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Chapter 2

THE PASSAGE IN ITS IMMEDIATE CONTEXT

The sub-sequence

Increasingly, exegetes insist that, in order to truly understand a pericope from the Gospels, it should be placed in its «context». However, most academic commentaries, even the most recent, study the pericopes one after the other, contenting themselves with occasional observations on the links between the pericope under examination and those around it, without these links being used in the slightest way for interpretation.

It is essential to start by explaining the notion of context. Generally, it is extremely vague. As the word itself indicates, the context of a pericope is made up by the pericope which precedes it and the one which follows it. Usually one distinguishes between the «immediate context», that is, the two pericopes which frame the pericope under examination, and the «wider context», that is a certain, imprecise, number of pericopes which go before and after it.

This definition is not enough to satisfy the linguist, who is used to working on precise «pertinent» units – s/he has learned to distinguish sentences, propositions and words in the movement of words or the «spoken chain». We offer two examples:

. *Firstly, the level of the word.* The word «medal» has five letters (which in this case correspond to six sounds or phonemes). The graphical context of the /d/ is formed by the previous two letters (/me/) and the two which follow (/al/). However, the context of the /m/ only includes the four letters which follow it (/edal/) and the context of the /l/ only includes the previous four letters (/meda/).

. *Secondly, the level of the sentence.* Let us look at the first sentence of this paragraph: «This definition is not enough to satisfy the linguist». This sentence has nine words. The context of the word «is» is made up of the two words which come before it and the six which follow it; however, the syntactical context of «this» is only formed by the eight words which follow it and the context of «linguist» only by the six words which precede it. The first word of the following clause, («who») is not part of the syntactical context of the word «linguist», even though it is contiguous to it on the written page.

Meaning is greatly dependent on context. Let us take as an example the word «veil». Out of context, it is impossible to know what it means – we might have a broad idea, or unconsciously choose one possibility among all the possible ones, without even noticing that there are others. If the word «veil» is *out of context*, we cannot know if it is a noun or a verb. If we add the article «the» in front of «veil», the context enables us to understand that this is a noun, «the veil», and not a verb, as it would be if we put «he» in front of «veil»: «he veils» (or «she», or even «I veil»). However, even with the veil we do not know what kind of veil this is. If we broaden the context, for example by adding a supplementary noun, we can distinguish several meanings: «the veil of a nun» is different from «the veil of the temple». If we add a verb, we

would have «take the veil», which is what female religious do when they join a religious community; or «wear the veil» as some Muslim women do, and so forth.

The same rules apply for the organization of a text at a higher level than the level of the «passage». The context of a passage cannot simply be defined by the pericopes which go before it or follow it. The context of a passage will only be those pericopes which precede and follow it if it is at the center of the construction; if the passage under consideration is the last in the construction, its context will be made up of one or more previous pericopes; and if it is at the start, its context will be one or more passages which follow it. The clearest example is that of the first passage in a Gospel, whose context can only be made up by what follows it, and the same goes for the last passage in the book, whose context will obviously have to be made up of all that goes before it. All this presupposes that the biblical text is organized in «discrete» units, whose limits are not arbitrary, but which can be identified by objective procedures. I call these units, which are higher units than the passage, «sequences», and they can also include «sub-sequences». The second chapter of this book is given to the study of three sub-sequences, from Matthew, Mark and Luke, which the accounts of the healing in Jericho are part of, and then those into which the accounts of the calling of the rich man have been inserted¹.

A. THE ACCOUNTS OF THE HEALING AT JERICHO IN THEIR IMMEDIATE CONTEXT

1. THE SUB-SEQUENCE IN MARK 10:35-52

We shall begin with Mark, not because it is the oldest, and therefore the closest to the historical events, but purely for didactical purposes – we will better understand the reasons why Matthew had two blind men, rather than just one, by comparing the Markan sub-sequence is compared to the Matthean sub-sequence.

This sub-sequence includes two quite developed accounts, «James and John make their request» (35-40) and «The healing of the blind man Bartimeaus» (46b-52), which frame a brief discourse by Jesus (41-46a).

