

Fearless

Matthew 10:24-31

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Introduction:

The discussion now proceeds to relate the suffering and rejection to be experienced by the disciples to that which has begun already but which will increase dramatically and be experienced even by Jesus himself. If he is to be treated rudely and rejected, so too must they expect the same. This emphasis will become sharper as the Gospel proceeds, coming to its climax in connection with Jesus' direct predictions of his passion (see 16:24–26).

Body:

- I. Not above v. 24-25
 - a. Not Above
 - i. Not Above His Teacher
 - 1. Lk. the saying about the disciple and his teacher illustrates the saying about the blind leading the blind. Because a blind man cannot be directed by a blind man, so a scholar dependent on his teacher cannot receive more wisdom than his teacher has. At the best, he will be as wise as his teacher. Here the words have a different application, and are intended as a warning to the disciples to expect persecution.
 - b. Just Like
 - i. Like His Master /Teacher
 - 1. Enough
 - 2. “Servant” (δοῦλος) and “master” (κύριος, lit. “lord”) are different words for the same relationship. In both cases, one is required to be “like” (ὡς) the other, the very point of this relationship in the first place. This was an accepted viewpoint in Palestinian Jewish culture and may reflect a Jewish proverb
 - 3. Although never the teacher's equal, the disciple can aspire to be like the teacher, and the servant can aspire to be like the Lord. The theme is the imitation of Christ: Christians must follow Christ's example. It should be stressed, however, that in Matthew the idea is neither simplistic nor literal
 - 4. ‘If anyone should ask how to acquire humility, he would answer: “It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord.” See how much humility was shown by Him who has given us this commandment and who gives us this gift; imitate Him and you will acquire it’

c. Not Above the Suffering
i. Head of the House

1. House

- a. The imagery of the housemaster and household members refers here to the one who heads and those who belong to the kingdom. οἰκιακός, “household member,” occurs again in its literal sense in v 36; οἰκοδεσπότης, “master of the house,” a favorite term of Matthew, is often used in the parables and refers almost always to God or Jesus (e.g., 20:1, 11; 21:33); it also refers twice to the disciples as those given charge of the kingdom (see 13:52; 24:43). Here the words “housemaster” and “household members” reflect the same relationship as teacher/disciple and master/servant.
- b. Here as in 8:8 practically equivalent to the infinitive. See Moulton, p. 206 ff.—Βεελζεβούλ] Here clearly a term of reproach meaning “lofty dwelling,” cf. 1 K 8:13, Is 63:15; but זבול in this sense is used as the dwelling of God, whereas we should expect here some term equivalent to Hades, the abode of evil spirits.

2. Beelzebul

- a. Although the name Beelzeboul has not yet occurred in the Gospel (it will in 12:24, 27), it is implied in 9:34, where τῷ ἄρχοντι τῶν δαιμονίων, “the prince of demons” (i.e., Satan), is mentioned in the very words used to identify Beelzeboul in 12:24. In both passages it is the Pharisees who use the name for Jesus. The name means “lord [=בַּעַל, *be‘el*, or *ba‘al*] of the house [זְבוּל, *zēbûl*, ‘height, abode, dwelling’]” and thus itself stands as a play on words opposite Jesus as the “lord of the household
- b. He was even accused of being in league with Beelzebul (Mk 3:22). If he then had followers who were extensions of his ministry, we can readily imagine that they too sometimes encountered less than a favourable reception. In such a situation Mt 10:24–5 is readily comprehended as a word of Jesus.
- c. In any event the meaning of ‘Beelzebul’ for the NT is clear. He is the (not ‘a’, despite the lack of an article) prince of demons (cf. 12:24 par.), the commander in charge of demonic hordes

ii. Malign You More

- a. But the disciples and servants of the messianic king who are sent to proclaim the good news of the kingdom are not

- prepared at this point for the fateful rejection their teacher and Lord will experience or for the fact that they are to experience similar treatment. The relationship between Jesus and his disciples means that they will share rejection, hostility, and persecution. The same logic, as reflected in John 15:20 (cf. John 13:16), makes the point tersely
- b. But if Jesus suffers hostility and rejection, so must his disciples be prepared for the same. Thus, almost by definition, with discipleship to Jesus and the witness of the gospel comes an unavoidable suffering.

iii. Peter

1. Get Behind me Satan Matthew 16:21-23

II. Speak UP 26-31

- a. Fear
 - i. Despite the persecution and trouble that will come their way because of the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom, the disciples are not to be afraid of αὐτούς, “them” (cf. Jer. 1:8),
 - ii. This emphasis on freedom from fear of one’s persecutors became very important to the early Church in the midst of much suffering (cf. 1 Peter 3:14; Rev 2:10).
- b. Nothing Concealed
 - i. Not be Revealed
- c. Hidden
 - i. Known
 - ii. Rather, on the last day God will see to it that the truth will be victorious (cf. the targum on Eccles 12:14). The eschatological judgement will be public and all lies exposed (cf. 2 Esdras 16:64–6). Therefore those on the side of the truth need have no fear. Although that which is hidden will be revealed (v. 26), this is something the disciples should not simply wait for or expect. They themselves are called to bring it about proleptically, that is, to make known the truth and those who belong to it. They do this by preaching the gospel of Jesus
- d. What I tell Yyou
 - i. Tell in Darkness
 - 1. What Jesus speaks then “in the darkness” (ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ) and “in the ear” (εἰς τὸ οὖς), privately among the disciples and in sometimes cryptic language, will be spoken ἐν τῷ φωτί, “in the light,” and proclaimed ἐπὶ τῶν δωμάτων, “from the rooftops.” Thus the time following the resurrection will be a time of proclamation of the gospel in new strength, clarity, and power. The

contrast is between the darkness of the pre-Easter period and the light of the post-Easter period

2. despite the eschatological ring of the words, would seem to have its original meaning in reference to the proclamation of the gospel, esp. in the post-resurrection period as in Mark 4:22. Luke, on the other hand, applies the logion to the words of the disciples (Luke 12:3, contrast Luke 8:17), The gospel, up till now veiled in a degree of secrecy, is to be made clear and plain through the preaching of the disciples and the Church. There is a kind of inevitability about this making known of the gospel through the disciples,

ii. Speak in the Light

1. The whole paragraph is permeated by eschatology. 10:26 anticipates the revelation of the last day, and v. 28 gains its force from belief in the resurrection and final judgement. (vi) The prospect of suffering and even death (vv. 28–31) is consistent with Jesus' conviction that the messianic tribulation had entered the present with the death of John the Baptist (11:12)
2. The subject now switches from eschatological revelation to the meaning of death. But the underlying thought remains the same: all is not what it appears to be. God's eschatological future will reveal the true meaning of earthly events.

e. What You Hear

i. Whispered

ii. Proclaim it on Rooftops

1. The message must be proclaimed, and God will surely look after the ultimate welfare of his servants. Even death itself is not to be feared, for the person is more than the body. Life after death is assumed here as a fact, as is the reality of judgment.
2. This would be consistent with his desire to encourage the missionary to preach the gospel in season and out of season, under all circumstances.

f. No Fear

i. Not Kill the Soul

1. ψυχὴν is here the disembodied 'soul' which can survive bodily death and later be reunited with a resurrected body

ii. Fear God not Man

1. Despite rejection, persecution, and even the prospect of death, the true follower of Jesus will know that he need not fear. God is the sovereign Lord, and what befalls God's own must somehow be within his will.

2. If the mission is the will and work of God through the disciples, they need not fear. The worst that human persecution can bring, in any event, is the death of the body (σῶμα). But a human being, made in the image of God, is more than a body, being a combination of both body and soul (ψυχή).

iii. Sovereign Worth and Value

1. 29 offered encouragement by invoking eschatological revelation, 10:28 by calling to mind the deathless soul. 10:29–31 now offers, by means of an *a fortiori* argument, a third means of consolation: God is sovereign, so whatever happens must, despite appearances, somehow be within his will. ‘Nothing happens without God’
2. Two illustrations of the unrestricted attention of God to even the smallest things of life are now provided: the death of a sparrow and the very number of hairs on one’s head (v 29a; see *Comment* on v 31). The implication (cf. v 31a) is not only that these things do not escape the notice of τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν, “your Father,” a term of intimacy and endearment, but that they too fall within the scope of his sovereign power and care (ἄνευ, “without the knowledge and consent of”; BAGD 65). The fact that sparrows were very inexpensive, the cheapest living things used for food (two for an ἰσάριον, a Roman copper coin worth 1/16 of a denarius), heightens the effect of the logion
3. The sparrow allusion recalls the illustration in the Sermon of the Mount (6:26, specifically concerning feeding) where another *a fortiori* argument is also found (cf. v 31b).
4. ‘Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies’ appears in Lk 12:6.
5. The numbering of the hairs on a head is a variant of the more common idea that when God protects, not even a single hair of a person’s head is allowed to perish (e.g., 1 Sam 14:45; 2 Sam 14:11; Luke 21:18; Acts 27:34). Since even the hairs of a person’s head are numbered (possibly a proverb), there is no need to fear what one’s enemies may do.
6. The conclusion from this reasoning (οὖν, “therefore”) is that “you are not to be afraid.” God has the knowledge, the power, and the concern to protect the disciples from any *ultimate* harm or injury. This conclusion itself implies the *a fortiori* argument, which is now made explicit in the reference back to the sparrows of v 29. They are actually worth almost nothing, yet they are not outside God’s attention and will. The conclusion of this argument comes only now in 31b: “You are worth more than many sparrows”

iv. Peter

1. Denies out of Fear Matthew 26:69-75
2. Preaches Pentecost Acts 2:14
3. Peter Do you Love Me John 21:15-17

Commentary Studies

The pericope consists of three parts: (1) the disciple/servant is *not above* the teacher/master (v 24); (2) the disciple/servant is *to be like* the teacher/master (v 25a); and (3) the result: the former can expect to be treated like or worse than the latter (v 25b). The parallelism especially

of v 24, but also of v 25a, is notable and again suggests a formulation designed for memorization.¹

