

As part of the Church Militant, we live in the vortex of turmoil. The Church has always been in one crisis or another. The cross of mismanagement in the Church is ours to carry, not in the sense of self-righteous superiority but in the sense of deep dissatisfaction, even depression. Sharing our concerns is appropriate and we do need to check our perceptions, one with the other. The purpose of the sharing is to share (1) our pain, and (2) to look for a salve for the pain in (a) prayer and (b) prudent action. This is a struggle and our part of that struggle is in the intellectual life, fighting for our own hearts and souls first of all, then for the hearts and souls of everybody else.

## Isaiah 22:19-23

Verse 15     Thus says the Lord to Shebna, master of the palace<sup>1</sup>

Though the Lectionary<sup>2</sup> indicates that the readings begin with verse 19, the above first verse from the readings is pieced together from verse 15.

My reason for pointing this out is my concern for truth even in the face of countervailing pressure to be silent.

My sense of **Isaiah 22:19-23** is that if we do not engage the Church and participate in the struggle of the Church Militant, we risk losing the inheritance of our Faith.

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<sup>1</sup> Because the Lectionary generally follows Saint Joseph Edition of The New American Bible: Translated from the Original Languages with Critical Use of All the Ancient Sources: Including The Revised New Testament and the Revised Psalms Authorized by the Board of Trustees of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine and Approved by the Administrative Committee/Board of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the United States Catholic Conference: with many helps for Bible reading: Vatican II Constitution on Divine Revelation, How to Read the Bible, Historical Survey of the Lands of the Bible, Bible Dictionary, Liturgical Index of Sunday Readings, Doctrinal Bible Index, and over 50 Photographs and Maps of the Holy Land (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1992), so do my quotations of passages used to fill in passages left out of the Lectionary.

<sup>2</sup> National Conference of Catholic Bishops, The Roman Missal Restored by Decree of the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican and Promulgated by Authority of Pope Paul VI: Lectionary for Mass: For Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America: Second Typical Edition: Volume I: Sundays, Solemnities, Feasts of the Lord and Saints (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1998), page 784

## Psalm 138:1-2, 2-3, 6, 8

The following verse 5, while omitted from the Lectionary seems pertinent to the prayer of this Mass. This psalm is used for readings 71C and 111C. Verse 5 appears in 71C, but not in 111C.

Verse 5 They will sing of the **ways** of the Lord: “How great is the **glory** of the Lord!”

**Ways** is mentioned again, below, in Romans.

**Glory** carries meaning difficult to translate.

Another interesting example of semantic borrowing is the use of  $\delta\omicron\xi\alpha$ , which in Classical Greek meant “opinion” or, in its passive sense, “reputation” (i.e., the opinion others have of a person). In the NT, of course, the word commonly has quite a different sense: “radiance, glory.” How can we account for such a substantial semantic shift? The explanation is that the LXX translators chose this word to render Hebrew ... (“weight”), which was commonly used in the figurative sense of “importance, distinction” (cf. English *weighty*), then more specifically of divine manifestations. It is possible that in the Hellenistic period  $\delta\omicron\xi\alpha$ , because of its sense of “good) reputation,” was already used with reference to the renown of kings and others in authority. If so, one can more easily understand why the LXX translators would have used this term in passages such as Exodus 24:17; 40:34; Ezekiel 1:28; and many others. But whatever the precise reasons for such use, it remains a striking instance of the effect that Hebrew had on the vocabulary of the Greek Bible.<sup>3</sup>

Verse 8a           The Lord is with me to the end.

The above verse 8a is omitted in the Lectionary.

## Romans 11:33-36

Verse 33c           how unsearchable his **ways**.

See above, verse 5 in the Psalm.

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<sup>3</sup> Karen H. Jobes and Moisés Silva, Invitation to the Septuagint (Grand Rapids, Michigan 49516: Baker Academic: A Division of Baker Book House Co., 2000), page 110.

## Matthew 16:18

## Matthew 16:13-20

Verse 18           And so I say to you, you are **Peter**, and upon this **rock** I will build my **church**, and the **gates** of the netherworld shall not prevail against it.

Moreover, there is an insurmountable philological problem with the “defensive” interpretation of the **gates**: as J. Jeremias has noted, in “Jewish Greek” *katischynein* + genitive is always *active* in meaning (= “to vanquish”), never passive (= “to resist successfully”). The **gates**, therefore, would seem to be attacking the church. This philological deduction is supported by observation of another Matthean passage: 7:24-25 also portrays a rock, and here the rock is subjected to a pounding by inimical forces.

