a feminine form and then followed by the feminine noun. Three words encode the grammatical gender. One may speculate as to the reason for such redundancy. It would be simpler and less of a hassle not to have a fourth non-feminine/non-masculine/non-neuter grammatical form. The redundancy also makes it easier for a piece of information not to be lost on the reader or in communication. If someone does not hear the first definite article encoding the feminine grammatical gender, other words would provide that piece of information.

This common feature of redundancy in language again returns us to the question why Porter would treat temporal reference as if it were only encoded by a verbal form or its deixis, but not both. In many cases, the temporal reference of a clause is more important than a grammatical gender of some word in the clause or the number of some word. It would seem

better to think that, in light of the importance of temporal reference in clauses and communication, readers would read a text as if temporal reference were redundantly encoded, and users of a language would think to encode temporal reference more than once. Usually, in cases where redundancy is not found, it is because language users would have to do something additional, and language generally tends towards the economical. But in the present case, the verbal form will be the exact same whether one adopts Porter's view or the view of this chapter. If, as it seems to be, the general operative rule in languages is towards saying the same thing with less effort, or saying more with the same effort, then interpreting the same Greek clause as having two encoded temporal references rather than one seems preferable. It just does not seem certain that an examination of the Greek corpus will make it significantly more plausible to think that Greek readers or speakers would not be redundant in encoding of temporal reference when they redundantly encode other information. Accordingly, it does not seem certain that an examination of Greek literature would lead one to think that it is more plausible that a given body of Greek literature encodes less information rather than more.

Perhaps another avenue for attempting to use the principle of parsimony in favor of Porter's theory would be to argue that his theory does not require the reader to take the extra step of weighing differing temporal references. Whether rightly or wrongly, it might be said that the temporal reference of the clause is objectively there in the verbal form's deixis in Porter's theory, whereas with the proposal of this chapter the temporal reference of the clause is what the reader subjectively chooses. This extra step in the process of temporal reference would add complexity and would be subjective in a way that Porter's proposal would not.

This claim about simplicity does not seem persuasive, and more than one response can be given. The temporal encoding of the verbal form's deixis envelops more than just the text of a clause whose temporal reference is in question. It envelops the sentence that has the clause (if the clause is only one part of the sentence). It includes the work in which the sentence is found. It includes, or at least requires information about, the social and geographical and historical situation in which the text was produced. There is in the verbal form's deixis a large amount of extra-textual information whose analysis involves a large measure of subjective judgment that only an intelligent agent can do. Subjective weighing of information by the reader is a necessity both in Porter's theory and the proposal of this chapter. In that respect, the difference between Porter's proposal and the proposal here is not one of kind. This is not to say that there are not factors that one can identify that favor one temporal reference over another. Porter has identified a number of factors, but in the end, even with some factors identified, there is still a measure of subjectivity on the part of the reader in settling on a temporal reference of the verbal form's deixis.

Second, given the necessity of that subjective evaluation in determining temporal reference in Porter's theory, it would seem methodologically unjustifiable to claim that another proposal has a deficiency because that proposal requires a subjective evaluation from the reader. The process of encountering an unknown body of text the size of an entire language and reaching the point of proposing a theory about semantics of its verbal forms requires an immense amount of subjective judgment along the way. It is still true that for Porter even to get to his theory, he has to do some subjective interpretive activity as a reader that draws out meaning from a body of

linguistic data. Porter cannot rightly reach his theory by the subjective analysis of data only to then kick away such a subjective ladder upon attaining his theory and decry another theory because it uses the same ladder. Still, it is true that the proposal of this chapter envisions a subjective choice by the reader between a verbal form's encoded temporal reference and the encoded temporal reference of the verbal form's deixis. Porter might respond that such subjective judgment is overly complex.

This brings us to the third response. The objection from simplicity fails because the reader's subjective choice between the two encoded temporal references is, strictly speaking, something that is outside the purview of semantics. Porter has quite clearly emphasized that his is a theory about the semantics of Greek indicative verbs, the (supposed, but actually non-existent) meaning that verbal forms have apart from actual uses of language by language users. This chapter's proposal about the semantics of Greek indicative verbs is technically different from its proposal about how we as readers read a text with two conflicting temporal references. Porter's proposal about the semantics of the Greek indicative verb should be compared with this chapter's comparable proposal about semantics, not with this chapter's additional claim about how we read texts having two encoded temporal references that conflict. If this is done, we are brought back to the earlier question about the same text encoding more or less information. For that, see above.

At this point, the objection could be modified to be one about how we as readers actually read texts. Whether rightly or wrongly, it could be claimed that Porter's proposal is a simpler account of how we as readers actually make sense of texts. Is this so? If the question is whether

Porter can just as adequately describe our reading of texts and do so with less postulated explanatory factors, and if it were shown that he could, then the principle of parsimony would be on his side in that regard. But whether we read a Greek text in one way or another is less important than how Greeks themselves read it, so the question would be better formulated as what theory better accounts for how ancient Greeks read their texts. Porter might still claim that his view does not introduce the subjective choice between the temporal reference of a verbal form and the temporal reference of its deixis, but now that the question has moved from the semantics of the Greek indicative verb to how Greek users read texts, it seems that it is quite legitimate to consider Porter's own admission that ancient Greek grammarians read indicative verbs as being temporally based. This is debilitating evidence for Porter's view if the present question is how ancient Greeks read Greek indicative verbs. Simplicity achieved by reductionism, that is, by ignoring some of the data to be explained, does not make the proposal better. It makes it worse. In this respect, the principle of parsimony is secondary to explanatory scope in the analysis of competing theories of the same phenomenon. For the present question, ignoring the evidence of ancient Greek grammarians to have a simpler theory would wrongly privilege the principle of parsimony over the criterion of explanatory scope.

Further, if the question is what accounts for our reading of data with the least possible explanatory factors, one needs to consider not only cases where the two encoded temporal references conflict, but also cases where they agree. What accounts for the extensive agreement among readers about temporal reference in a large majority of clauses? Also, what accounts for the speed at which readers discern the temporal reference of the clause? For the reader, the

agreement of the two encoded temporal references has a simplifying effect. One can respond to Porter by claiming that even if the proposal of this chapter has one additional step in the process of interpreting temporal reference of a clause when encoded temporal references disagree, that disadvantage (if it is one) may be more than offset by the greater explanatory scope in cases where the encoded temporal references do agree. The ease and speed with which temporal reference of a clause is obtained by the reader in a great majority of cases, and the extent to which readers agree about the temporal references of clauses, is something that needs explanation. It is easier and simpler to explain this by the mutual reinforcement of the two encoded temporal references agreeing with each other than by reference only to encoding of temporal reference by a verbal form's deixis. This is admittedly a subjective claim, but if correct, it would allow one to say that, even if the principle of parsimony works in favor of Porter in exceptional cases in virtue of the one additional step of weighing conflicting temporal references, the criterion of explanatory scope would offset at least some of this for many of the majority of cases in which the temporal references of the verbal form and of its deixis agree.