¹ On «context», see *Traité*, especially 346-355.

1.1 JAMES AND JOHN MAKE THEIR REQUEST (Mark 10:35-40)

COMPOSITION

³⁵	And come near	to him	James and John, the sons of Zebedee,	saying to him:
+	«Master,	WE WANT	that what we will ask you	you may do for us».
³⁶	He said	to them:		
+	«What	DO YOU WANT	that	I may do for you?».
.....				
³⁷	They said	to him:		
	:	« GRANT	to us that ONE AT YOUR RIGHT	AND ONE AT YOUR LEFT
	=	we may sit	in your glory!».	
³⁸	<i>Jesus said to them:</i>	«You do not KNOW what you ask!		
—		CAN YOU		
	. drink of	the cup	of which	I drink
	.. or	the baptism	in which	I am baptized
				to be baptized?».
³⁹	<i>They said to him:</i>			
	+	« WE CAN ».		
—	<i>Jesus said</i>	<i>to them:</i>		
	.	«The cup	of which	I drink
	.. and	the baptism	in which	I am baptized
				you shall drink
				you shall be baptized.
.....				
=	⁴⁰	But to sit	AT MY RIGHT	OR AT MY LEFT
	:	is not mine to GRANT it,		
	:	but it is for those to whom it has been prepared».		

Two parallel parts (35-37; 38b-40) are joined by a very brief central part (38a). The first and last parts are each made up of two pieces (35-36 and 37; 38b-39 and 40). The piece 35b-36 has two parallel segments, while the symmetrical piece (38b-39) has three segments, arranged concentrically. These first pieces are followed by two shorter pieces (37 and 40) which parallel one another; v.40 ends with a member in which the «mine» in 40b is opposed to the agent of the divine passive, «it has been prepared», that is God («left» translates two synonyms: *aristerōn* in 37b and *euōnymōn* in 40a). Between the two parts, «can you» (38b) and «we can» (39b) recall, in mirror fashion, «we want» (35b) and «[do] you want» (36b); «the cup» and «the baptism» (38cd.39de) are opposed to «glory» (37c). In the center (38a), «you do not know» ensures the connection between «want» and «can»; «what you ask» repeats «what we will ask you» in 35c. These two «ask»s correspond to the two «give»s in 37b and 40b.

*BIBLICAL CONTEXT***The cup and baptism**

In the Old Testament the image of the cup represents testing and suffering (Ps 60:5; 75:9; Isa 51:17, 22). The cup reappears at the Last Supper (14:23) and at Gethsemane (14:36). The waters in which humanity is submerged are one of the main metaphors for agony and death (Ps 69:2-3, 15-16; Jonah 2:3-10: the song of the prophet swallowed up by the waters).

Sons of Thunder

Only Mark recounts that Jesus gave a name to Zebedee's sons: «James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James, to whom he gave the name Boanerges, or "Sons of Thunder"» (Mark 3:17).

«At Jesus' right and his left»

It is only in 15:27 that the same expression, «And they crucified two bandits with him, one on his right and one on his left (*euōnymōn*) », reappears.

*INTERPRETATION***The two brothers' wish**

James and John seem to have really deserved the name Jesus gave them when he chose them to be among the Twelve: they really are «Sons of Thunder»! Just like a flash of lightning in a calm sky, their request appears unexpectedly, to the detriment of the other ten. Their impetuous nature gives them the audacity to ask first of all for a blank check, and then to demand nothing less than first rank. In response to Jesus' question, they show absolutely no hesitation – they can drink his cup and be baptized with his baptism. They are confident in themselves, just as they are confident in their master's absolute power. They know what they are worth, and they do not draw back before the necessary conditions to reach the goal they have set themselves. Their ambition and determination are surely a model for every disciple.