What sense, then, can we make of attacking **gates**? First, in the OT “**gates**” (*se arim*) can be a *pars-pro-toto* term for the city itself; indeed, the English translations occasionally render *se arim* “town” or “city.” In line with this metonymy, in Wis 16:13 (cf. 1 Kgs 2:6) and Isa 38:10 “**gates** of Hades” seems to stand for the entire underworld city of the dead.<sup>4</sup>

...

Contrary to the usual interpretation of our passage, the locus of this revelation, the **church**, will not be a vestibule into the kingdom of heaven conceived as a realm, a domain which human beings enter *to escape* from the assaults of Hades. The **church** will rather be the *site of the battle* between the powers of Hades and the power of heaven. In the age inaugurated by Jesus’ death and resurrection, the **gates** of the underworld will swing open and the horrors of the pit will erupt onto the earth with a roar, attacking everything on it—including the **church**—with unbridled fury. In the midst of this peril, however, **Peter** will be given the keys that unlock the **gates** of heaven. Those **gates**, too, will swing open, and the kingly power of God (*basileia ton ouranon*) will break forth from heaven to enter the arena against the demons. Hades will not prevail against the **church** because God will be powerfully at work in it, revealing his

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<sup>4</sup> Joel Marcus, “The Gates of Hades and the Keys of the Kingdom (Matt 16:18-19),” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 50, No. 3 (July 1988), pages 444-445.

purposes for it and imparting the heavenly power to fulfill those purposes, so that his will is done on earth as it is in heaven (6:10). Thus in **Matt 16:18-19**, as in Judaism, the triumph of God, the manifestation of the *basileia* of heaven, involves the revelation of the law; but this law has not been christologically redefined by the apocalyptic event of Jesus' death and resurrection. In the period between the resurrection and the parousia, it is Jesus as cosmic Lord who both imparts torah and empowers his hearers to do it, "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (28:19-20).<sup>5</sup>

...

Critical to the self-identification of Matthew's groups is their use of the term *ekklesia* ("**church**" **Matt 16:18**; 18:17). Saldarini attempts to minimize the significance of the evidence by postulating that Matthew chooses this common Greek word for "assembly" merely to distinguish Christian meetings from those of their Pharisaic opponents. In **Matt 16:18**, however, great emphasis is placed on the fact that the Messiah promised to build a new entity, *his assembly (ekklesia)* on the **rock of Peter**. Clearly, Matthew understands *ekklesia* in this instance as a word referring not simply to the local Christian assembly but to the whole movement. Since Matthew undoubtedly knew that the term had become the standard way of referring to congregations in the Pauline wing of the church, his use of it suggests that the Matthean groups did not rigorously disassociate themselves from Gentile Christianity. Saldarini concedes that Matthew's group was part of a network that included Pauline **churches**.<sup>6</sup>

...

James, the brother of Jesus, the great hero of Jewish Christianity, received scant attention in the First Gospel (13:55). Is this significant? Here, perhaps, the argument from silence has more force, since **Matthew**, in **16:17-19**, makes such a point of elevating **Peter**, the patron saint of the Roman **church**, to a position far above that which he has in the Gospel of

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<sup>5</sup> Joel Marcus, "The Gates of Hades and the Keys of the Kingdom (Matt 16:18-19)," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 50, No. 3 (July 1988), pages 455.

<sup>6</sup> Douglas R. A. Hare, "How Jewish Is the Gospel of Matthew?" the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 2 (April 2000), page 269.

Mark, the gospel traditionally associated with Rome and **Peter**, while at the same time Matthew abstains from anti-Paulinism. Like every argument from silence, however, this one must remain inconclusive.<sup>7</sup>

...

*D. **Matt 16:16**—Luke 9:20 against Mark 8:29*

In the confession of **Peter** at Caesarea Philippi, we find a Matthew-Luke agreement against Mark. In Mark 8:29, **Peter** confesses “**You are the Christ.**” Matthew in his parallel has “**You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.**” and Luke has “**the Christ of God.**” In John 6:69, we have in a very different context a confession of **Peter** in which he confesses Jesus as “the Holy One of God.” All four Gospels have some sort of confession by **Peter** as to Jesus’ identity. All but Mark contain the genitive phrase “**of God**” as part of that confession. It may be therefore that a well-known confession made by **Peter** circulated in the early church and that in it Jesus was referred to as “**the Christ**” followed by “**of God.**” Matthew, Luke, and John knew that in the tradition **Peter** referred to Jesus as “God’s Messiah,” i.e., the **Christ of God**. Matthew, Luke, and John knew that in the tradition **Peter** referred to Jesus as “God’s Messiah,” i.e., the **Christ of God**. John’s ‘Holy One’ seems at first to be a different title, but the use of “Holy one” as a synonym for **Christ** in the Christian tradition is not altogether strange. We find that Jesus is called “Holy One” by demons in Mark 1:24 and Luke 4:34, and Luke expressly states that the demons know that he is the **Christ** (Luke 4:41). This title is also used in Luke 1:35 as a synonym for “Son of **God**” who is the **Christ** (Luke 2:11, 26; etc.).<sup>8</sup>

Verse 19            I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you **loose** on earth shall be **loosed** in heaven.