A fourth response to the argument from principle of parsimony is to simply assert the process envisaged for the reader of deciding between two conflicting temporal references is in most cases a simple process, whether it is relatively more complex to Porter's account or not. Consider how a traditional grammarian might describe some of Porter's exceptional cases from the standpoint of the language user. This would need to be modified for the present question of how a reader interprets such exceptional cases, but the point can be made clearly from the perspective of an author before the point is adjusted to the perspective of the reader.

In a traditional view of the Greek indicative verbal form, because the temporal reference of the author's sentence would be clear from the verbal form's context or the content of the statement itself, the author does not feel that using a "wrong" indicative form will cause the reader to make a false conclusion about the temporal reference of his entire statement. Because of this, the author feels free to choose the indicative verbal form based on some other factor, and in some of these cases, we might agree with Porter that the primary factor would be verbal aspect. Sometimes the author does choose the indicative form on the basis of verbal aspect, but to that one would add that the author does so because the verbal form's deixis, its context, and/or the meaning of the clause is quite likely to override the "wrong" indicative form when the reader interprets the statement, a fact which is taken into account when the author makes his choice of verb form. In Mt. 8:11, for example, Matthew uses a present tense form of λέγω because he was confident that a reader would not think that Jesus was telling the disciple to let the dead bury their own dead right at the very time of Matthew's composing his gospel or of its being read. Whether Matthew chose it for vividness or for verbal aspect or some other reason, Matthew had the freedom to use the present indicative because the temporal reference of the verbal form's context was adequate for the reader not to draw a false conclusion about the temporal reference of the statement in which the verbal form was located. If Matthew thought that some of his readers believed that an indicative form grammaticalizes temporal reference, Matthew depended on the reader to make the informed judgment of having the temporal reference of the context of the verbal form and/or meaning of the statement "override" their normal view about the verbal form's temporal reference.

A similar line of reasoning applies for the reader in many of Porter's exceptional cases. Here we would say that it makes far more sense to us, in our interpretation of a text, to prefer the temporal reference of the verbal form's deixis over the temporal reference of the verbal form itself. We might say that we find it much more sensible in our reading of a text to prefer the temporal reference of the verbal form's deixis and yet keep the verbal form's aspect. This does not require reference to the intentionality of the author. It is a statement about our interpretation of the author's text. Many of Porter's exceptional cases are like this, and the choice between the temporal references is actually quite clear and easy for the reader to make. It is not clear that, if one were inclined, labeling these cases "odd" or "deviant"⁹³¹ would be relevant to a proper evaluation of this proposal about how we read texts.

(g) Irrelevant

Another possible objection is that of irrelevance. Since a particular indicative verbal form does not have degrees of temporal reference, and if the reader is going to make an informed judgment between conflicting temporal references, whether the reader would choose to favor the temporal reference encoded by the verbal form or by its deixis would depend on variations on what is found in the deixis. If the verbal form always encodes temporal reference, then it would be variations in the deixis that would determine the user's judgment about what temporal reference to favor. Does this make the temporal encoding of the verbal form irrelevant to

931. Cf. his statement (Ibid., p. 103) that "If an adequate semantic category is to be defined, sufficient attention must be paid to all potential uses, including those which are infrequent; to characterize them as odd or deviant is to place greater stress on primary usage than is warranted."

interpretation? No. It is true that a user's favoring one temporal reference would be dependent on what would be in the deixis, but this does not mean that a verbal form encoding temporal reference would not make a difference in certain cases.

An analogy may clarify why. If one puts five pounds on the right side of a scale, whether or not the scale would tip down towards the right side with that five pounds would always depend on what is on the left side of the scale. But having nothing on the right side of the scale would surely make a difference to the outcome when there is anything between one and four pounds on the left side. In such cases, it makes a significant difference whether there is five pounds or nothing on the right side of the scale. It seems preferable and more plausible to think that the different factors in the verbal form's deixis would not all be evaluated by the reader as having the same strength of evidence in regard to the question of temporal reference, and so those different elements of the verbal form's deixis and the different levels of weights on the left side of the scale would be appropriately analogous.

(h) Lack of Counter-Examples

Another possible objection would come from a lack of counter-examples. It might be thought that if this thesis is going to put forward the view that there are cases of conflicting temporal references, one ought to be able to provide examples where there is a conflict and where the temporal reference of the verbal form is chosen over that of its deixis. Here it may be of use to note that this thesis does not actually think that semantics as defined by Porter is anything more than a fiction; the present author believes that language, including a Greek verbal

form, means what was intended by the language user, and that the same verbal form can mean different things at different times given that users can intend to mean different things with the same verbal form. The current proposal is being offered as an alternative proposal to Porter's theory on the supposition that Porter's view about semantics is granted. Given that the proposal is being offered as a counter to Porter's theory, it need only concern itself with how it compares to Porter's theory. Further, it seems to be necessarily true that Porter's view and the view of this thesis are the only two available for consideration given that the two views are the denial and affirmation of the same claim. This proposal affirms verbal form's having temporal reference; he denies it. That exhausts the possibilities.

It is in this situation of only two options where a problem arises if an insistence is made that examples be provided in which a verbal form's temporal reference is chosen over the temporal reference of the verbal form's deixis. In such examples, this thesis would have a different evaluation of the temporal reference of the clause as a whole than Porter would have, but the persuasiveness of Porter's argument for his theory depends on examples where there is agreement about the reference of the clause as a whole. For example, Porter would only successfully argue that an aorist does not encode past temporal reference if he were to have an example in which his interlocutor agreed with Porter about the temporal reference of the clause in which the aorist is found. But proposing a clause in which the temporal reference of the verbal form is chosen over the temporal reference of the deixis is to propose a situation in which there is no such agreement. This thesis would interpret the clause as having a temporal reference of the verbal form, and Porter, in line with his view, would interpret it as having the temporal reference

of the deixis. Without the agreement about the temporal reference of the clause as a whole, offering an example would not be argumentatively persuasive to Porter.

The point of requesting such an example, though, is to make the proposal advanced here seem less preferable and to make Porter's seem more preferable. If Porter's theory and the proposal of this thesis are the only two under consideration, and if it is possible, as already demonstrated, that a verbal form and its deixis both encode temporal reference, then Porter would be requesting as evidence against his view an example that would be impossible to be argumentatively persuasive to him given the differing assessments of the temporal reference of the clause as a whole. The situation is as hopeless as his offering his exceptional cases in support of his view; those cases can be subsumed under the proposal of this thesis just as much as under his theory. The conclusion to be had, then, is that it is unnecessary to provide examples in which the temporal reference of the verbal form is chosen over the temporal reference of the verbal form's deixis.