Comment

24–25 The thought of vv 24–25a is self-evident and hardly needs articulation except for the surprise of v 25b. Clearly the disciple is not “greater than” (ὑπέρ) the teacher (μαθητής, “disciple,” and διδάσκαλος, “teacher,” are particularly important words for Matthew; for the latter, cf. 23:8), nor is the servant greater than the master. “Servant” (δοῦλος) and “master” (κύριος, lit. “lord”) are different words for the same relationship. In both cases, one is required to be “like” (ὡς) the other, the very point of this relationship in the first place. This was an accepted viewpoint in Palestinian Jewish culture and may reflect a Jewish proverb (cf. *Gen. Rab.* 49:2 [30d]; *Midr. Ps.* 27 §5 [113b]; *b. Ber.* 58b). But the disciples and servants of the messianic king who are sent to proclaim the good news of the kingdom are not prepared at this point for the fateful rejection their teacher and Lord will experience or for the fact that they are to experience similar treatment. The relationship between Jesus and his disciples means that they will share rejection, hostility, and persecution. The same logion, as reflected in John 15:20 (cf. John 13:16), makes the point tersely: “The servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.” Here the argument “how much more” is a *minori ad maius* (Heb. *qal wāḥômer*). Although the name Beelzeboul has not yet occurred in the Gospel (it will in 12:24, 27), it is implied in 9:34, where τῷ ἄρχοντι τῶν δαιμονίων, “the prince of demons” (i.e., Satan), is mentioned in the very words used to identify Beelzeboul in 12:24. In both passages it is the Pharisees who use the name for Jesus. The name means “lord [= בעל, *be’el*, or *ba’al*] of the house [בית, *zēbûl*, ‘height, abode, dwelling’]” and thus itself stands as a play on words opposite Jesus as the “lord of the household” (see Gaston; MacLaurin). “Lord of dung” is a possible, but less likely, rendering of the name. The textual variant Beelzebub means “lord of flies” (cf. 2 Kings 1:2). The imagery of the housemaster and household members refers here to the one who heads and those who belong to the kingdom. οἰκιακός, “household member,” occurs again in its literal sense in v 36; οἰκοδεσπότης, “master of the house,” a favorite term of Matthew, is often used in the parables and refers almost always to God or Jesus (e.g., 20:1, 11; 21:33); it also refers twice to the disciples as those given charge of the kingdom (see 13:52; 24:43). Here the words “housemaster” and “household members” reflect the same relationship as teacher/disciple and master/servant.

Explanation

Teacher and disciple, master and servant, stand together because of their respective responsibility and allegiance. Jesus and his chosen disciples stand preeminently together. In the

¹ Donald A. Hagner, [Matthew 1–13](#), vol. 33A, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1993), 282.

lit. literally

present discourse Jesus is instructing them to extend his ministry to Israel with the same words and deeds that characterized his own ministry, that is, with the good news of the fulfillment and the dawning of the kingdom. But if Jesus suffers hostility and rejection, so must his disciples be prepared for the same. Thus, almost by definition, with discipleship to Jesus and the witness of the gospel comes an unavoidable suffering. A large incongruity exists between the content of the message and the current experience of Jesus and the disciples; no doubt the latter had trouble assimilating the announcement of Jesus at this point, although they probably connected them with the messianic woes preceding the eschatological age itself. Nevertheless, though these words are ominous, the disciples can be comforted that Jesus will have preceded them in the experience of suffering and rejection and in turn can sustain them in the midst of it. This has been the testimony of the Church throughout the ages.²

Comment

26–27 Despite the persecution and trouble that will come their way because of the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom, the disciples are not to be afraid of αὐτούς, “them” (cf. Jer. 1:8), a general reference, which is to be connected with the unspecific “they” that is the subject of the verbs in the preceding sections (e.g., in vv 19, 23) and with τῶν ἀνθρώπων, “the people,” of v 17. The logion of v 26b, “nothing is hidden [κεκαλυμμένον] which will not be revealed [ἀποκαλυφθήσεται] and secret [κρυπτόν] which will not be made known [γνωσθήσεται],” despite the eschatological ring of the words, would seem to have its original meaning in reference to the proclamation of the gospel, esp. in the post-resurrection period as in Mark 4:22. Luke, on the other hand, applies the logion to the words of the disciples (Luke 12:3, contrast Luke 8:17), i.e., as a warning concerning their private conduct, which is thus tied in with the judgment theme in Luke 12:5. The gospel, up till now veiled in a degree of secrecy, is to be made clear and plain through the preaching of the disciples and the Church. There is a kind of inevitability about this making known of the gospel through the disciples, witnessed to by the divine passive verbs ἀποκαλυφθήσεται, “will be revealed,” and γνωσθήσεται, “will be made known,” where God is understood as the active agent working through the disciples. This full revelation and “making known” in its contrast to the present time must refer to the Church’s proclamation in the period following the resurrection (contra Luz). What Jesus speaks then “in the darkness” (ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ) and “in the ear” (εἰς τὸ οὖς), privately among the disciples and in sometimes cryptic language, will be spoken ἐν τῷ φωτί, “in the light,” and proclaimed ἐπὶ τῶν δωμάτων, “from the rooftops.” Thus the time following the resurrection will be a time of proclamation of the gospel in new strength, clarity, and power. The contrast is between the darkness of the pre-Easter period and the light of the post-Easter period (thus Davies-Allison).

28 If the mission is the will and work of God through the disciples, they need not fear. The worst that human persecution can bring, in any event, is the death of the body (σῶμα). But a human being, made in the image of God, is more than a body, being a combination of both body

² Donald A. Hagner, [Matthew 1–13](#), vol. 33A, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1993), 282–283.

and soul (ψυχή). In this distinction Matthew may well reflect the influence of Hellenistic Judaism and of contemporary martyrdom theology (cf. Wis 16:13–14; 2 Macc 6:30). The persecutors may kill the body, but only God has power over the soul and thus the whole person. It is thus God, the final judge of all, and not human beings, who alone is to be feared, that is, to be obeyed and trusted (cf. Ps 33:18) in the completion of the mission. This emphasis on freedom from fear of one's persecutors became very important to the early Church in the midst of much suffering (cf. 1 Peter 3:14; Rev 2:10). A Jewish parallel can be seen in 4 Macc 13:14: "Let us not fear him who thinks he kills." The fear of God as judge is referred to in Heb 10:31 and Rev 14:7 (cf. Jas 4:12a). It is not necessary to understand καὶ ψυχὴν καὶ σῶμα ἀπολέσαι ἐν γεέννῃ, "to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna" (a prediction found only here in the NT), as referring to a literal destruction of soul and body. This may be simply a hyperbolic description of the experience of Gehenna (Heb. גֵּי הִנּוֹם, *gê hinnôm*, "valley of Hinnom"; see on 5:22). See I. H. Marshall on this verse.

29–30 Two illustrations of the unrestricted attention of God to even the smallest things of life are now provided: the death of a sparrow and the very number of hairs on one's head (v 29a; see *Comment* on v 31). The implication (cf. v 31a) is not only that these things do not escape the notice of τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν, "your Father," a term of intimacy and endearment, but that they too fall within the scope of his sovereign power and care (ἄνευ, "without the knowledge and consent of"; BAGD, 65). The fact that sparrows were very inexpensive, the cheapest living things used for food (two for an ἄσσάριον, a Roman copper coin worth 1/16 of a denarius), heightens the effect of the logion. The sparrow allusion recalls the illustration in the Sermon of the Mount (6:26, specifically concerning feeding) where another *a fortiori* argument is also found (cf. v 31b). The numbering of the hairs on a head is a variant of the more common idea that when God protects, not even a single hair of a person's head is allowed to perish (e.g., 1 Sam 14:45; 2 Sam 14:11; Luke 21:18; Acts 27:34). Since even the hairs of a person's head are numbered (possibly a proverb), there is no need to fear what one's enemies may do.

31 The conclusion from this reasoning (οὖν, "therefore") is that "you are not to be afraid." God has the knowledge, the power, and the concern to protect the disciples from any *ultimate* harm or injury. This conclusion itself implies the *a fortiori* argument, which is now made explicit in the reference back to the sparrows of v 29. They are actually worth almost nothing, yet they are not outside God's attention and will. The conclusion of this argument comes only now in 31b: "You are worth more than many sparrows" (cf. 12:12, where a sheep is in view). The ὑμεῖς, "you," stands emphatically at the end of the sentence. Still the reader must supply the final point: therefore all the more will he care for you. This is the clear assumption of the exhortation not to fear. cf. the rabbinic parallel: "Rabbi Simon ben Yohiai said: 'No bird perishes without God, how much less man' " (y. Šeb. 9, 38d [22]; see Str-B 1:582–85).

BAGD W. Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ET, ed. W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich; 2d ed. rev. F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker (University of Chicago, 1979)

Str-B H. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, 4 vols. (Munich: Beck'sche, 1926–28)

Explanation

Wherever the gospel of the kingdom is proclaimed there will be opposition. When that opposition escalates into open hostility, the messengers of the good news are not to be afraid. The message must be proclaimed, and God will surely look after the ultimate welfare of his servants. Even death itself is not to be feared, for the person is more than the body. Life after death is assumed here as a fact, as is the reality of judgment. In short, God, the “Father,” who watches over the sparrows and knows the number of hairs on a person’s head, will care for his disciples through all that they may have to experience in the service of the gospel. In difficult times the disciples and the witnessing Church of every age have been able to take courage from these words (cf. 8:31).³

24. The editor here collects together other sayings bearing upon persecution.

(L) *A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above his master.*] Lk. in his Sermon (6:40) has clause *a*, adding: “but every one who is perfected shall be as his teacher.”