Jesus' wish

Jesus does not in fact tell the two brothers off, but supports their wish (36). They wish to share his glory (37); this is clearly also their master's wish. But, when Jesus starts by revealing the total lack of wisdom, (38a), this means that their request is seriously distorted. Above all, Jesus wishes to check whether his disciples are ready to accompany him on the way of his Passion; and he confirms their commitment when he announces that they will drink his cup and share his

baptism. But the main distortion in their request is not found here. Jesus seems to refuse to promise what they have asked for (40), while he has noted that they will fulfill the conditions to reach glory (39de). In effect, he denies the omnipotence which the two brothers attribute to him (37) and refers them to the only one who has the authority to «give» the glory which they sought. He does not wish to be confused with the Father; the disciples must recognize him as the Son, who is expecting glory to be given to him by another. In so doing, he invites the sons of Zebedee to become, like him, sons of God.

1.2 CALLED TO SERVE (Mark 10:41-46a)

COMPOSITION

⁴¹ And having heard, the ten began to be indignant at James and John.
⁴² And having called them to him, Jesus says to them:

«You know that					
. those considered	to command	the <i>NATIONS</i>	exercise lordship	over them	
. and	the GREAT-ONES	among them	exercise authority	over them	
.....					
⁴³ Not so shall it be	among you,				
+ but who wants	GREAT to become	among you,	shall be	of you	the servant
+ ⁴⁴ and who wants	among you to be	the first ,	shall be	of ALL	the slave .
.....					
⁴⁵ For the Son of Man	did not come				
. to	be served		but to <i>serve</i>		
. and	to give his own life		a ransom	for MANY ».	

⁴⁶ And they come to Jericho.

Two parts of the narrative (41-42a; 46a) frame a discourse made up of three pieces. The commandment given to the disciples (43-44), opposed to the law which governs relations of authority among the pagans (42bcd), is motivated by Jesus' behavior (45). Every piece is made up of a unimember and two bimembers. The parallelism between the last two segments of the first two pieces is obvious. The last segment of the third piece (45c) develops and clarifies the second member of the previous segment (45b: «to serve»). The movement from «servant» to «slave» in the second piece is repeated and enveloped in the last piece, where «serve» corresponds to «servant», but «give his own life a ransom» («give himself as a ransom», taking on the place and condition of the slave) is much stronger and means to sacrifice his life, to die. «Many» at the end of the last piece (45c) takes up «all» at the end of the

second piece and can be considered to be making an inclusio with «the nations» at the start of the first piece (42c), particularly if we take into account the link between this text and the Songs of the Servant in Isaiah (see «Biblical Context»).

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

Humanity's dominion over the animals

The first two verbs which describe the attitude of the leaders of the nations (42c) are those which the Septuagint uses to translate Gen 1:28: «God blessed them, saying to them, “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and *subdue it*. *Be masters* of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven and all the living creatures that move on earth”». The first verb was already used when God decided to create man: «Let us make man in our own image, in the likeness of ourselves, and let them *be masters* of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle, all the wild animals and all the creatures that creep along the ground» (1:26). The same verb «to be masters» is also used for the new creation after the Flood: «Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth; *be masters of it* » (Gen 9:1).

The Servant of the Lord

Jesus' discourse echoes the Song of the Servant, in which the theme of universal salvation thanks to the Servant were already to be found, for example in Isa 49:6: «It is not enough for you to be my servant, to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back the survivors of Israel. I shall make you a light to the nations so that my salvation may reach the remotest parts of earth». The whole of the fourth Song of the Servant (Isa 52:13–53:12) is given to the account of the ransom worked by the Servant of the Lord on behalf of those who have persecuted him².

² See R. MEYNET, «Le quatrième chant du Serviteur (Is 52,13–53,12)».

*INTERPRETATION***The very first law**

For the pagan nations relationships of authority are most often governed by the desire for power and domination (42cd). It is enough to open one's eyes to see it: «everyone knows this» (42b). The leaders crush those they are charged to protect; they are served by those they are commanded to serve. Although their role is to procure food for their flock, and to defend it against predators, shepherds rarely resist the temptation to become voracious wolves themselves (Ezek 34). This law of the jungle, which governs relationships between animals, is opposed by the law which the Son of Man recalls (45). These are animals which man has been charged by God with being masters over, not with being similar to. It is man's animal nature which is to be domesticated, not his neighbor, created, like him, in the image of God.