Another situation in which one might be pressed to give evidence in favor of this thesis' proposal is if there are situations where the deixis is not sufficiently clear to have a firm conclusion about the temporal reference of a statement. If verbal forms encode temporal reference, then one would expect that lack of clear temporal reference in the verbal form's deixis would result in the reader opting for the temporal reference of the verbal form's deixis. Thus, if one can find situations of insufficient temporal indication from the verbal form's deixis, and yet still show that there is sufficient information to make a conclusion about temporal reference of

the clause, then this would be evidence in favor of this thesis' proposal. Porter might request that such examples be given.

Two significant problems would attend this request. The first is that Porter's exposition of deixis does not give sufficient guidance to demonstrate clearly the level of temporal indication offered by a verbal form's deixis and accordingly does not provide a sufficiently objective and clear way to prove that an offered example really is an example demonstrating the verbal form encoding temporal reference. It is not easy to see how Porter would succeed in providing such guidance given the complexities of communication and deixis. Given this, Porter might simply deny that what another person thinks counts as such an example really is one. In that case, there would not be a mutually-agreed sufficiently objective basis for arbitration.

It would also seem somewhat unreasonable to ask for this thesis' proposal to offer evidence from situations where a verbal form's deixis provides insufficient evidence regarding temporal reference when at least almost all of the data to which Porter limits himself comes from literary works (if not other material) that by their size provide a significant amount of information about temporal reference in the deixis. If every verse in Matthew's text (or Luke's text, or Paul's text or some other text) has deixis information from the rest of the chapter and from other chapters, the size of the document works against there being a lack of information about temporal reference in the deixis. If Porter is going to focus on written material, it would be somewhat unreasonable to ask for examples lacking information about temporal reference in the verbal form's deixis.

It is in oral speech where one would be more likely to encounter situations where the verbal form's deixis provides insufficient information. But oral speech is what Porter has not analyzed given that we do not have oral recordings of ancient Greek speakers, and the analysis of ancient Greek grammarians who did have access to such examples (if there were such examples) Porter dismisses.

6. Proposing an Alternative Binary Semantic Network that is Temporally-Based

At this point, it needs to be demonstrated by presentation of a systemic network of binary oppositions that this proposal about the semantics of the Greek verb can indeed be accompanied by a viable semantic network of binary oppositions. This section will attempt to provide such a viable semantic network of binary oppositions. In doing this, it will show that Porter's theory is not superior in its being able to map Greek verbal forms onto such a network.

Before presenting an alternative to Porter's semantic network, it will first be necessary to evaluate at least a part of his own semantic network in order to demonstrate an important point. If it is supposed that the perfective and imperfective aspects are mutually exclusive, it will be shown that Porter must treat "stative" as an aspect in order for one part of his semantic network to continue to be binary. It will then be shown that a temporally based semantic network can be constructed using "stative" as an aspect.

7. Demonstrating the Necessity of "Stative" Being an Aspect for Porter's Binary Semantic Network

Fanning has criticized Porter for treating "stative" as an aspect; Fanning says that "stative" is *Aktionsart*,⁹³² which, if true, would mean that Porter's semantic network mixes categories in one of its binary oppositions, contrasting [+imperfective] with [+stative] as the two parts of a binary opposition. But Porter has clearly contended that *Aktionsart* is something different and distinct from verbal aspect.⁹³³ If Fanning is right, if "stative" is *Aktionsart* or something that is not verbal aspect, then a demonstration that "stative" must be treated as a verbal aspect in order for Porter to have a binary semantic network would make Porter's judgment about whether or not "stative" is an aspect very important to his theory. In support of that point, consider the part of Porter's semantic network having the six Greek indicative forms.⁹³⁴

932. Fanning, Buist M., Approaches to Verbal Aspect in NT Greek. pp. 49-50.

933. Porter, Stanley E., In Defence of Verbal Aspect, p. 43.

934. For information on Porter's binary semantic network, see Porter, Stanley E., *Verbal Aspect in NT Greek*, pp. 93-109.

NETWORK A: PORTER'S PROPOSED BINARY SEMANTIC NETWORK FOR FINITE GREEK VERBS

- +Finite
 - +Assertion
 - +Expectation (>>Future Indicative)
 - Expectation
 - +Perfective (>>Aorist Indicative)
 - Perfective
 - +Stative
 - +Remoteness (>>Pluperfect Indicative)
 - Remoteness (>>Perfect Indicative)
 - +Imperfective
 - +Remoteness (>>Imperfect Indicative)
 - Remoteness (>>Present Indicative)
 - OR
 - +Remoteness
 - +Stative (>>Pluperfect Indicative)
 - +Imperfective (>>Imperfect Indicative)
 - Remoteness
 - +Stative (>>Perfect Indicative)
 - +Imperfective (>>Present Indicative)
 - Assertion
 - +Direction (>>Imperative)
 - +Projection
 - +Contingency (>>Optative)
 - Contingency (>>Subjunctive)

Porter separates the future indicative from other Greek verbal forms by the [\pm Expectation] factor.⁹³⁵ This seems appropriate if indicative forms do not encode temporal reference, but that leaves five indicative forms that need to be divided by binary factors. The only binary division of a group of five members is a one/four binary division of the group of five followed by a two/two binary division of the remaining group of four followed by a one/one

935. Fanning thinks that the future indicative is non-aspectual, and Porter thinks that it is not fully aspectual. See Fanning, "Verbal Aspect in NT Greek", pp. 120-124, and Porter, Stanley E., *Verbal Aspect in NT Greek*, pp. 413, 438-439.

division for each of the resulting groups of two, or a three/two binary division of the group of five followed by a one/two binary division of the remaining group of three followed by a one/one division of the two groups of two. Each of these two scenarios requires three steps of division and thus three binary factors that do the dividing.

Porter's three factors are [\pm Perfective], [\pm Remoteness], and [+Stative/+Imperfective]. Notice what happens if [+stative] is not a verbal aspect. In that case, Porter would not have the necessary dividing factors to reduce the one group of five indicative forms to five 'groups' of one indicative form each. If [+Imperfective] is not to be contrasted with [+Stative] due to "stative" not being a verbal aspect and due to binary oppositions having to contrast two things of the same kind, then Porter would have to contrast [+Imperfective] with [-Imperfective] or with [+Perfective].

But this Porter cannot do and still have his binary semantic system network work for his theory, for his [+imperfective]/[+stative] contrast is found in the [-Perfective] branch of his system. If in place of his [+imperfective]/[+stative] contrast, he puts a [+imperfective]/[-Imperfective] contrast, then he would have [-Imperfective] in the same branch as [-Perfective]. That is, the verb would be neither perfective nor imperfective in its aspect. If stative is not an aspect, then the verb would have no aspect at all, which would defeat Porter's main thesis about the verbal aspect of the Greek verb.