Again, a scholar:

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<sup>7</sup> Douglas R. A. Hare, “How Jewish Is the Gospel of Matthew?” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 2 (April 2000), pages 266-267.

<sup>8</sup> Robert H. Stein, “The Matthew-Luke Agreements Against Mark: Insight from John,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 54, No. 3 (July, 1992), page 497.

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A comparable understanding of the “unloosing” of Scripture can be found in John 10:35, where Jesus asserts ironically and in strikingly similar terms: ου δυναται λυθηναι η γραφη (“Scripture cannot be **loosed**”). obviously, interpretation is not the issue; the point seems rather to be the divine authority behind the fixation of the biblical text, a concept reminiscent of the binding/**loosing** motif in **Matt 16:19**; 18:18. Divinely revealed (“**unloosed**”) Scripture cannot be altered (“**loosed**”) by human initiative. ... concern for the preservation of the text of Scripture ...<sup>9</sup>

In total context, I take **Matt 16:19** to include the power to interpret scripture correctly.

Scholars wonder where and why the Gospel According to Matthew was written:

... If we look at four Matthew books which appeared in 1974, I think we shall find further support for a Palestinian origin. First of all, Eduard Schweizer, while cautiously noting that the important role of **Peter** in the gospel (**16:16-19**) points rather toward Antioch than toward Jerusalem, an insisting on an apparent majority of non-Jews in the Matthean community (21:23), firmly asserts that the gospel must have been written in an area where Judaism continued to rule, that is, Palestine or the neighboring part of Syria. He then refines this to Syria or the contiguous regions of Galilee. We are thus with Schweizer very close to Caesarea.<sup>10</sup>

...

This inquiry has endeavored to draw together what direct and indirect evidence there is available to support a Palestinian, Judean, and even a Caesarean provenance for the canonical gospel according to Matthew, and this, not simply out of idle speculatively historical curiosity, but in order to try to provide a concrete localization for the gospel as it is widely understood in contemporary scholarship, viz., as being in dialogue with the heirs of the Pharisees, breathing a Palestinian atmosphere, yet written in Greek for a Greek-speaking community which is in transition from a more Jewish-Christian, Torah-true character to being at least open to the Gentile mission, sponsored by a significant **church** with a tradition of learning and with good communications with the rest of the Empire. Caesarea seems to us the most plausible localization for such a gospel.

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<sup>9</sup> Rick Van De Water, “‘Removing the Boundary’ (Hosea 5:10) in First-Century Palestine,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 63, No. 4 (October 2001), page 625.

<sup>10</sup> B. T. Viviano, O.P., “Where Was the Gospel According to St. Matthew Written?” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 41, No. 4 (October, 1979), page 538-539.

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My notes for the Nineteenth Sunday included the following, with newly marked **bold**:

A similar transcending of traditional messianic categories occurs after 14:1—16:12, in which issues of response to the messianic Son of David come to the fore. **Peter**'s confession includes "**the Christ**," as the Marcan account (Mark 8:29), but **Matthew** makes him add "**the Son of the living God**" (16:16). In the account of the exchanges which follow and of the transfiguration he moves the focus, as in chap. 3, onto Jesus the Son of God, the universal judge (16:16—17:8).<sup>11</sup>

Finally, there is a *Magnificat* ® reading with which I heartily agree:

... To be heard it is not necessary to read from a book some beautiful formula composed for the occasion. ... it really gives me a headache!... I say very simply to God what I wish to say, without composing beautiful sentences, and he always understands me.<sup>12</sup>

In the above quotation, Saint Thérèse, in her sanctity, states what I mean that I do not like to attend meetings someone else has called in order to dispense information that I am quite capable of reading myself. I do not mind, however, meeting for the purpose of discussing information already at hand.

In conclusion, the notion of the intellectual life as a battle ground for the hearts and souls of us all raises up my prayer from these readings.

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<sup>11</sup> W. R. G. Loader, "Son of David, Blindness, Possession, and Duality in Matthew," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 44, No. 4 (October, 1982), pages 583-584.

<sup>12</sup> Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, *From Story of a Soul, the Autobiography of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, third Edition, translated by John Clarke, O.C.I.* © 1996 by Washington Province of Discalced Carmelites, ICS Publications, 2131 Lincoln Road, N.E. Washington, DC 20002, USA as cited in *Magnificat* ® Vol. 4, No. 6 (August 2002), page 258.