The law of slavery

If we understand that those who exercise power are to be careful not to reduce those in their care to slavery, if it is already more difficult to accept that leaders are at the service of those they rule, it seems quite made to claim that they have to make themselves their «slaves» (43b-44). By definition, the slave is the opposite of his master –deprived of his own freedom, he is totally dependent on his master; and yet, according to Jesus, the master does not belong to himself, but is totally dedicated to others. He does not have his own plans, but is governed by his community. He is at the service of his people at any time, just like a slave at the feet of his master.

Ready to sacrifice one's life for one's children

Just like the mother-hen confronting the sparrow-hawk to defend her chicks, the true leader does not hesitate to risk death to safeguard his children's life (45c). He is ready to give up his own body to satisfy the enemy's appetite, provided that the life of his people be spared. True service goes this far – it accepts slavery at the price of freedom for another, it does not refuse to go as far as giving up one's own life to snatch others from slavery. This is what the Son of Man is preparing to do (45) and what will be the model which his disciples are to follow (43-44).

Giving his life as a ransom for sinners

The Son of Man is not content to give his life as a ransom for his own people. He will give it «for many» (45), «as a ransom» for their wickedness. If the «many» at the end of the discourse refers to the «nations» at the start (42c), it is certainly not impossible to imagine that, at the end of the Son of Man's

life, «This is my blood, the blood of the covenant, poured out *for many*» (14:24). They represent a much larger group than the Twelve who «all drank from it» (14:23). These are all the sinners whom he intends to redeem by his poured-out blood, not only the disciples who will abandon him, but also those, Jews and pagans both, who will condemn him to death.

«For many»

We might ask why Jesus' last word is not «all» but «many»: «to give his own life as a ransom *for many*» (45c). Jesus uses the same word at the Last Supper (14:24). This choice is not merely fortuitous. Salvation is not imposed, it is offered freely to all humanity – of course, it is offered to «all», to all those who will accept it. The Eucharistic Prayer of the Roman Rite says «shed for you and for *all*». This final word is not found in any of the Gospel accounts, nor even in 1Cor 11:24-25, nor even in the official Latin text: *qui pro vobis et pro multis effundetur*. It cannot be said that the translation in various languages is an error of translation; it is an interpretation³.

³ The French translation says, «pour la multitude», the English, «for all». The Greek, clearly, follows the Gospel texts (*pollois*).

1.3 JESUS OPENS HIS DISCIPLES' EYES (Mark 10:35-52)

COMPOSITION OF THE SUB-SEQUENCE

³⁵ And **COME** towards him James and John, the **sons of Zebedee**, saying to him: «Master, we want that what we **will ask** you, you may do for us». ³⁶ He said to them:

«**WHAT DO YOU WANT THAT I MAY DO FOR YOU?**».

They said to him: ³⁷ «Grant to us that we may **SIT** at your right and at your left in your glory». ³⁸ Jesus said to them: «**YOU DO NOT KNOW** what you **ask**. Can you drink of the cup that I drink of or be baptized with baptism in which I am baptized?». ³⁹ They said to him: «We can». Jesus said to them: «The cup of which I drink you shall drink and the baptism in which I am baptized you shall be baptized. ⁴⁰ But to **SIT** at my right or at my left, is not mine to grant it; it is for those whom it has been prepared».

⁴¹ And having heard, the ten began to be indignant at James and John.

⁴² And having summoned them, Jesus says to them:

«**YOU KNOW** that those considered to command the nations dominate them and their great-ones subdue them. ⁴³ But it shall not be so among you,

but who **WANTS** to be great among you will be your servant

⁴⁴ and who **WANTS** to be first among you will be slave of all.

⁴⁵ For **the Son of Man** did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many».

⁴⁶ And they come to Jericho.