This would leave him with only one option. He would need to posit a [+imperfective]/[+perfective] contrast. But here again, his binary system would fail, whether one takes a

privative view of binary oppositions or a contradictory view. Fanning helpfully describes two types of binary oppositions. In a privative view of binary oppositions, the member of a +/- pair that has a "+" feature grammaticalizes that particular feature while the "-" member of the pair, the unmarked member, is simply neutral in regard to the feature in question, saying nothing about whether the verb has that feature. In an equipollent view of binary oppositions, both members of the pair are marked. This equipollent view of oppositions has more than type. There is the contradictory view, in which one member is the logical opposite of the other (denying one member is at the same time an affirmation of the other, such as the denial of something being alive is an affirmation that it is not alive). There is also the contrary opposition view, which generally has more than two members that are all marked with regard to some feature, but have it in differing degrees. Porter's binary semantic network clearly does not fit this description. There is also the mixed opposition type of equipollent opposition. Fanning remarks that one way of looking at this opposition "is to see it with *two* or more 'basic features' which are at issue, and to see the members as alternately marked and unmarked in regard to these basic features in a multiple private relationship."⁹³⁶ This approach also does not seem to work for Porter given that he is ostensibly intent on limiting the grammaticalization of Greek indicative verbal forms to one kind of thing, verbal aspect. That would leave him with only the contradictory type of equipollent opposition if his network were to be viewed as a network of equipollent oppositions.⁹³⁷

936. Fanning, "Verbal Aspect in NT Greek", p. 70.

937. See Ibid., pp. 56-70.

Suppose for the moment that Porter's binary network were a privative one. In this view, choosing the [-Perfective] in the [\pm Perfective] contrast would not be an affirmation that the verbal form is grammaticalizing the denial of the perfective aspect. Rather, the verbal form would say nothing at all about whether the verb is perfective. Notice that if Porter's binary network is taken in this way, he has the [+imperfective]/[+stative] contrast under the [-Perfective] branch. The question currently under consideration is what would be done if [+stative] were not an aspect. With what would Porter replace the [+stative] in his [+imperfective]/[+stative] contrast? If he replaces the [+stative] with [-Perfective] such that the contrast is a [+Imperfective]/[-Perfective] contrast, then he would have a verb with neither a perfective nor imperfective aspect, which means that the verb has no aspect (if "stative" is not an aspect). But if he replaces the [+stative] with [+Perfective] such that the contrast is a [+Imperfective]/[+Perfective] contrast, then he would have [+Perfective] in the [-Perfective] branch of his binary network. But this is a contradiction. In a privative binary network, the [-Perfective] means that the verbal form does not say anything about the [\pm Perfective] feature (it means that it refrains from grammaticalizing an affirmation on that question, one way or the other), but the [+Perfective] means that it does say something about that feature (it affirms that the verbal form does grammaticalize the [+perfective] aspect). That is contradictory. Thus, in a privative view of binary oppositions, Porter's binary semantic network would involve contradiction or would posit that a Greek verb does not express aspect. Either option would be fatal to his theory. This conclusion may not be of much concern to Porter. He denies that his network is a network of privative oppositions. He says that

There is no apparent evidence that in Greek any of the verbal aspects is semantically unmarked. ... In fact, this work argues that even with the binary oppositions all members contribute semantic weight to the verbal component of the clause. Greek verbal aspect, therefore, appears to function on the basis of equipollent binary oppositions, in which while each aspect is not identically weighted, at the least each contributes semantically in an identifiable way (see Friedrich, "Theory," S14).⁹³⁸

We may thus proceed from Porter's own words as if we are dealing with an equipollent binary semantic network.⁹³⁹ Now, if he replaces the [+stative] with [+Perfective] such that the contrast is a [+Imperfective]/[+Perfective] contrast, he would have a [+Perfective] under the [-Perfective] branch of his network. Given that this is an equipollent network, that [-Perfective] would be a denial of the verb being perfective, but the [+Perfective] would be an affirmation that it is perfective. There would be a contradiction. In both of these scenarios (the privative network of binary oppositions, and the equipollent, contradictory network of binary oppositions), Porter's semantic binary network does not succeed if "stative" is not an aspect. It is accordingly absolutely crucial to Stanley Porter's system of binary oppositions and to his thesis about the Greek verb that "stative" be an aspect.

At this stage, the task is not to argue that "stative" is not an aspect and that therefore Porter's theory fails because it does not map onto a completely binary semantic network. Rather, it is to make one observation. If "stative" being an aspect is crucial to the success of Porter's

938. Porter, Stanley E., *Verbal Aspect in NT Greek*, p. 90.

939. Fanning also prefers an equipollent opposition. See Fanning, "Verbal Aspect in NT Greek", p. 71-72.

theory, then he cannot condemn another proposal for treating "stative" as an aspect and at the same time be consistent.

8. Proposing a Temporally-Based Binary Semantic Network if "Stative" Is Treated as an Aspect

With that point made, it is now time to put forth an alternative, temporally-based proposal for the Greek indicative verb that is as successful in mapping Greek indicative forms onto a binary network of semantic oppositions as is the theory of Porter. Consider the following network.

NETWORK B: A TEMPORALLY-BASED BINARY SEMANTIC NETWORK FOR FINITE GREEK VERBAL FORMS

- +Finite
 - +Assertion
 - +Temporal Reference to Future (>>Future Indicative)
 - Temporal Reference to Future
 - +Temporal Reference to Present
 - +Stative (>>Perfect Indicative)
 - +Imperfective (>>Present Indicative)
 - Temporal Reference to Present/+Temporal Reference to Past
 - +Temporal Frame of Reference Prior to Time of Speaker⁹⁴⁰// -Perfective
 - +Stative (>>Pluperfect Indicative)
 - +Imperfective (>>Imperfect Indicative)
 - Temporal Frame of Reference Prior to Time of Speaker//+Perfective (>>Aorist Indicative)
 - Assertion
 - +Direction (>>Imperative)
 - +Projection
 - +Contingency (>>Optative)
 - Contingency (>>Subjunctive)

Some comments about this proposal can be made. First, there seems to be no need to eschew much of Porter's analysis for the Optative, Subjunctive, and Imperative, and this proposal incorporates that portion of Porter's semantic network. Second, on the assumption that the Greek indicative verb does grammaticalize temporal reference, it is acceptable to pair [-Temporal Reference to Present/+Temporal Reference to Past] with [+Temporal Reference to Present] given that this binary opposition occurs in the branch [-Temporal Reference to the Future]. If a verb refers neither to the future nor the present, and if it refers to some time, then by process of elimination it refers to the past. Thus, if it is already granted that a verb is not referring to the

940. For some justification of including temporal frame of reference as a factor in this binary semantic network, cf. Ibid., p.113.

future and also granted that it is referring to some time, then to deny that it refers to the present means by necessity that it refers to the past. [-Temporal Reference to Present] is thus appropriately treated as the same thing as [+Temporal Reference to Past].