(L) **25.** *Sufficient for the disciple that he be as his teacher, and the slave (shall be) as his master. If they called the master of the house Beelzeboul, how much more the members of his house?*] In Lk. the saying about the disciple and his teacher illustrates the saying about the blind leading the blind. Because a blind man cannot be directed by a blind man, so a scholar dependent on his teacher cannot receive more wisdom than his teacher has. At the best, he will be as wise as his teacher. Here the words have a different application, and are intended as a warning to the disciples to expect persecution. If their Master has been ill-treated and slandered, they must expect similar treatment. It is clear that Mt. and Lk. were acquainted with the saying in a detached form or in different contexts.—ἵνα γένηται] Here as in 8:8 practically equivalent to the

³ Donald A. Hagner, [Matthew 1–13](#), vol. 33A, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1993), 285–287.

L the Matthæan Logia.

L the Matthæan Logia.

infinitive. See Moulton, p. 206 ff.—Βεελζεβούλ] Here clearly a term of reproach.¹ , of 2 K 1:6. This has been changed into זְבוּל בְּעַל in order to introduce assimilation to the sound of זָבַל = dung. In B. *Ab. Zar* 18⁶ the sacrifice (זֶכֶת) of the heathen is ironically called זָבַל “dung.” Cf. Dalm. *Gram.* p. 137. The objection to this explanation is that there is no evidence that Baalzebul was adopted into the popular demonology as a powerful devil, or that flies were particularly identified with evil spirits. Others connect *zebul* with the Hebrew זְבוּל meaning “lofty dwelling,” cf. 1 K 8:13, Is 63:15; but זְבוּל in this sense is used as the dwelling of God, whereas we should expect here some term equivalent to Hades, the abode of evil spirits. In the Rabbinical literature, Zebul is the name of the fourth heaven, in which are the heavenly Jerusalem, the Temple, the Altar, and Michael.² In the apocalyptic literature the lord of evil spirits and the Antichrist is called Beliar; cf. Charles on *Ascension of Isaiah* 1:8.

25. ἀρκετόν] See on 6:34.—ὁ δοῦλος] sc. “let him be” or “shall be.” We should expect τῷ δούλῳ. The nom. is probably due to careless translation.⁴

26–33. The editor here inserts a section which finds a parallel in Lk 12:2–9, where it is ascribed to an occasion at a later period in Christ’s life. There is a good deal of agreement in language, with some striking differences. These differences do not favour the theory that the two Evangelists borrowed from the same written source; and the difference in historical setting is still more unfavourable to such a view, unfavourable to such a view, unless the supposed source contained sayings without any historical settings. It is probable that the two writers drew these words from different written sources, Mt.’s being the Logia.

¹ C E *al* have Βεελζεβούλ; **℣** B., Βεεζεβούλ; S¹ c g² Beelzebub. See on 12:24.

B. *Babylonian Talmud*.

Dalm. Dalman.

² Cf. *Chagiga* 12^b.

⁴ Willoughby C. Allen, [*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Matthew*](#), International Critical Commentary (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1907), 107–108.

(L) 26. *Fear them not, therefore; for nothing is covered which shall not be revealed, and hidden which shall not be known.*] Three times in the following verses we get this “fear not.” See Introduction, p. 65. The saying about that which is hidden being revealed seems to have been a traditional utterance of Christ which could be adapted to any context. Mk. has it after the parable of the Sower, 4:22, in the difficult form, οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν κρυπτόν ἐὰν μὴ ἵνα φανερωθῇ οὐδὲ ἐγένετο ἀπόκρυφον ἀλλ’ ἵνα εἰς φανερόν ἔλθῃ. It there seems to be applied to the teaching in parables. The truth was hidden in the parabolic teaching, but only that it might gain the greater publicity. Mt., having inserted a similar saying here, omits Mk 4:22 in his parallel section. Lk. in the parallel to Mk. has οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν κρυπτόν ὃ οὐ φανερόν γεγέσται οὐδὲ ἀπόκρυφον ὃ οὐ μὴ γνωσθῇ καὶ εἰς φανερόν ἔλθῃ. Lk. here in γνωσθῇ shows remembrance of the form of the saying which occurs in Mt., γνωσθήσεται. Lk. has the saying again in 12:2, where he has a section, 12:2–9, parallel to Mt 10:26–33, but assigned to a different occasion. The saying in 12:2 runs thus: οὐδὲν δὲ συγκεκαλυμμένον ἐστίν, ὃ οὐκ ἀποκαλυφθήσεται καὶ κρυπτόν ὃ οὐ γνωσθήσεται. This is almost identical with Mt., where the words seem to be used as a proverbial saying, affording an analogy for the following exhortation: “Just as all hidden things are destined to be brought to light, so you must publish to the world what I tell you now in obscurity.” In Lk. the application seems different: “Beware of hypocrisy, because the truth will come to light.”

(L) 27. *What I say to you in the darkness, speak ye in the light; and what you hear at the ear (in whispers), proclaim upon the housetops.*] Lk. has: “Wherefore (ἀνθ’ ὧν), whatever things you say in the darkness shall be heard in the light, and what you speak to the ear (*i.e.* privately) in the chambers shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.” In Mt. the meaning seems to be: “I give you My teaching in privacy and obscurity. But I wish you to be the agents in making it everywhere public.” In Lk. the idea rather is: “Hypocrisy is essentially futile, inasmuch as all things hidden ultimately come to light, and your secret words and whispers will one day be known.”

(L) 28. *And fear not those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul. But fear rather Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna.*] The second “fear not,” cf. v. 26. The warning there is against fear of slander; here, against fear of persecution to the death: “In your work of making My teaching public you will meet with persecution. Fear not physical death. But fear the wrath of God against unfaithfulness to Him, for He can destroy soul and body together in Gehenna.” The Talmud (B. *Rosh ha Sh* 16^b 17^a) says that the school of Shammai taught that at the judgement-day there would be three classes of men. Of these, one would remain in Gehinnom for twelve months, after which their bodies would be destroyed and their souls burned. But, as a rule, both in Apocalyptic and Talmudic literature, the punishment of the wicked is regarded as eternal; cf. Volz, *Jüd. Eschat.* pp. 286 f. Lk. has: “But I say unto you, my friends, Fear not those who kill the body, and after these things have nothing more that they can do. But I will show you

L the Matthæan Logia.

L the Matthæan Logia.

L the Matthæan Logia.

B. *Babylonian Talmud.*

whom you should fear. Fear Him who has power after killing to cast into Gehenna. Yea, I say unto you, fear Him.”

For φοβηθῆτε ἀπό, a Hebraistic idiom, cf. Blass, p. 88.

For γέεννα, cf. on 5:22.

(L) 29. *Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and not one of them falls to the ground without your Father.*] Lk. has: “Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings? and not one of them is forgotten before God.”

ἄσσάριον] The Latin *as*, known to the Talmudic writers as טוֹל . It was equivalent to 1/16th of a denarius, *i.e.* to something less than a halfpenny. Cf. *Pesikta des Rab. Kahana*, 10 (Wünsche), p. 113: “If the bird is not captured without the will of heaven, how much less we!”

(L) 30. *But even the hairs of your head are all numbered.*] So Lk. with ἀλλὰ καὶ—ὕμῶν for ὕμῶν δὲ καί. The emphasis here is rather upon αἱ τρίχες than upon ὕμῶν.

(L) 31. *Fear not, therefore, you are more valuable than many sparrows.*] So Lk. without οὖν or ὑμεῖς. This is the third “Fear not”; cf. vv. 26, 28.⁵

DISCIPLE AND TEACHER, SERVANT AND MASTER (10:24–5)

Between 10:16–23, which deals with persecution, and 10:26–31, which offers consolation, Matthew has inserted 10:24–5. The passage, which probably came to the evangelist as isolated tradition,¹⁰⁰ can be read in two different ways. Taken with what comes before it, the text declares

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L the Matthæan Logia.

L the Matthæan Logia.

⁵ Willoughby C. Allen, [*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Matthew*](#), International Critical Commentary (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1907), 108–109.

¹⁰⁰ The closest Lukan parallel is 6:40. This differs from 10:24–5 in that it has a different context, a different application, a different structure, and abbreviated content. Perhaps Lk

the necessity of suffering: they persecuted the master, surely they will persecute his servants. If, on the other hand, 10:24–5 be taken with what follows, the emphasis would be upon consolation: take heart, for when they persecute you, they are doing no more than they did to your Lord. Three considerations move us to think that the emphasis is upon the necessity of suffering. First, in both Lk 6:40 and Jn 13:16 the saying about disciple and teacher or servant and Lord has nothing to do with consolation but is used in a hortatory context. A paraenetic application may have been traditional. Secondly, in both *b. Ber.* 55b and *Sipre* on Lev 25:23, ‘It is enough, etc.’ is used to express not consolation but resignation (see further Gruenewald (v)). Thirdly, according to our structural analysis of chapter 10, the passage belongs to the triad 5–15 + 16–23 + 24–5 while 10:26–31 stands by itself. See Excursus VIII. This encourages us to link vv. 24–5 with what precedes, not with what follows.

Mt 10:24–5 has its closest parallel in Jn 13:16 (cf. 15:20). As Dodd’s careful investigation of this passage has shown, it is not easily reckoned as an adaptation of Mt 10:24–5 (*Tradition*, pp. 335–8). His conclusion that Jn 13:16 preserves an oral variant of the quatrain in Mt 10:24–5 is well grounded.¹⁰¹

Concerning authenticity, one could consider 10:24a a secular proverb which entered the Jesus tradition and then attracted to itself additions (cf. Bultmann, *History*, pp. 86, 99, 103). Yet Jesus himself mined traditional wisdom materials,¹⁰² and if our tradition-history (see below) is correct, 10:24–5 should be treated as a unit independently attested in John’s gospel. We are inclined to receive 10:24–5 as dominical. Certainly Jesus during his own ministry was rebuked in the strongest terms (see on 19:12). He was even accused of being in league with Beelzebul (Mk 3:22). If he then had followers who were extensions of his ministry, we can readily imagine that they too sometimes encountered less than a favourable reception. In such a situation Mt 10:24–5 is readily comprehended as a word of Jesus.