And while **COMING** out of Jericho, he, his disciples and a considerable crowd, **the son of Timaeus**, Bartimaeus, a **BLIND-MAN**, **WAS SITTING** along the way, **asking** (for alms). ⁴⁷ And having heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he started to cry out and to say: «**Son of David**, Jesus, have mercy on me!». ⁴⁸ Many rebuked him so that he would be silent, but he cried out all the more: «**Son of David**, have mercy on me!». ⁴⁹ Stopped, Jesus said: «Call him». And they called the blind saying to him: «Have courage! **RISE**, he calls you!». ⁵⁰ Having abandoned his mantle, walking again, he came to Jesus. ⁵¹ Answering him, Jesus said:

«**WHAT DO YOU WANT THAT I MAY DO FOR YOU?**».

The blind-man said to him: «Rabbuni, that I may see again!». ⁵² Jesus said to him: «Go, your faith has saved you». And immediately he saw again and **WAS FOLLOWING** him on the way.

The links between the first two passages are so obvious that many consider them to be a single pericope⁴. The second passage is the lesson which Jesus draws for the Twelve from what happened in the first passage. The third passage takes place in another place and another time, because the stay in Jericho is situated between the two accounts (46a and 46b).

⁴ So, for example the *Jerusalem Bible* and the *New Jerusalem Bible* split the text at the same point with the same titles for the pericopes, «The sons of Zebedee make their request» and «Leadership with service», while the *Catholic Study Bible* links the two into one, entitled «Ambition of James and John».

The strongest formal mark of the unity of this sub-sequence is probably the symmetrical repetition of an identical question (as well as the movement from the plural to the singular) at almost the start of the first passage (36) and almost at the end of the third (51); in the original, these two questions, both asked by Jesus, reflect one another in mirror fashion:

«What **do you want** that I may do for YOU?».
«For YOU what **do you want** that I may do?».

The verb «to want» is re-used twice at the center of the second passage (43-44); and in this way the center and the outer parts match⁵.

The characters relating to Jesus in the outer passages are «the sons of Zebedee» and «the son of Timaeus» named at the start of each passage (35 and 46b)⁶; Jesus, meanwhile, calls himself «Son of man» in the central passage (45) and he is called «Son of David» in the final passage (47.48).

«You do not know», at the center of the first passage (38) is opposed to «you know» at the start of the second (42); «blind man» in the third passage (46) can be linked to this verb, as we will see in due course.

«To be seated» is found in the first and third passages (37.40 and 46), and, in the central passage, this is also the position of the commanders and the great ones, who make others serve them.

The two occurrences of «James and John» (35.41) act as initial terms for the first two passages. Two verbs with the same root, *pros-poreuontai* and *ek-poreuomenou*, both translated as «come» (35.46b), act as initial terms for the first and third passages; two other verbs with the same root follow them, *aitēsōmen* and *pros-aitēs*, translated by «we will ask» (35.38) and «asking-for-alms» (46). The two occurrences of «Jericho» act as median terms between the two last passages (46).

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

Blindness and misunderstanding

The first account is focused on the misunderstanding of Zebedee's sons; the second introduces the son of Timaeus, who is blind. The link between blindness and misunderstanding is well-known in the Bible.

⁵ This is one of the laws of composition of biblical texts; see N.W. LUND, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*.

⁶ Mark is the only one of the synoptic authors to name the blind man.

In Isa 56:10-11, for example:

+ ¹⁰ His <i>WATCHMEN</i> are	all blind ,	they KNOW nothing.
– All of them are	dumb DOGS,	they can not bark.
.....		
	They dream, LYING DOWN ,	they love to slumber.
.....		
– ¹¹ These DOGS are	greedy ,	they do not KNOW to be satisfied.
+ And they are	SHEPHERDS ,	they do not KNOW to understand.

Blindness is paralleled with lack of intelligence from the very first segment. The «watchmen» (10a) or «shepherds» (11b) who should be guarding the flock are the people's leaders who are not doing their work – they are not using their mouths to warn of danger (10b), but to consume (11a). The whole piece turns on 10c which describes them as «lying down». Eyes, mouth, feet, and intelligence – all are still, just as in Mark.