A third comment has to do with the absence of the category [+Temporal Frame of Reference Posterior to Time of Speaker]. The proposal above has the binary opposition [±Temporal Frame of Reference Prior to Time of Speaker]. This is a true binary opposition. But choosing the [-Temporal Frame of Reference Prior to Time of Speaker] side of the opposition still leaves open whether a person adopts a frame of reference at the time of the speaker or posterior to the time of the speaker. The proposal does not present this as a semantic option because, granted that the verb does not refer to the future, the aspect and the temporal reference of the aorist indicative verb, which is the only verb that meets the conditions at this point in the network⁹⁴¹ would be unchanged whether one adopts the present as the temporal frame of reference or the future as the temporal frame of reference. If the verb refers neither to the present nor the future, then the temporal reference would still be to the past whether the frame of reference is in the present or in the future. The aspect would accordingly be perfective whether one adopts the future or present as the frame of reference. Since at this point in the network there would be no substantial difference in meaning, temporal reference, or aspect between a future temporal frame of reference or a present temporal frame of reference, it is fitting that there is only one indicative form that is found in this part of the network.

941. The conditions of [-Temporal Reference to the Future], [-Temporal Reference to the Present], and [-Temporal Frame of Reference Prior to Time of Speaker]

The preceding alternative proposal perfectly maps the six Greek indicative forms onto a binary semantic network that is temporally based. Provided that both a verbal form and its deixis can encode temporal reference, this network accordingly offers a real and viable alternative to Porter's mapping of the six Greek indicative forms onto a binary semantic network that is aspectually based. Since both mappings are viable (on the assumption that "stative" is an aspect), it is illegitimate for Porter to insist that Greek users had a shared-meaning system of Greek indicative forms encoding aspect and not time. That cannot be known *a priori*, for there is a viable alternative binary semantic network that is temporally based (if "stative" is an aspect). Further, since ancient Greek grammarians thought that the Greek indicative was temporally based, the semantic network proposed here is supported by that historical evidence; Porter's network is not.

At this stage, two tasks need to be accomplished. First, a fuller semantic network for Greek verbs needs to be given such that the proposal here is not deemed incomplete. Second, if "stative" is not an aspect, the ramifications of this need to be addressed for Porter's proposal and for the alternative proposal above. The two questions here will be whether a binary semantic network based on aspect alone can be developed if "stative" is not an aspect, and whether a binary semantic network based on temporal reference can be developed if "stative" is not an aspect.

For the task of giving a temporally based binary network of non-indicative Greek verbal forms, the assumption that "stative" is an aspect will continue to be assumed. Discussion of whether that is the case will be taken up later, but for now, this assumption may make it easier to

focus on other parts of the semantic network outside of that part having the six indicative Greek verbal forms. In the alternative, fuller proposal below, one may also note that the main remaining difference between Porter and a temporally-based binary semantic network is in treatment of the participle. Whereas the alternative proposal posits absolute indications of time by Greek indicative verbs, the corresponding claim of this alternative proposal is that the participle gives a relative indication of time. This proposal may not actually be a necessarily correlate of the proposal for the Greek indicative verb. It seems possible that, at the same time, participial forms would not indicate relative time and that Greek indicative forms would indicate absolute time. Thus, even if there were a successful criticism of the proposal that participles indicate time relative to the main verb, it may not necessarily follow that this negates the proposal above about the Greek indicative verb. The proposal above may be expanded to include the category of non-finite verbs.

NETWORK C: AN EXPANDED TEMPORALLY-BASED BINARY SEMANTIC NETWORK,
WHICH INCLUDES FINITE AND NON-FINITE VERBAL FORMS

- +Finite
 - +Assertion
 - +Temporal Reference to Future (>>Future Indicative)
 - Temporal Reference to Future
 - +Temporal Reference to Present
 - +Stative (>>Perfect Indicative)
 - +Imperfective (>>Present Indicative)
 - Temporal Reference to Present/+Temporal Reference to Past
 - +Temporal Frame of Reference Prior to Time of speaker//-Perfective
 - +Stative (>>Pluperfect Indicative)
 - +Imperfective (>>Imperfect Indicative)
 - Temporal Frame of Reference Prior to Time of Speaker//+Perfective (>>Aorist Indicative)
 - Assertion
 - +Direction (>>Imperative)
 - +Projection
 - +Contingency (>>Optative)
 - Contingency (>>Subjunctive)
 - Finite
 - +Factive Presupposition (>>Participle)
 - +Relative Future Temporal Reference (>>Future Participle)
 - Relative Future Temporal Reference
 - +Relative Present Temporal Reference//-Perfective Aspect
 - +Relative Present Temporal Reference//+Stative (>>Perfect Participle)
 - Relative Present Temporal Reference//+Imperfective (>>Present Participle)
 - Relative Present Temporal Reference//+Perfective Aspect (>>Aorist Participle)
 - Factive Presupposition (>>Infinitive)

The preceding expanded alternative semantic network differs from Porter in that it is temporally based for indicative forms and for participles. Like Porter, it proceeds on the assumption that "stative" is an aspect and that there is such a thing as semantics of Greek indicative verbal forms, even though the present author thinks that semantics as defined by

Porter is a fiction. Given that assumption, the semantic binary network above (Network C) shows that Porter's binary semantic network is not the only possible binary semantic network for the six principal indicative forms and the four principal participial forms. There can thus be no legitimate appeal to a shared meaning system among speakers in which the six Greek indicative forms and the four principal participial forms only encode aspect.

This alternative proposal for the semantics of Greek verbal forms shows that the alternative proposal of this thesis regarding the encoding of temporal reference, namely, that both verbal form and the verbal form's deixis are encoding temporal references which sometimes conflict, cannot be shown to be inferior to Porter's theory about the Greek verb simply by appeal to Porter's ability to map Greek verbal forms onto a binary semantic network. The same mapping can be done for the proposal of this thesis. This means that at best, Porter only shows that his view is a plausible alternative to a traditional view of Greek verbs in which verbal forms do encode temporal reference. But this conclusion does not take into account the testimony of the very Greek grammarians that Porter discusses. He clearly indicates that ancient Greek grammarians thought that Greek verbs did encode temporal reference. Such native users of ancient Greek clearly favor the proposal of this appendix that Greek verbs do encode temporal reference over that of Porter which says that Greek verbs do not. In this regard, Porter's theory is marred by a serious deficiency of failing to square with clear historical evidence.