24. οὐκ ἔστιν μαθητὴς ὑπὲρ τὸν διδάσκαλον.¹⁰³ So Lk 6:40a. The sentiment may well have been proverbial (note the present tense). On Jesus as ‘teacher’ in Matthew see on 8:19.

οὐδὲ δοῦλος ὑπὲρ τὸν κύριον αὐτοῦ. Compare Jn 13:16. There is for our author no negative connotation to the idea of being a servant or slave. Jesus himself was a servant (cf. 20:28). Christian service is perfect freedom. Compare Philo, *De cherub.* 107: ‘To be the slave of God is

6:40 = Q is an excerpt from the unit preserved independently in M. It is less likely that 10:24–5 comes from Q and that Luke abbreviated the text. We also deem unlikely the suggestion that Mt 10:24–5 is Matthew’s expansion of Lk 6:40 = Q, although this is the judgement of Gnika, *Matthäusevangelium* 1, p. 374; cf. Gundry, *Commentary*, p. 195.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Brown, *John* 2, pp. 569–72. If Mt 10:24–5 be considered, against our judgement, as mostly redactional, then one would almost be forced to conclude that Matthew’s gospel has influenced John: the parallels between Mt 10:24–5 and Jn 13:16 and 15:20 are too close to be accidental.

¹⁰² See Davies, *SSM*, pp. 457–60.

¹⁰³ αὐτοῦ appears at the end in **X** W ^f13 1424 *al* sy. It could be original. It increases the parallelism with v. 24b as well as the corresponding clauses in v. 25.

the highest boast of man, a treasure more precious not only than freedom, but than wealth and power and all that mortals most cherish’.

25. Although never the teacher’s equal, the disciple can aspire to be like the teacher, and the servant can aspire to be like the Lord. The theme is the imitation of Christ: Christians must follow Christ’s example. It should be stressed, however, that in Matthew the idea is neither simplistic nor literal. Our author would hardly have commended the Cerinthians and Ebionites for using Mt 10:25 to urge that, because Jesus was circumcised, Christians should be also (see Epiphanius, *Haer.* 30:26:2). Matthew’s text moves much more in the direction of the words attributed to Isaac the Syrian: ‘If anyone should ask how to acquire humility, he would answer: “It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord.” See how much humility was shown by Him who has given us this commandment and who gives us this gift; imitate Him and you will acquire it’ (Theophan, *Philokalia*, Isaac the Syrian 133).

ἀρκετὸν τῷ μαθητῇ ἵνα γένηται ὡς ὁ διδάσκαλος αὐτοῦ. Before ὡς Lk 6:40 has this: κατηρτισμένος δὲ πᾶς ἔσται. Matthew may be responsible for enhancing the parallelism between this clause and v. 24a. ἄρκετος—which here means ‘sufficient in the eyes of God’ (cf. Bonnard, p. 149)—appears only three times in the NT: Mt 6:34; 10:25; 1 Pet 4:3. For γίνομαι+ ὡς¹⁰⁴ see also 6:16; 18:3; 28:4 (all without parallel). ἵνα γένηται also appears in 23:26 (diff. Lk 11:41).

If 10:24 *may* reformulate a secular proverb, 10:25 certainly does. See SB 1, pp. 577–8; Gruenewald (v). Note especially *Sipra* on Lev 25:23: *dayyô lē·ebed šeyyihyeh kērabbô*. Matthew’s formulation is closer to the rabbinic parallels than is Luke’s; see Schlatter, p. 342.

καὶ ὁ δοῦλος ὡς ὁ κύριος αὐτοῦ. This clause is required in order to maintain the parallelism with v. 24.

εἰ τὸν οἰκοδεσπότην Βεελζεβούλ ἐπεκάλεσαν πόσω μᾶλλον τοὺς οἰκιακοὺς αὐτοῦ. Compare 1 Pet 4:1. It is precisely because the disciples are members of the Christian household that they are persecuted.

10:25c has no synoptic parallel and might therefore be regarded as redactional. But the word statistics offer little support.¹⁰⁵ In addition, because 10:24–5b has secular parallels and would, standing by itself, be subject to various interpretations, v. 25c probably preserves the original (that is, Jesus’) application to the proverbial material. In other words, v. 25c is the *raison d’être* for vv. 24–5b, so the two were presumably handed on together. In support of this conclusion, Jn 15:20 takes up Jn 13:16 (see above) and follows it with this: ‘If they persecuted me, they will persecute you’. This is evidence that the slave/master saying was associated in the tradition with mistreatment of the disciples. Finally, the juxtaposition of

¹⁰⁴ Often in the LXX for *hāyâ + ka·ăšer*.

¹⁰⁵ Βεελζεβούλ appears only three times, twice with parallels (12:24, 27). πόσω μᾶλλον is used only one other time (7:11) and in that instance comes from Q (cf. Lk 11:13). οἰκιακός: Mt: 2 (once in an OT quotation: 10:35); Mk: 0; Lk: 0. The only word possibly characteristic of Matthew is οἰκοδεσπότης (Mt: 7; Mk: 1; Lk: 4). Although Brooks, pp. 51–2 assigns the line to redaction, he admits that ‘the study of vocabulary is inconclusive’.

οικοδεσπότην and Βεελζεβούλ is telling. The former could be rendered *bē-ēl-zēbūl*,¹⁰⁶ which is obviously very close to ‘Beelzebul’ (cf. Jeremias, *Theology*, p. 7). If not coincidence, either we have before us the translation of a Semitic sentence, or Matthew, although writing in Greek, was thinking in another language.

Who is the subject of ἐπεκάλεσαν? In 9:34 the Pharisees say that Jesus casts out demons by the prince of demons, and 10:25 refers back to this. Further, in 12:24 it is again the Pharisees who level the same charge. So ἐπεκάλεσαν is probably not an impersonal plural. The implicit subject of 10:25c would appear to be the Jewish leaders. It is they who accuse Jesus and his followers of Satanic inspiration.

Βεελζεβούλ¹⁰⁷ (cf. 4 Βας 1:2 Sym) has been thought by many to derive from the OT god of Ekron, *ba-al zēbūb* (‘Lord of the flies’; cf. the LXX translation—Βααλ μυῖαν θεόν—and Josephus, *Ant.* 9:19); see 2 Kgs 1:2–3, 6, 16. But the best NT mss. have ‘Beelzebul’ (that is, λ at the end, not β). Also problematic is derivation from *bē-ēl dēbāb* (= ‘adversary’, that is, ‘master of complaint’; criticism in SB 1, p. 631) or from *bē-ēl zibbūl* (= ‘Lord of dung’; cf. the Βελχειρά = *ba-al hārê* in some copies of Asc. Isa 2–3 and 5; but he is neither Satan nor a spirit). The best guess is that Βεελζεβούλ is an ancient name for the Canaanite god Baal, the Lord of the heavens (cf. Albright and Mann, p. 126; supportive is the possible wordplay with οἰκοδεσπότην=‘lord of the dwelling’; see above). In Ugaritic texts he is known as ‘Exalted one, Lord of the earth’ (= *zbl b-l arš*; see Fitzmyer, *Luke* 2, p. 920).¹⁰⁸ In any event the meaning of ‘Beelzebul’ for the NT is clear. He is the (not ‘a’, despite the lack of an article) prince of demons (cf. 12:24 par.), the commander in charge of demonic hordes (cf. T. Sol. 3:6; Origen, *C. Cels.* 8:25). In the Testament of Solomon he is said to have once been ‘the highest-ranking angel in heaven’ (6:1–2). This suggests identification with Satan, and Rev 12:9 arm has ‘Beelzebul’ for διάβολος. It seems likely that by NT times ‘Beelzebul’ was one of Satan’s several names, along with ‘Asmodeus’ (Tob 3:8; contrast T. Sol. 5, where Beelzebul and Asmodeus are separate beings), ‘Belial’ (Jub 1:20; 2 Cor 6:15), and ‘Mastemah’ (Jub. 10:8; 11:5). Still, this is not certain, and Hippolytus, *Haer.* 6.34.1, and the Gospel of Nicodemus distinguish the two. (Dante identified Satan and Beelzebul, Milton did not.)

¹⁰⁶ A hybrid form, from Aramaic *bē-ēl*, Hebrew *zēbūl*.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. 4 Βας 1:2 Sym. Some NT mss. have Βεεζεβουλ (so **Ν**, **Β**), others *Beelzebub* (so c vg sys^{s.p.}; this is assimilation to 2 Kgs 1:2–6). Lit.: W. E. M. Aitken, ‘Beelzebul’, *JBL* 31 (1912), pp. 34–53; SB 1, pp. 631–4; W. Foerster, *TWNT* 1, pp. 605–6; T. H. Gastor, *IDB* 4, s.v.; L. Gaston, ‘Beelzebul’, *TZ* 18 (1962), pp. 247–55; M. Limbeck, ‘Beelzebul—eine ursprūchliche Bezeichnung für Jesus?’, in *Wort Gottes in der Zeit*, ed. H. Feld and J. Nolte, Düsseldorf, 1973, pp. 31–42; E. C. B. MacLaurin, ‘Beelzebul’, *NovT* 20 (1978), pp. 156–60; Schenk, *Sprache*, pp. 157–58.