The Son of Man

The title which Jesus uses to describe himself comes from Dan 7, which talks about a glorious character to whom the Lord will give eternal kingship:

¹³I gazed into the visions of the night. And I saw, coming on the clouds of heaven, someone like a *son of man*. He came to the one of great age and was led into his presence. ¹⁴On him was conferred sovereignty, glory and kingship, and men of all peoples, nations and languages became his servants. His sovereignty is an eternal sovereignty which shall never pass away, nor will his empire ever be destroyed. (Dan 7:13-14)

However, before being glorified, «the Son of man» must undergo the test of suffering and humiliation.

INTERPRETATION

Seated or standing

The blind man seated at the roadside receives the command to get up (49) and ends up following Jesus on the way (52). James and John, who wished to be seated in the glory of their Master (37), are referred to the Passion, their Passion being identical to that of Jesus (38-39). Jesus presents his own Passion to the Twelve as a service, «for the Son of man did not come to be served but to serve» (45). To be served is to be seated, like the king on his throne; to serve is to remain standing as a servant does. The sons of Zebedee, just like the other ten apostles, who demanded to be seated in the glory of the king, are called to remain standing just as servants and slaves do (43-44). As for

Bartimaeus, everything takes place as though the miracle were not so much that he recovers his sight, but that he gets up to follow the Son of man, like the Twelve (52). Seated on the ground, expecting his bread and clothing to come from others (46), seated on thrones (37) expecting others to serve them (42): neither is the attitude of a disciple (43). Jesus' disciple is to get up to serve his brothers (43-44), following his Master (45).

Blind unawareness

The blindness of Timaeus' son refers back to the unawareness of Zebedee's sons⁷. James and John do not know what they are asking for (38), they do not see the path which they will have to take to be seated in the King's glory. Jesus opens their eyes: they will have to drink the same cup and be baptized in the same baptism as him, and go through the Passion (38-39). They know perfectly well what the world's law is (42), the more so since they have just proved that they follow it themselves, and just as the ten others, who get angry, do (41). But they still do not know the law of the kingdom of God which Jesus will teach them (43-44). Like beggars, they ask to be given the first places, although they are asked to give their own lives, just like the Son of man, in ransom for the many (45). Bartimaeus, too, who asked for alms, abandons all his alms with his mantle (50) to give himself to the Lord (52).

Son of man, son of David

Timaeus' son twice calls out to the «Son of David» (47.48); Jesus describes himself as the «Son of man» (45). He uses this name each time he talks about his Passion. Here, the Son of man is the one who serves, the slave who will give his life as a ransom for the many. «Son of David» is a royal title. Jesus does not give this title to himself – it is not for him to give it to himself – but he is recognized as such by the Son of Timaeus as well as by the Sons of Zebedee, those who wish to be seated on either side of this king of glory. Jesus, who gives himself the title of Son of man, and who does not reject the title of Son of David, is both king and servant. These two titles, which might appear to be opposed to each other, are in fact complementary: there is no glory without the cup and baptism (37-38), there is no greatness without service (43-44), there is no resurrection without going through suffering and death.

⁷ This is noted, for example, by Ernst, 501 : «The disciples' blindness, who do not wish to understand the meaning of the *sequela* of the cross, is in strong contrast with the fact that the beggar can [now] see».

2. THE SUB-SEQUENCE IN MATT 20:20-34

The sub-sequence in Matthew presents the same montage of three passages, but the first Evangelist has not used the same means to produce it.

2.1 THE MOTHER OF ZEBEDEE'S SONS MAKES HER REQUEST (MATT 20:20-23)

COMPOSITION

+ ²⁰ Then came to him	the MOTHER OF Zebedee's sons	with her SONS,
– prostrating	and ASKING for something from him.	
+ ²¹ Now he said to her:		
– «What	DO YOU WANT? ».	
.....		
Now she said to him:		
: Say that	they may sit	these two SONS of mine
: one AT [your] RIGHT AND one AT YOUR LEFT		in your kingdom».