9. The Ramifications of "Stative" Not Being an Aspect

The alternative proposal above has assumed that "stative" is indeed an aspect. Porter's network thinks as much, and the goal was to show that such an assumption could be used in constructing an alternative semantic binary network that did incorporate temporal reference and that was just as capable of accounting for Greek verbal forms as Porter's theory. But it is in fact a point of dispute whether "stative" is really an aspect. It was shown earlier that a negative conclusion on this matter, that "stative" is not an aspect, would remove the binary nature of Porter's semantic network or show that a verb would have no verbal aspect, which would destroy Porter's theory about the Greek verb. For Porter's theory to work, he must insist that "stative" is an aspect. Given that it has already been shown that taking "stative" as an aspect allows for an alternative temporally-based view of the semantics of the Greek verb with its own binary semantic network onto which Greek indicative forms can be mapped, it seems unnecessary to mount a sustained argument against "stative" being an aspect.

Still, there is one reason for considering the consequences of "stative" not being an aspect. The present author thinks that, if one must choose between "stative" being an aspect and "stative" being an *Aktionsart* (or something like *Aktionsart*, if the 'action' in 'kind of action' is somewhat incorrect regarding being in a state), there is more reason to think that "stative" is the latter. But the alternative proposals above purposely took on board Porter's assumption that "stative" is an aspect. If "stative" is not an aspect, this appendix would do well to offer a positive account of Greek indicative verbs that does not treat "stative" as an aspect and that supports the

contention of the present thesis about the periphrastic future perfects of Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18.

Before giving such a positive account, it may be valuable to briefly elaborate on the view that "stative" is not an aspect. This is one of the most significant criticisms of Buist Fanning regarding Porter's theory. Fanning agrees with Porter about the definition of aspect as 'grammaticalizing' the author's reasoned subjective choice of conception of a process'.⁹⁴² But Fanning indicates that he wonders how Porter's analysis of the perfect can fit this definition, "since *stative* (his label for the perfect) is an *Aktionsart*, not an aspect. I think Porter has not been rigorous enough in grasping the difference between aspect and *Aktionsart* and in pursuing that all the way through his analysis."⁹⁴³ Fanning's footnote part-way through this quote is notable. He remarks,

My own approach to the perfect is an attempt to see aspect as consistently as 'viewpoint' rather than procedural character and to apply that distinction to the perfect. Thus, there are significant oppositions between the perfect and the pure aspects (present and aorist), but they are not at the definition level. This treatment of the perfect as something different from the present and aorist is not idiosyncratic; it is the standard approach in recent aspect studies. See P. Friedrich, *On Aspect Theory and Homeric Aspect* (International Journal of American Linguistics, Memoir 28; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), pp. 16-19, 36; B. Comrie, *Aspect: An Introduction to the Study of Verbal Aspect and Related Problems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 52-53; A.L. Lloyd, *Anatomy of the Verb: The Gothic Verb as a Model for a Unified Theory of Aspect, Actional Types, and Verbal Velocity* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1979), pp. 117-18; and J. Bybee, *Morphology: A Study of the Relation of Meaning and Form* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1985), pp. 141, 159-161. The three-part

942. Cf. Fanning, Buist M., *Approaches to Verbal Aspect in NT Greek*, p. 49. Porter's definition is somewhat larger: "Greek verbal aspect is a synthetic semantic category (realized in the forms of verbs) used of meaningful oppositions in a network of tense systems to grammaticalize the author's reasoned subjective choice of conception of a process." (Porter, Stanley E., *Verbal Aspect in NT Greek*, p. 88)

943. Fanning, Buist M., *Approaches to Verbal Aspect in NT Greek*, pp. 49-50.

opposition as in Porter is found primarily in older Greek grammars and earlier linguistic studies.⁹⁴⁴

In his main work on verbal aspect, Fanning also cites others who object to treating the perfect as if it were an aspect.⁹⁴⁵ He later expresses his own conviction that the perfect has an invariant meaning combining "three elements: the Aktionsart-feature of stative situation, the tense-feature of anteriority, and the aspect of summary of viewpoint concerning the occurrence."⁹⁴⁶

Thus, on Fanning's view, verbs in the perfect indicative express *Aktionsart*, aspect, and tense. Whether or not Fanning is right on the issue of the perfect having Aktionsart, aspect, and tense, he is not alone in thinking that "stative" is not an aspect. Since Porter's theory has already been shown to be deficient in comparison to the alternative model proposed in this chapter if "stative" is an aspect, we will proceed from here as if "stative" is not an aspect.

Granted that assumption, and supposing that the Greek perfect is perfective in aspect, Porter might respond that he could adapt his own semantic network to this conclusion. Instead of being in the [-Perfective] branch of his network, the Greek perfect and pluperfect would be in the [+perfective] branch of his network. But then there would be three Greek verbal forms in the [+Perfective] branch of his network. In order to break this group down to individual forms, the group of three would be broken down to a set of one and a set of two. That set of two would need

944. Ibid., p. 50, footnote 1.

945. Cf. Fanning, "Verbal Aspect in NT Greek", pp. 106-107.

946. Ibid., pp. 119-120. His quote continues on p. 120: "In individual texts one can observe degrees of emphasis on one or the other of these features due to variety of contextual factors, but some allusion to all three elements is normally preserved even if one is highlighted over the others."

to be broken down into two sets of one each. That is two divisions, which requires two factors of division. If Porter is not going to introduce *Aktionsart* or temporal reference into his binary network, he would be left with only one dividing factor, [\pm Remoteness], in this branch of his binary network, but he needs two factors to accomplish the necessary two divisions.

He must either allow *Aktionsart* or temporal reference into his binary network, or admit that two of the three indicative forms have no semantic difference. The latter option is clearly false; no competent grammarian would believe that there is no semantic difference between the aorist indicative and perfect indicative, between the aorist indicative and pluperfect indicative, or between perfect indicative and pluperfect indicative. The difference between perfect indicative and pluperfect indicative would be best explained by Porter's [\pm Remoteness] factor, so in this latter option, he would really be forced to concede that there is no semantic difference between aorist indicative and perfect indicative, or between aorist indicative and pluperfect indicative. Either concession would be clearly false.

It seems, then, that if Porter's network is going to be a binary network that accounts for usage of the Greek verb, he has to introduce a non-aspectual factor, if "stative" is not an aspect. That would, of course, undercut his theory that the Greek indicative verb grammaticalizes only aspect. If he refuses to concede that "stative" is not an aspect, then the preceding argument has shown that his theory of the semantics of the Greek indicative verb is deficient in comparison to the theory advocated in this appendix. The ensuing semantic network reveals this problem of a

missing factor of division; it has a "???" in the places where Porter would need to have a non-aspectual factor in his network.

NETWORK D: A POSSIBLE MODIFICATION OF PORTER'S BINARY SEMANTIC NETWORK IF "STATIVE" IS NOT AN ASPECT?