¹⁰⁸ It is possible that the ‘Beelzebub’ of 2 Kgs 1 is a play upon ‘Beelzebul’: ‘such a use of corrupted names conveying more of the writer’s or speaker’s opinion of the character than its proper meaning is common in the OT ...’; so T. R. Hobbs, *2 Kings*, Word Biblical Commentary 13, Waco, 1985, p. 8. See further G. A. Rendsburg, ‘The Mock of Baal in 1 Kings 18:27’, *CBQ* 50 (1988), pp. 414–7.

(iv) Concluding Observations

(1) In his justly famous book on *The Quest of the historical Jesus*, A. Schweitzer made Mt 10 the edifice for his reconstruction of the Jesus of history (see pp. 358–64). In Schweitzer's estimation, that chapter 'is historical as a whole and down to the smallest detail' (p. 363), and it discloses that Jesus, when he sent out the twelve, expected the messianic woes and then the *Parousia* to arrive in the very near future (so already Reimarus). Schweitzer's conclusions on this matter have been contradicted from all sides. On literary grounds alone, Mt 10, being a conflation of Markan and Q material, can hardly be the floodlight that forever banishes the shadows from the pre-Easter stage.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, Schweitzer's observations on the eschatological character of Matthew's discourse on mission were right on target. The chapter is indeed 'a prediction of the events of the "time of the end", events ... in which the supernatural eschatological course of history will break through into the natural course' (p. 363). Matthew's words to missionaries are permeated by eschatological motifs which show that Christian suffering belongs to the 'messianic woes' and will only be ended when—and this will be sooner rather than later—the Son of Man comes on the clouds of heaven (10:16–23). All of this follows from a plain reading of the text and a knowledge of the eschatological expectations of Judaism and Christianity. For Matthew, the missionary endeavour takes place in the latter days, and the sufferings of Christian missionaries are to be interpreted as a manifestation of the birth pangs which herald the advent of God's new world.

(2) Although Mt 10 scarcely scores the polemical points that 23 does, it is nonetheless not free of animosity towards the Jewish leaders. The scribes and Pharisees are not, it is true, named. But if one interprets Matthew by Matthew, much in chapter 10 would seem to implicate them as the chief opponents of the Christian mission (cf. on 9:36). When Jesus' messengers go forth into Israel, they, as sheep in the midst of wolves, are handed over to councils, flogged in synagogues, persecuted from town to town, and maligned by those who called the master Beelzebul. The implicit subjects of all these actions are the Jewish leaders (see on 10:16, 17, 25). This means, first of all, that the afflictions of Mt 10 are more than hypothetical: the evangelist has in mind the concrete actions of Jewish authorities. Then, secondly, the same fact also requires that in the First Gospel the Pharisees are more than just opponents. They are *eschatological* opponents. Because 10:16–23 is about the latter days, the Jewish leaders are clearly channels through which the eschatological sorrows afflict the followers of Jesus.

(3) The *imitatio Christi* runs like a bright thread throughout 10:5–25. The disciples, like Jesus, go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (10:5; 15:24). They preach the same message Jesus preached (10:7; cf. 4:17). They heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, and cast out demons (10:8)—all of which Jesus did (8:2–4, 14–17, 28–34; 9:18–26). They wander from town to town, just like Jesus (10:11; cf. 4:23–5); and, like their master, they stay in the homes of others (10:11; cf. 8:14–16; 9:10?). The apostles also suffer like Jesus. They flee (see on 10:23), are delivered up

¹⁰⁹ See further Beasley-Murray, pp. 286–7.

before councils, are flogged, and are dragged before governors (10:17–19; cf. 26:57–27:31).¹¹⁰ They in addition are betrayed by those closest to them, which recalls the betrayal of Jesus by one of the twelve (10:21; cf. 26:47–56).

That Matthew was conscious of these parallels is clear from two facts. The first is 10:25, which concludes our section: it is enough for the disciple to be like the master. This makes the imitation of Christ explicit. Equally telling is the arrangement of chapters 5–10. Before the apostles are told what to say and do (10), the narrative recounts what Jesus said (5–7) and did (8–9). Thus 5–9 is the hermeneutical key to 10. The acts of the apostles are given meaning by the acts of Jesus. In him the words of the SM have become flesh. The Christian Lord is, for Matthew, the incarnation of proper Christian behaviour and therefore its model. His words and deeds supply an example that demands and fortifies at the same time⁶

THERE IS NO NEED TO FEAR (10:26–31)

(ii) *Sources*

10:26–31 is, on the two-source theory, a block from Q. See Lk 12:2–7. But because, in our judgement, most of the differences between 10:26–31 and its Lukan parallel are readily explicable in terms of Lukan redaction, it would be possible, all else being equal, to regard

¹¹⁰ Cf. Farmer, *Jesus*, p. 158: ‘Jesus had not only died “for us”, as Paul taught, but he died to show those who confess him before the world ... how to make their confession and, when necessary, *how to die* while making their confession’.

⁶ W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., [*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*](#), vol. 2, International Critical Commentary (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 192–197.

Matthew's text as Luke's source. 10:26 = Lk 12:2 has a parallel in Mk 4:22 = Lk 8:17 (see on 10:26). Two-source theorists postulate Markan/Q overlap, and this is our verdict. Certainly one can in this way easily account for Lk 8:17 and 12:2: one verse depends upon Mark, the other upon Q. Yet we must admit that nothing about 10:26 par. palpably militates against the Griesbach hypothesis¹ or the view that Luke used Matthew.

(iii) *Exegesis*

The primary function of 10:26–31 is manifest. The passage is surrounded on all sides by difficult commands and ominous prophecies. These our evangelist wishes to put in perspective by offering encouragement (cf. the function of 6:25–34 and 7:7–11).² Despite rejection, persecution, and even the prospect of death, the true follower of Jesus will know that he need not fear. God is the sovereign Lord, and what befalls God's own must somehow be within his will. The course of discipleship may seem to be a mighty maze, but it is not without a plan. Beyond this, earthly life is not what ultimately matters. The things of eternity are what count. What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world yet forfeits his soul?

10:26–31, which probably incorporates four originally separate logia (10:26–7, 28, 29 + 31b, 30) is we think a faithful record of words of Jesus.³ (i) Both the form and the content of at least vv. 28–31 are strongly reminiscent of 6:25–34, whose core can be accepted as dominical (see on 6:25). (ii) Signs of a Semitic substratum are visible (see on vv. 26, 28, 31). (iii) V. 26 is attested in both Mark and Q. (iv) Vv. 26–7 have a natural *Sitz im Leben Jesu*. Certainly Jesus sought to encourage and exhort those he sent out to preach. (v) The whole paragraph is permeated by eschatology. 10:26 anticipates the revelation of the last day, and v. 28 gains its force from belief in the resurrection and final judgement. (vi) The prospect of suffering and even death (vv. 28–31) is consistent with Jesus' conviction that the messianic tribulation had entered the present with the death of John the Baptist (11:12) and would fall upon the saints. (vii) Jesus was fond of parallelism (vv. 26–8), of arguments *a fortiori* (v. 31), and of the divine passive (vv. 26, 30). (viii) Jesus surely possessed a proclivity for exercising what Hugh of St.-Victor meant by *cogitatio*, this being the soul's perception of God in the things of this world (cf. vv. 29–30). Moreover, characteristic is the emphasis upon God working directly in the world (vv. 29–30). No thought is given to angels or other intermediaries:

¹ Theoretically, Lk 12:2 could depend upon Matthew, Lk 8:17 could be Lukan redaction, and Mk 4:22 could depend upon Lk 8:17.

² Cf. the way in which many prophetic books balance warnings with consolation and see on this L. Finkelstein, *New Light from the Prophets*, London, 1969.

³ While we see no reason to regard 10:26 and 27 as originally separate sayings, many would disagree; see Wanke (v) and Gnllka, *Matthäusevangelium* 1, p. 390.

26. μὴ οὖν φοβηθῆτε αὐτούς. Compare 1 Pet 3:14; Rev 2:10. This redactional line⁴ sets the theme: notwithstanding all appearances, there is no need to have fear or suffer despair. The imperative is repeated three times (see above).⁵ This recalls the very similar threefold use of μὴ μεριμνᾶτε/-ήσητε in 6:25–34. The οὖν of 10:26 is clearly not inferential. It probably has either intensive force (as often in exhortations) or it may be adversative.⁶ Who are ‘they’ (αὐτούς)? They must be those who have called the master Beelzebul and maligned the disciples (10:25). That is, they must be the scribes and Pharisees (see on 10:25). Matthew probably had in mind the rabbis and synagogue leaders of his day who made life difficult for the Jewish Christians they perceived as contumacious.

οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐστὶν κεκαλυμμένον ὃ οὐκ ἀποκαλυφθήσεται καὶ κρυπτὸν ὃ οὐ γνωσθήσεται. Compare 1 Cor 4:5⁷ and 2 Bar. 83:3.⁸ Lk 12:2 has δέ for γάρ,⁹ ἐστὶν before the first ὃ, and συγκεκαλυμμένον. Given Luke’s fondness for συν-compounds,¹⁰ the simplex is presumably original. Jesus now backs off from the frightening scenes he has just painted and directs the mind’s eye towards the grand eschatological future. He thereby puts everything in perspective and gives the true interpretation of the disciples’ predicament. It is not just that ‘time brings all to light’.¹¹ Rather, on the last day God will see to it that the truth will be victorious (cf. the targum on Eccles 12:14). The eschatological judgement will be public and all lies exposed (cf. 2 Esdras 16:64–6). Therefore those on the side of the truth need have no fear.

⁴ Compare 6:8, 31, 34; 10:31. There is no parallel in Luke. μὴ οὖν* is Matthean; and ‘Do not fear’ is redactional or at least has no parallel in 1:20; 17:7; 28:5, 10.

⁵ The aorist subjunctive—used for categorical imperatives—appears in v. 26. Vv. 28 and 31 have the present tense.