- +Finite
 - +Assertion
 - +Expectation (>>Future Indicative)
 - Expectation
 - +Perfective
 - +/-??? (>>Aorist Indicative)
 - /+???
 - +Remoteness (>>Pluperfect Indicative)
 - Remoteness (>>Perfect Indicative)
 - Perfective/+Imperfective
 - +Remoteness (>>Imperfect Indicative)
 - Remoteness (>>Present Indicative)

If [+Perfective] and [+Imperfective] are not mutually exclusive aspects, maybe one way of avoiding introducing a non-aspectual factor is to put [+Imperfective] in the place where the above network has "???". This would be to treat [+stative] as if it had an [+Imperfective] aspect in addition to its [+perfective] aspect. Even if it were true that a verb could have a perfective aspect and imperfective aspect simultaneously, and also true that the perfect does have both aspects, this would not resolve the problem. It is true that the network above would be completed, and without introducing a non-aspectual factor. But the assumption of this section is that "stative" is not an aspect, that it has something to it that is over and above aspect. Moving from "stative" as an aspect in itself to treating "stative" as just the conjoining of the perfective and imperfective aspects still defines it only in terms of aspect; also, the challenge of Fanning is that "stative" is *Aktionsart*, not aspect.

But let us suppose that the challenge of Fanning and others is not correct and that "stative" can be reduced to the mere conjoining of the perfective and imperfective aspects. This would allow Porter to complete the above binary network without introducing any non-aspectual factor. The perfect indicative and the pluperfect indicative would have [+Imperfective] and the aorist indicative would have [-Imperfective]. But there is also another consideration that must be taken into account if "stative" is reducible to just the joining of perfective and imperfective aspects. Just as it was possible to construct a temporally based binary semantic network on the assumption that "stative" was an aspect in itself, it is also possible to construct a temporally based binary semantic network on the assumption that "stative" is the mere joining of the imperfective and perfective aspects. The following temporally based binary semantic network demonstrates this.

NETWORK E: A TEMPORALLY BASED ALTERNATIVE BINARY SEMANTIC NETWORK, INCLUDING FINITE AND NON-FINITE VERBAL FORMS, CONSTRUCTED ON THE ASSUMPTIONS THAT THE PERFECTIVE AND IMPERFECTIVE ASPECTS ARE NOT MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE AND THAT "STATIVE" IS THE CONJOINING OF THE PERFECTIVE AND IMPERFECTIVE ASPECTS

- +Finite
 - +Assertion
 - +Temporal Reference to Future (>>Future Indicative)
 - Temporal Reference to Future
 - +Temporal Reference to Present
 - +Temporal Reference to Past/+Perfective Aspect/+Imperfective (>>Perfect Indicative)
 - Temporal Reference to Past/-Perfective Aspect/+Imperfective (>>Present Indicative)
 - Temporal Reference to Present/+Temporal Reference to Past
 - +Temporal Frame of Reference Prior to Time of speaker//+Imperfective
 - +Temporal Reference to Past/+Perfective Aspect (>>Pluperfect Indicative)
 - Temporal Reference to Past/-Perfective Aspect (>>Imperfect Indicative)
 - Temporal Frame of Reference Prior to Time of Speaker//+Perfective Aspect (>>Aorist Indicative)
 - Assertion
 - +Direction (>>Imperative)
 - +Projection
 - +Contingency (>>Optative)
 - Contingency (>>Subjunctive)
- Finite
 - +Factive Presupposition (>>Participle)
 - +Relative Future Temporal Reference (>>Future Participle)
 - Relative Future Temporal Reference
 - +Relative Present Temporal Reference//+Imperfective Aspect
 - +Relative Present Temporal Reference//+Perfective Aspect (>>Perfect Participle)
 - Relative Present Temporal Reference//-Perfective Aspect (>>Present Participle)
 - Relative Present Temporal Reference//+Perfective Aspect (>>Aorist Participle)
 - Factive Presupposition (>>Infinitive)

The preceding binary semantic network is both temporally based and treats the perfect as if "stative" were the combination of having perfective and imperfective aspects. One comment about this network needs to be made. In the [-Temporal Reference to the Future], [+Temporal Reference to the Present] branch of the network, each of the two members of the binary pair (that

is, both the present indicative and the perfect indicative) has [+Imperfective] associated with it. This is admittedly not a binary opposition, but because there are factors of this pair that do have binary opposition, it is not necessary that the perfect indicative and present indicative share the same value in regard to the [±Imperfective] factor. The two indicative forms do have different values for the temporal factor of [±Temporal Reference to Past] (and also have different values for the [±Perfective Aspect] factor), and the contention of this chapter is that this binary network is temporally based. In a language in which verbal forms encode more than one factor of meaning in individual forms, as long as the two verbal forms differ on one factor of meaning, the verbal forms can indicate the same meaning for other factor(s) and still be included as opposing members in a pair of the binary semantic network. If Porter's verbal network would fail for lack of sufficient number of dividing factors in his binary network (if "stative" were not an aspect and were not reducible to the conjoining of perfective and imperfective aspects), this binary semantic network enjoys a harmless excess of encoded factors of meaning. The above binary semantic network shows that even on the assumption that the perfect and imperfective aspects are not mutually exclusive, and that "stative" is defined as the combination of these two aspects, one can construct an adequate temporally based binary semantic network. By Porter's own admission, ancient Greek grammarians analyzed the Greek verb as temporally based, a fact that he criticized, but given this alternative binary semantic network, such testimony of ancient Greek grammarians means that this proposed temporally based binary semantic network better accounts for the historical data than would a modified form of Porter's network.⁹⁴⁷

947. It has already been shown that Porter's network as he gave it is deficient in comparison to an

The conclusion that two members of a pair in a binary semantic network can have the same value, provided that there is another encoded factor of meaning on which the two members of the pair disagree, is relevant if one drops the assumption about "stative" being the mere combination of perfective and imperfective aspects and concludes with Fanning that "stative" is *Aktionsart*. On that assumption, Porter's binary network would not have enough dividing factors. The network proposed above, though, could continue to be viable with some modification. Such modification can be found in the following temporally based binary semantic network.

earlier proposed binary semantic network that, matching Porter's treatment of "stative" as an aspect, treated "stative" as if it were an aspect.

NETWORK F: A TEMPORALLY BASED BINARY SEMANTIC NETWORK, INCLUDING FINITE AND NON-FINITE VERBAL FORMS, CONSTRUCTED ON THE ASSUMPTIONS THAT "STATIVE" IS AN AKTIONSART AND THAT THE PERFECT ENCODES TENSE, ASPECT, AND AKTIONSART.