⁶ See H. E. Dana and J. R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, New York, 1927, pp. 255–8.

⁷ ‘Therefore do not pronounce judgement before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart.’

⁸ ‘He will certainly investigate the secret thoughts and everything which is lying in the inner chambers of all their members which are in sin. And he will make these manifest in the presence of everyone with blame’. This is followed by ‘Therefore, nothing of the present things should come into your heart’. As in Mt 10:26, the thought of the apocalyptic revelation brings comfort. Contrast Eccles 12:14.

⁹ γάρ is probably from Q; cf. Mk 4:22.

¹⁰ See Jeremias, *Lukasevangelium*, pp. 86–7. Cf. Schulz, Q, pp. 461–2.

¹¹ Diogenes Laertius 1:35 (attributed to Thales).

A second version of the saying preserved in Mt 10:26 = Lk 12:2 (Q) appears in Mk 4:22¹² = Lk 8:17. Because there is between the two no sign of literary dependence, the hypothesis of translation variants seems reasonable.¹³ As to the precise application on Jesus' lips, we remain in the dark. The words do envisage 'the eschatological reversal of the situation'.¹⁴ But whether this situation was the need for esoteric teaching¹⁵ or the presence of the hidden kingdom of God¹⁶ or something else again¹⁷ we do not know, for the original context has been lost.¹⁸

27. Although that which is hidden will be revealed (v. 26), this is something the disciples should not simply wait for or expect. They themselves are called to bring it about proleptically, that is, to make known the truth and those who belong to it. They do this by preaching the gospel of Jesus (cf. Zahn, p. 409). As in the previous verse so here too Jesus makes his point through compound parallelism. The repetition gives added force to the commands and makes them more memorable.

ὁ λέγω ὑμῖν ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ εἶπατε ἐν τῷ φωτί. Lk 12:3 has ἀνθ' ὧν ὅσα before ἐν and ἀκουσθήσεται after φωτί: 'Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light'. ἀνθ' ὧν (Mt: 0; Mk: 0; Lk: 3) is Lukan redaction. But has Matthew turned a statement of fact into a command (and accordingly dropped ἀκουσθήσεται)?¹⁹ **This would be consistent with his desire to encourage the missionary to preach the gospel in season and out of season, under all circumstances.** Still, it seems more likely that Luke has here altered Q.²⁰ (i) Matthew's words better fit the Q context, which has to do with fearless confession (cf. 10:32–3 = Lk 12:8–9). (ii)

¹² 'For there is nothing hid, except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret, except to come to light'. The final form (ἴλα) may be Markan (cf. Mk 4:21).

¹³ Detailed discussion in Laufen (v). According to Black, p. 114, Mark's ἐὰν μή and ἀλλά, both meaning 'except', are best explained as translation Greek. On the variant in Gos. Thom. 5 (cf. *P. Oxy.* 654:4) see Fitzmyer, *Background*, pp. 381–4.

¹⁴ Jeremias, *Parables*, p. 221, n. 6.

¹⁵ Cf. Cadoux, p. 55.

¹⁶ Cf. W. Manson, p. 60.

¹⁷ According to Käsemann, *Questions*, p. 99, and *Essays*, p. 41, 10:27 reinterprets the proverbial 10:26: in the end-time caution must be thrown overboard; silence is no longer possible.

¹⁸ The version in *On the Origin of the World* 125:17–18 is not independent of the synoptics; see Tuckett, *Nag Hammadi*, p. 30.

¹⁹ So many, including Schweizer, *Matthew*, p. 246; Polag, *Fragmenta*, pp. 58–9; and Gundry, *Commentary*, p. 196.

²⁰ So also F. Horst, *TWNT* 5, p. 554, and Laufen, pp. 160–3; pace Schulz, *Q*, p. 462.

Luke's wording could be the result of assimilation to 12:1, where the theme is hypocrisy. (iii) The Markan doublet of 10:26 = Lk 12:2 (Mk 4:22) probably shows that the theme of apocalyptic revelation was traditionally associated with preaching the gospel (cf. Nineham, p. 141). (iv) If in Q 10:27 was already about missionary proclamation, then Matthew's placement of 10:26–31 in a missionary discourse would find a ready explanation.

What does the 'I word' in 10:27a mean for Matthew? Christian missionaries, no matter what situation they find themselves in, are not to keep quiet but must plainly declare all that they have learned from and about Jesus. The gospel is not to be hid under a bushel. The truth must be fully served even now, even if its full revelation belongs only to the future. (The contrast between light and darkness is simply the contrast between the pre- and post-Easter periods.)

καὶ ὃ εἰς τὸ οὐχ ἀκούετε κηρύξατε ἐπὶ τῶν δωμάτων. Lk 12:3 has this: 'What you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed upon the housetops'. The Third Evangelist has radically altered the sense. Instead of being an injunction to preach (proclaim what is whispered), Jesus' word has become a warning that what one whispers will be preached abroad. With εἰς τὸ οὐχ ἀκούετε, which has no exact parallel, compare Gen 50:4; Exod 11:2; Acts 11:22; and Josephus, *Ant.* 6:165. With ἐπὶ τῶν δωμάτων compare Josh 2:6, 8; 2 Bαc 16:22; Mt 24:17; Acts 10:9; Josephus, *Ant.* 6:49; *Bell.* 2:611; *b. Šabb.* 35b. Roofs were typically flat and used for various activities.

Gos. Thom. 33 reads: 'That which you will hear in your ear (and) in the other ear, that preach from your housetops'. This is much closer to Mt 10:27 than to Lk 12:3. Dependence upon the synoptic tradition can hardly be demonstrated, for it is Luke's version that is editorial (see above).²¹

28. The subject now switches from eschatological revelation to the meaning of death. But the underlying thought remains the same: all is not what it appears to be. God's eschatological future will reveal the true meaning of earthly events.

καὶ μὴ φοβεῖσθε ἀπὸ τῶν ἀποκτεννόντων τὸ σῶμα. So Lk 12:4, with φοβηθῆτε²² and ἀποκτεννόντων and without καί.²³ A situation of possible martyrdom is presupposed. For the sense compare 4 Macc. 13:14 ('Let us not fear him who thinks he kills'); Sextus, *Sent.* 363b ('As a lion has power over the body of a sage, so too does a tyrant, but only over the body'); T. Job 20:3 (the devil has authority over Job's σῶμα but not his ψυχή); and Asc. Isa 5:10. One is also reminded of the first chapter of Epictetus' *Dissertationes*. φοβέω + ἀπό could reflect LXX usage, the Hebrew *yārē + min*, or the Aramaic *dēhal + min*.

²¹ On Gos. Thom. 33 see further M. Marcovich, 'Textual Criticism on the Gospel of Thomas', *JTS* 20 (1969), pp. 54–5. He finds the saying to be remodelled along Gnostic interests: one hears a saying in one ear and interprets it with the other.

²² So B D N W Θ f¹ for Matthew.

²³ Luke, following Q, introduces the saying with 'But I tell you my friends'.

τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν μὴ δυναμένων ἀποκτεῖναι. Lk 12:4 ('and after that have no more that they can do') is very different and secondary.²⁴ Matthew's parallelism is in this instance not redactional but preserves Q.

ψυχὴν is here the disembodied 'soul' which can survive bodily death and later be reunited with a resurrected body.²⁵ The conception, whether due to the influence of Hellenism²⁶ or whether a faithful continuation of OT thought,²⁷ is 'dualistic'.²⁸ Ambrose, *De Isaac* 8:79, rightly conveys the sense: 'We do not fear him who can carry off our clothing, we do not fear him who can steal our property but cannot steal us'.

φοβεῖσθε δὲ μᾶλλον τὸν δυνάμενον καὶ ψυχὴν καὶ σῶμα ἀπολέσαι ἐν γεέννῃ. Compare Heb 10:31; Jas 4:12; Hermas, *Mand.* 12:6. ἀπό (cf. v. 28a) is dropped because in the MT *min* is rare when the object of fear is God and ἀπό would imply an avoidance improper for the believer's relationship to his Father (cf. Lagrange, p. 208). 'Soul' and 'body' form a *chiasmus* with the 'body' and 'soul' of vv. 28a–b. καί ... καί means 'both ... and'. Lk 12:5 has: 'I will show you whom to fear. Fear him who after he has killed, has power to cast into Gehenna. Yes I tell you, fear him' (cf. Justin, *1 Apol.* 19:7; 2 Clem. 5:4; Ps.-Clem. Hom. 7:5). Matthew is again closer to Q,²⁹ although μᾶλλον* could be redactional; and our evangelist may have dropped 'Yes etc.' as redundant. The

²⁴ Cf. Schulz, *Q*, p. 158, and Jeremias, *Lukasevangelium*, p. 212.

²⁵ For belief in a disembodied, conscious interim state combined with belief in bodily resurrection many texts could be cited; see D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*, London, 1964, pp. 357–85.

²⁶ Cf. E. Schweizer, *TWNT* 9, p. 645.

²⁷ See R. E. Gundry, *Sōma in Biblical Theology*, SNTSMS 29, Cambridge, 1976.

²⁸ Cf. F. Godet, *A Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke* (trans. of *Commentaire sur l'évangile de saint Luc*, 1888–89), 4th ed., Edinburgh, 1889, vol. 2, p. 91: 'This saying of Jesus distinguishes soul from body as emphatically as modern spiritualism ...'. Tertullian, *De res. carnis* 35, found in Mt 10:28 evidence for 'the natural immortality of the soul.' While this goes too far, our text does stand in the way of those such as O. Cullmann (*Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead?*, London, 1958) who have argued for a profound contradiction between disembodied immortality in Hellenism and resurrection in biblical religion.

²⁹ See Jeremias, *Lukasevangelium*, p. 212; also Marshall (v), p. 277.

* An asterisk (*) after a Greek word or phrase signifies that that word or phrase is listed in vol. 1 on pp. 75–9 and so is characteristic of the First Evangelist.

disciples should fear³⁰ God,³¹ not men (cf. Isa 8:12f.), for only the former has any real power. Further, the fear of God will eliminate the fear of all else. As Augustine put it: 'Let us fear prudently that we may not fear vainly' (*Hom.* 15:1; cf. 2 Macc 6:30).

Mention of the death of both body and soul in Gehenna may allude to the universal resurrection, when all, both good and evil, will stand before the throne of God (cf. Rev 20:11–5). See further 5:29f., where the whole body goes into Gehenna; also C. Milikowsky, 'Which Gehenna? Retribution and Eschatology in the Synoptic Gospels and in Early Jewish Texts', *NTS* 34 (1988), pp. 238–49.

The aorist ἀπολέσαι³² is usually translated 'destroy' (so e.g. RSV); and there are some Jewish texts in which the wicked are in fact annihilated (e.g. *t. Sanh.* 13:3; *b. Roš. Haš.* 16b–17a). It would appear, however, that the author of Matthew shared the prevalent view that the wicked would suffer for ever; see on 5:29.

29. 10:26f. offered encouragement by invoking eschatological revelation, 10:28 by calling to mind the deathless soul. 10:29–31 now offers, by means of an *a fortiori* argument, a third means of consolation: God is sovereign, so whatever happens must, despite appearances, somehow be within his will. 'Nothing happens without God' (Origen, *De prin.* 3:2:7). (This disallows the false supposition that God's will is done only in the future, as 10:26–8 might be taken to imply. The heavenly Father is not just the guarantor of the fantastic dream which is the eschatological future but is also the sovereign Lord of the trying and mundane present.)

οὐχὶ δέο στρουθία ἀσσαρίου πωλεῖται; 'Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies' appears in Lk 12:6. 'The difference between the two versions is practically quite unimportant, although the equation 2:5 = 1:2 does not hold mathematically. On the purchaser's taking a large number of birds the proportional price may well have been reduced; as we should say nowadays, they came cheaper by the half-dozen'.³³

An ἀσσάριον (= Latin *assarius*; *ḥssār* in the Mishnah) was a small copper Roman coin worth about 1/16th of a denarius (a day's wage; cf. 20:1–16). 'Half-penny' gives the sense. For its proverbial lack of value see *m. Hul.* 12:5. Sparrows³⁴ were part of the diet of the poor and were of all birds the cheapest. See Deissmann, *Light*, pp. 272–5. For the sparrow's insignificance see Ps 84:3.

³⁰ φοβεῖσθε κ.τ.λ. enjoins not the intellectual reflection called for by Proverbs but fearful reverence and humble submission. Cf. Schniewind, p. 133.

³¹ τὸν δυν. is not the devil (against Olshausen, Stier, Grundmann, Stendahl, Meier); see Zahn, p. 409, n. 47, and Alford 1, pp. 109–10. Tertullian, *De res.* 35, identifies τὸν δυν. with God.

³² With ψυχὴ also in Barn. 20:1 and Hermas, *Sim.* 9:26:3.

³³ Deissmann, *Light*, p. 273. Schweizer, *Matthew*, p. 246 speculates: 'Perhaps the great devaluation of silver under Nero intervened between the earlier form in Matthew and the later form in Luke'.

³⁴ στρουθίον most frequently translates *šippôr* in the LXX.

καὶ ἐν ἐξ αὐτῶν οὐ πεσεῖται ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν ἄνευ τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν. Compare *Gen. Rab.* on 33:18: ‘Not even a bird is caught without the will of heaven; how much less the soul of a son of man’.³⁵ After αὐτῶν Lk 12:6 continues with: οὐκ ἔστιν ἐπιλεησμένον ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ. Perhaps Q had: οὐ πεσεῖται ἄνευ τοῦ θεοῦ. Matthew’s ‘on the earth’ could be influenced by Amos 3:5: ‘Does a bird fall in a snare on the earth when there is no trap for it?’ πεσεῖται and ἄνευ also have parallels in LXX Amos 3:5.³⁶ ἄνευ τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν is rightly translated by the RSV as ‘without your Father’s will’ (cf. the addition of τῆς βουλῆς in Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 2:26:2; Ps.-Clem. Hom. 12:31; and many of the Latin mss.). For ἄνευ meaning ‘without the knowledge and consent of’ when used of persons see BAGD, s.v. Our verse is not to be interpreted in terms of God’s presence. Nor, *pace* Cook (v), is God the active cause of the sparrow’s fall. On the problem of providence in the synoptics see on 6:32. Whether we are to envisage a nestling falling from its nest or an adult bird dropping dead during flight, or whether ‘falls to the earth’ is just a figurative way of speaking of death is unclear.

30. This is probably an interpolation made by the compiler of Q or by some tradent of that source (cf. the interpolation in 6:26).

ὑμῶν δὲ καὶ αἱ τρίχες τῆς κεφαλῆς πᾶσαι ἡριθμημέναι εἰσίν. So Lk 12:7, with ἀλλά for ὑμῶν δέ,³⁷ ὑμῶν after κεφαλῆς,³⁸ ἡριθμῆνται instead of ἡριθμημέναι, and without εἰσίν. For the genitive separated from its noun see also 13:16 (ὑμῶν δέ; diff. 10:23). The καὶ is ascensive and means ‘even’. According to Schlatter, p. 348, τῆς κεφαλῆς corresponds to Palestinian usage: because naked corpses were often seen, the unqualified expression, ‘your hairs’, was not sufficiently precise.³⁹ But the Testament of Job, which was probably penned in the Diaspora, uses the expression (23:7–8), and Schlatter himself observes its use in Philo.

The question, How many hairs does a man’s head have?, was probably proverbial and at home in Jewish wisdom (cf. Apoc. Sed. 8.6: ‘Since I created everything, how many people have been born, and how many have died and how many shall die and how many hairs do they have?’). Like so many Jewish wisdom texts which contrast God’s omniscience with human ignorance

³⁵ Additional texts in SB 1, pp. 582–3. On *m. Meg.* 4:9 see on 6:26. Ancient Jews were, as compared with other ancient peoples, much less cruel towards animals (cf. Montefiore and Loewe, pp. xci–xcii); and Mt 10:29 reflects a genuine sympathy for the animal world. Only one who cared for animals would be inclined to speak of God’s care for them. On animals in the synoptic tradition see Goulder, pp. 101–2.

³⁶ The similarities with Amos 3:5 explain why some patristic texts have εἰς (τὴν) or ἐν παγίδι; see e.g. Ps.-Clem. Hom. 12:31; Origen, *C. Cels.* 8:70; Chrysostom, *Hom. on Mt.* 34:2.

³⁷ So also Mt 10:30 D.

³⁸ So also Mt 10:30 D.

³⁹ To his references add 1QapGen 20:3.

through the naming of things only God can count,⁴⁰ Mt 10:30 implies that only God can count hairs ('are numbered' is the divine passive; cf. Ps 40:12; 69:4 and recall the biblical statements about 'the sands of the sea'). The effect is intellectual consolation. One may not understand the events that befall humanity and how they can be permitted by the divine will; but if one does not even know the number of concrete hairs on one's own mundane head, how can one presume to judge the Creator, who is beyond comprehension?⁴¹ 4 Ezra 4:10–1 puts it this way: 'You cannot understand the things with which you have grown up; how then can your mind comprehend the way of the Most High?' (cf. T. Job 38:5). Similarly, Mt 10:30 reminds readers that while they cannot understand the trying events that befall believers and how they can be permitted by the divine will, comfort may be found in this, that God knows what his people do not.

Our verse is usually understood to be about God's watchfulness and care (cf. Gnllka, *Matthäusevangelium* 1, pp. 388–9, citing 1 Sam 14:45; 2 Sam 14:11; and *b. B. Bat.* 16a). Certainly the notion that God takes care of human hairs was proverbial. See, in addition to 1 Sam 14:45 and 2 Sam 14:11; 1 Kgs 1:52; Lk 21:18; and Acts 27:34. But all these texts take up a well-known proverb which includes mention of 'a' hair or 'one' hair as well as falling to the ground or perishing. Neither one of these elements is to be found in Mt 10:30. The verse is not about one hair but all the hairs (plural) of one head, and nothing is said about them falling or perishing. What is asserted rather is the fact that hairs are numbered. Moreover, the pertinent OT texts all have to do with deliverance from physical evil. But it is manifest that Mt 10:30 is about something very different: escape from danger is not being promised. The point about the sparrow is not that it will not fall to the ground but rather that when it does the event will somehow be within God's will. One thus wonders how 10:30 can have the same import as a proverb which promises rescue from tribulation.⁴²

31. This verse does not exclude the prospect of martyrdom but rather implies that, if it comes, it will be in accord with God's will.⁴³ Although God may not nip evil in the bud, ultimately good will out.

⁴⁰ Job 38:37; Ecclus 1:2; 4 Ezra 4:7; 1 En. 93:14; Apoc. Sed. 8:7, 9; *b. Sanh.* 39a. Full discussion in Allison, 'Hairs' (v).

⁴¹ Cf. Origen, *De prin.* 2:11:5, where Mt 10:30–1 is cited in a discussion which relegates the understanding of providence to the future state.

Gnllka, J. Gnllka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, HTKNT 1/1, 2, Freiburg, 1986, 1988.

Matthäusevangelium J. Gnllka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, HTKNT 1/1, 2, Freiburg, 1986, 1988.

1 J. Gnllka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, HTKNT 1/1, 2, Freiburg, 1986, 1988.

⁴² In a memorable example of using a text with complete disregard for its original intention, Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 3:3, cites Mt 10:30 to argue that men should not be hairless.