+Finite

+Assertion

+Temporal Reference to Future (>>Future Indicative)

-Temporal Reference to Future

+Temporal Reference to Present

+Temporal Reference to Past/+Perfective/+Stative *Aktionsart* (>>Perfect Indicative)

-Temporal Reference to Past/+Imperfective/-Stative *Aktionsart* (>>Present Indicative)

-Temporal Reference to Present/+Temporal Reference to Past

+Temporal Frame of Reference Prior to Time of Speaker

+Temporal Reference to Past/+Perfective/+Stative *Aktionsart* (>>Pluperfect Indicative)

-Temporal Reference to Past/+Imperfective/-Stative *Aktionsart* (>>Imperfect Indicative)

-Temporal Frame of Reference Prior to Time of Speaker//+Perfective (>>Aorist Indicative)

-Assertion

+Direction (>>Imperative)

+Projection

+Contingency (>>Optative)

-Contingency (>>Subjunctive)

-Finite

+Factive Presupposition (>>Participle)

+Relative Future Temporal Reference (>>Future Participle)

- Relative Future Temporal Reference

+Relative Present Temporal Reference

+Relative Present Temporal Reference//+Perfective Aspect//+Stative *Aktionsart* (>>Perfect Participle)

-Relative Present Temporal Reference//-Perfective Aspect//-Stative *Aktionsart* (>>Present Participle)

-Relative Present Temporal Reference//+Perfective Aspect (>>Aorist Participle)

- Factive Presupposition (>>Infinitive)

This semantic binary network provides an analysis of the Greek verb that is temporally based and that takes up Fanning's contention that "stative" is *Aktionsart*, and that the perfect is

marked for past and present tense, perfective aspect, and stative *Aktionsart*. It is a binary semantic network in regard to temporal reference, and often, though not always, with regard to aspect. In the [\pm Temporal Frame of Reference Prior to Time of Speaker] pair, the aorist indicative, which is the sole member of the [-Temporal Frame of Reference Prior to Time of Speaker] in that portion of the network, is marked by [+Perfective] aspect. But the two members of the [+Temporal Frame of Reference Prior to Time of Speaker] side of the pair are not both marked by [-Perfective] aspect. The imperfect indicative has the [+Imperfective/-Perfective] value, but the pluperfect indicative has the [+Perfective] value. This does not make this section of the network non-binary, for the aorist indicative differs from both the imperfect indicative and pluperfect indicative for the factor of [\pm Temporal Frame of Reference Prior to Time of Speaker].

The preceding binary network shows that a temporally based binary semantic network can be constructed on the assumption that "stative" is *Aktionsart* and not aspect and that the perfect is marked for past and present tense, perfective aspect, and stative *Aktionsart*. It is not clear that Porter can construct a binary semantic network on the assumption that stative is *Aktionsart* and not aspect and still have a binary semantic network that only includes aspect. He would have to introduce a non-aspectual factor to have enough factors of division for the six indicative forms. That would, though, invalidate his theory that Greek indicative verbs only encode temporal aspect. In the end, Stanley Porter's semantic binary network either fails or is matched by an alternative, temporally based binary semantic network that, unlike Porter's network, actually accounts for the historical evidence of ancient Greek grammarians analyzing Greek indicative verbs from a temporal perspective.

Even if it were the case that Porter could construct a binary semantic network for Greek indicative verbs without treating "stative" as an aspect, that would not negate the success of the proposal of this chapter. If he were to succeed at that, there would be two possible semantic networks for Greek indicative verbs. The consequence of this is that Porter can not successfully appeal to systemic linguistics to distinguish his verbal aspect theory from the view proposed here. There is not only one possible network of semantic possibilities underlying choices of verbal forms, and it is accordingly unjustified to claim that Greek users had a shared meaning-system or shared code or to claim that the Greek verbal form had an essential meaning that was limited to aspect.

10. Conclusion Regarding Stanley Porter's Verbal Aspect Theory

This appendix has attempted to address Stanley Porter's verbal aspect theory by doing what previous scholarship seems not to have done, that is, by proposing a theory about semantics of Greek indicative verbs on terms that Porter has defined in his own theory for semantics of Greek indicative verbs. Further, this has been done in a way that shows that Stanley Porter's verbal aspect theory is deficient as an analysis of the semantics of Greek indicative verbs in comparison to the semantic proposal of this appendix. Contra Porter, Greek indicative verbs are temporally based. For the present thesis, this is what needed to be done in order to vindicate this thesis' claim about the periphrastic future perfects of Mt. 16:19b-c and Mt. 18:18 against Stanley Porter's theory and his application of it to these two passages.

The argument of this appendix has been structured so that remarks made below could be omitted without harm to this thesis, but before finishing, two additional comments may be made about Porter's verbal aspect theory. First, the semantic proposal of this chapter has been made on the terms defined by Porter, but the present author thinks that semantics so defined is a fiction. Porter supposes that there can be meaning apart from actual instances of language by language users. That allows for there to be meaning apart from intentionality. Ignoring intentionality may make for an easier theory, and avoid the very difficult question about the relationship of mind, meaning, and language. But avoiding difficult problems does not make a theory better. Porter achieves simplicity by ignoring some of the hardest data to be explained, our intentionality in use of language.

Second, having focused on the fictional meaning that items of language supposedly have apart from uses of language by language users, Porter then proceeds to act as if this fictional meaning dictates what a verbal form can mean for real users of language. There is no defensible analysis of meaning of language that does not include the intentionality of the author as the key factor in the determination of the meaning of language. The necessary correlate of that truth is that two people may use the same string of letters or words and mean two different things by it. Porter's complaint about disparate temporal references being drawn from the same form is really just a denial of this necessary correlate, and thus in effect a denial that an author's intentionality is relevant to the meaning of the author's language. Porter thus in substance sides with post-modern deconstructionists who affirm that meaning of language is what readers make it to be. This is most evident in his hermeneutic of suspicion in regard to the analysis of ancient Greek

grammarians about their own language. It is a reasonable assumption that their description of Greek indicative verbs as temporally based was how they thought of and used Greek verbs themselves. They at least thought that in choosing an aorist they were encoding past temporal reference, and in choosing a future indicative were choosing future temporal reference. But according to Porter, what they intend to mean in choosing verbal forms is irrelevant to what their language actually means. The semantic proposal of this chapter shows that such a hermeneutic of suspicion is unfounded, and the reader may thus continue to affirm quite sensibly that an author's intentionality is not irrelevant to the meaning of the author's language.

Third, if semantics as defined by Porter is a fiction (as this author thinks), then it is illegitimate to argue that something that does not exist (semantics) is to determine how we should think of that which does exist. Porter attempts to distinguish between semantics and pragmatics, yet recognizes that actual language use is always in the latter category. In short, his theory is a theory about what does not exist, and it is not clear how a theory about what does not exist would help us understand language. This should be clear from the fact that one can posit other theories of the semantics the Greek indicative verb that have just as much explanatory power as Porter's theory (see the proposals above). By this point, this appendix has succeeded in its aim to vindicate ancient and modern Greek grammarians against Stanley Porter's verbal aspect theory. Greek indicative verbs do encode temporal reference. Greek verbs are temporally based.

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