⁴³ Chrysostom rightly continues the thought: 'Deliverance from death is not near so great as persuading men to despise death' (*Hom. on Mt.* 34:2).

μὴ οὖν φοβεῖσθε. So Lk 12:7b, without the conjunction, which is here inferential.

πολλῶν στρουθίων διαφέρετε ὑμεῖς. Compare 12:12. God who, in the words of St. Basil the Great, ‘lives in the highest and cares for the humblest’, cares even for the sparrow. How much more deeply then must he feel for those made in his image? They must be of incomparable value.

Wellhausen, *Matthaei*, p. 49, may have been correct in detecting a mistranslation from the Aramaic. The reference to ‘many sparrows’ is odd, and one instead expects something like ‘you are of much more value than sparrows’. Wellhausen proposed an Aramaic sentence in which ‘saggi’ could have been taken either with ‘sparrows’ (many sparrows) or with the verb (‘you are of much more value’).⁴⁴

(iv) *Concluding Observations*

(1) Because the prophecies of affliction in Mt 10 are mostly stock items borrowed from Jewish apocalyptic, one might infer that they are doctrinal and unhistorical, removed from the concrete reality of Matthew’s experience. 10:26–31 gives the lie to such a notion. One does not offer consolation for hypothetical suffering. If the tribulation depicted throughout chapter 10 were only theoretical and not painful in fact, our evangelist would not have interrupted his discourse with what amounts to encouraging words. As it is, the text shows a concern that missionaries not lose heart and faint in the day of adversity. Just as 6:25–34 and 7:7–11 function to encourage the listener or reader overwhelmed by the sermon on the mount, so does 10:26–31 serve to hearten and cheer the missionary whose experience is so bad that it can be interpreted as belonging to the messianic birth pangs. In sum, 10:26–31, with its gemaric thrust, reveals both the reality of Christian suffering in Matthew’s world and the pastoral concern generated by that suffering.

(2) 10:26–31 poses the problem of evil in a most acute fashion. A theodicy is first attempted by means of eschatology. What matters is not the pain of the present but one’s fate in the world to come: ‘Fear him who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna.’ But lest the reader falsely infer that God’s will is to be done only in the future, vv. 29–31, through the illustration of the sparrow and an argument *a fortiori*, assert that God is sovereign even now, so whatever happens must, despite all appearances, somehow be within his will. This, however, poses the unanswerable problem. How can God be the sovereign Lord of this world with all its ills and wrongs? If our analysis of 10:30 is correct, the question is responsible for the placement of v. 30. This sentence, which awkwardly interrupts the lines about the sparrow, is what J. Wanke has called a *Kommentarwort*. Perhaps proverbial, with the meaning that God’s knowledge admits no rival, it has been inserted in order to qualify the eschatological solution to the problem of evil: that solution—which Matthew fully accepts (see below)—does not solve all the difficulties. One must, in the end, follow the path taken by Job and confess human inability to fathom the depths. God is a mystery, and he knows what his creatures do not. In that should lie solace. ‘But indeed all the hairs of your head are numbered.’

(3) 10:26–31 concerns itself neither with human integrity nor with the truth as such. The passage is instead an appeal to the handmaiden of faith’s certainty, which is the imagination, the

⁴⁴ The sense of 10:31 can also be improved by interpreting πολλῶν as ‘all’; so Jeremias, *Theology*, p. 184. Certainly πολλοί has inclusive meaning elsewhere in the NT. See Jeremias, *TWNT* 6, pp. 536–45.

faculty that looks beyond the present to the future and beyond the temporal to the eternal. Faith judges the here and now by pondering what is to come (so vv. 26–8). It sets itself upon the divine outcome and from there surveys the ache and doubt and turmoil that history hands the faithful. And from that anticipated conclusion it gains boldness for the moment and confidence even in the face of death. Hope engenders freedom, above all freedom from fear (cf. the last two beatitudes). Furthermore, faith, seeing not ‘with but through the eyes’ (Blake), has the ability to see beneath the surface or face of the world (so vv. 29 and 31), which ability it uses to seek the secreted reality that casts its shadow upon the cave wall. One may never be able to ‘find bottom in the uncomprehensive deeps’ (cf. our discussion of v. 30), but it is sometimes given to human beings to glimpse the heavenly in the earthly, which permits faith to make its unlikely extrapolation: God cares even for the sparrow. There is, therefore, no need to fear. The hand of God, although invisible, is always there.⁷

10:24–25 Jesus links his assurance that the disciples will be persecuted with the treatment he is already beginning to receive, hostility that will culminate in his crucifixion. Verses 24–25a are simply false if generalized and applied out of context (cf. Jesus’ own prediction that the disciples will do greater works than he, John 14:12). Verse 25b gives the correct application and recalls 9:34. “Beelzeboul” (NIV marg.) most likely meant *lord of the high abode*, i.e., of the home

⁷ W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., [*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*](#), vol. 2, International Critical Commentary (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 201–211.

of pagan deities, which Jews believed were demons.²⁸ Hence some textual variants use “Beelzebub”—*lord of the flies*—the common Hebrew parody of Beelzeboul.²⁹ “How much more” implies *how much more certain not to what a greater extent*. Even as they do not seek persecution and in fact actively shun it, all Christians can at times expect it. Promises of exemption from persecution offer false hope. People who have never experienced it probably have not sufficiently witnessed to their faith. But Jesus’ words here must be balanced with the principles of 1 Tim 3:7 and 1 Pet 2:12; 3:15–16. To the extent that it is possible, Christians and their leaders should try to get along with and gain the respect of unbelievers in their communities.

(2) *The Proper Reaction to Hostility: Fear God, Not People (10:26–31)*

²⁶ “So do not be afraid of them. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. ²⁷ What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs.

²⁸ Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. ³⁰ And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

10:26a Verses 17–25 did not paint a pleasant picture. If Christians had to look forward only to a life of suffering and persecution, they might well despair or, more likely, abandon all Christian commitment (and rightly so—see 1 Cor 15:19). But the future holds much more for the believer. Judgment Day is coming when God will eternally compensate his people for their suffering and punish their enemies forever. Then the injustices of this world will disappear before the grandeur and glory of life in God’s presence (Rom 8:18). So Jesus can confidently encourage his followers, “Do not be afraid.” Matthew punctuates vv. 26–31 with this encouragement, repeating it again for emphasis in the middle (v. 28).

10:26b–27 Jesus describes the coming judgment as a time for disclosing all the secrets of individuals’ lives. The sins people think they have committed with impunity (v. 26) will be revealed (cf. Luke 12:3). Indeed, the disciples will help out (v. 27) as they judge all unbelievers (1 Cor 6:2). Either or both of vv. 26–27 may also refer to the universal public declaration of the gospel, which will have previously received only a partial hearing.³⁰

²⁸ O. Böcher, “βεέλζεβουλ” in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 1, ed. H. Balz and G. Schneider (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 211.

²⁹ See F. W. Beare (*The Gospel according to Matthew* [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981], 278) for the textual evidence, which the NIV reading obscures.

³⁰ J. Broadus, *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, AC (Valley Forge: American Baptist Publication Society, 1886), 229.

10:28 Physical death thus pales in comparison with the prospect of eternal punishment. “Body” and “soul” point to a fundamental dualism in human beings.³¹ In this life, of course, body and soul are closely united, and God will eventually reunite them in the resurrection body. But Scripture consistently teaches that the two are separated at death (see Luke 23:43; 2 Cor 5:1–10; Phil 1:23–24). “Kill,” like “destroy,” does not imply annihilation but eternal suffering, as the qualification “in hell” makes clear (on which, see comments under 5:27–30). The NIV rightly capitalizes “One” as referring to God and not the devil (cf. Jas 4:12).³²

10:29–31 To reassure the disciples of God’s fatherly love, Jesus contrasts their great worth with the comparatively insignificant value of sparrows, a cheap marketplace item sold for 1/32 of the minimum daily wage (“penny” is literally an *assarion*, which equaled 1/16 of a denarius). So, too, God knows the very number of our hairs. If he is aware and in control of such minor details, “how much more” will he not care for his own people and vindicate them despite their present suffering? “The will of” in v. 29 does not appear in the Greek but is probably a correct interpolation,³³ although the parallelism with v. 30 could suggest the translation *apart from the knowledge of your Father*.³⁴ A clear perspective of a person’s finitude, of God’s coming justice, and of the expanse of eternity should encourage believers in the worst of circumstances and should instill terror in anyone who fails to take into account God’s future plans for the universe.⁸

³¹ Cf. J. W. Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), against the prevailing fashion that speaks of humans as indissoluble wholes. The “trichotomist” view, which separates a person into body, soul, and spirit, misses the fact that in Scripture “soul” and “spirit” are largely synonymous.

³² On this verse in general, see I. H. Marshall, “Uncomfortable Words: VI. ‘Fear Him Who Can Destroy Both Soul and Body in Hell’ (Mt 10:28 RSV),” *ExpTim* 81 (1969–70): 276–80.

³³ B. Newman and P. Stine, *A Translator’s Handbook on the Gospel of Matthew* (New York: UBS, 1988), 317. T. Hirunuma (“ἄνευ τοῦ πατρὸς: ‘Without [of] the Father,’ ” *FNT* 3 [1990]: 53–62) argues that this meaning can be derived simply from the genitive without inferring an ellipsis.

³⁴ D. C. Allison, Jr., “Matthew 10:26–31 and the Problem of Evil,” *SVTQ* 32 (1988): 293–308; *idem*, “ ‘The Hairs of Your Head Are All Numbered,’ ” *ExpTim* 101 (1990): 334–36. For a good survey and discussion of these and other options, see J. G. Cook, “The Sparrow’s Fall in Mt. 10:29b,” *ZNW* 79 (1988): 138–44.

⁸ Craig Blomberg, [Matthew](#), vol. 22, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 176–178.