²² Now answering Jesus said: «**You do not KNOW** what you **ASK!**»

–	CAN YOU	drink of the cup	that I am about to drink of?».
+ They say to him:			
– « WE CAN ».			
+ ²³ He says to them:		«My cup,	you shall drink of.
.....			
= But	to sit	AT MY RIGHT OR AT MY LEFT	
: is not mine	to give,		
: but is for those	to whom it has been prepared	by my FATHER».	

Two parallel parts (20-21; 22b-23) are linked by a very short central part (22a).

The first and last parts (20-21b and 21cde; 22b-23a and 23bcd) are made up of two pieces which match. The piece 20-21b has two parallel segments, while its symmetrical piece (22b-23a) has three segments, arranged concentrically. These first pieces are followed by two other, shorter, pieces (21cde and 23bcd). Between the two parts, «you can» (22b) and «we can» (22d) recall «do you want» (21b), to which «asking» (20b) corresponds; «the cup» (22b.23a) is opposed to «kingdom» (21e); «my Father» at the end (23d) is opposed to «the mother of Zebedee's sons» at the start (20a; the three occurrences of «sons» in 20 [twice] and 21d belong to the same semantic field).

At the center of the passage (22a), «you do not know» acts as a hinge between «want» and «can»; «what you are asking» refers back to «asking for something» in 20b.

SYNOPTIC COMPARISON (see pp. 169 and 159)

Matt 20:20-23

²⁰ Then came TO HIM
the mother of ZEBEDEE'S SONS
with her sons, prostrating
and ASKING
for something from him.

²¹ NOW HE SAID to her:
«WHAT DO YOU WANT?».

NOW she SAID TO HIM:
«Say THAT MAY SIT these two sons of
mine
ONE AT [your] RIGHT
AND ONE AT YOUR LEFT
in your kingdom».

²² NOW answering JESUS SAID:
«YOU DO NOT KNOW
WHAT YOU ASK!»

CAN YOU DRINK OF THE CUP
THAT I am about to DRINK OF?».

THEY SAY TO HIM: «WE CAN».

²³ HE SAYS TO THEM:
«As for my CUP, YOU SHALL DRINK OF.

BUT TO SIT AT MY RIGHT OR AT MY LEFT,
IS NOT MINE TO GIVE,
BUT IT IS FOR THOSE
TO WHOM IT HAS BEEN PREPARED
by my Father».

Mark 10:35-40

³⁵ And come near TO HIM
James and John,
THE SONS OF ZEBEDEE
saying to him: «Master, we want
that what we WILL ASK you
you may do for us».

³⁶ NOW HE SAID to them :
«WHAT DO YOU WANT
That I may do for you?».

³⁷ NOW they SAID TO HIM:
«Grant to us THAT
ONE AT YOUR RIGHT
AND ONE AT YOUR LEFT WE MAY SIT
in your glory!».

³⁸ NOW JESUS SAID to them:
«YOU DO NOT KNOW
WHAT YOU ASK!»

CAN YOU DRINK OF THE CUP
THAT I DRINK OF
or the baptism in which I am baptized
to be baptized?».

³⁹ *Now to him* THEY SAID: «WE CAN».

Now Jesus SAID TO THEM:
«THE CUP that I drink of YOU SHALL DRINK OF
and the baptism in which I am baptized
you shall be baptized.

⁴⁰ BUT TO SIT AT MY RIGHT OR AT MY LEFT
IS NOT MINE TO GIVE,
BUT IT IS FOR THOSE
TO WHOM IT HAS BEEN PREPARED.

As often happens, Matthew is much more concise than Mark – the long request at the start of Mark (35def) is summarized by a brief indirect question in Matthew (20de); Jesus' question is also shorter in Matt 21b than it is in Mark (36b); in the first sub-part of the last part, Matthew does not return to the image of baptism (Mark: 38ef.39de) and neither does he use «Now to him» and «Now Jesus» (Mark: 39ab).

On the other hand, Matthew adds some words: «answering» (22a), «I am about to» (22d), «as for» (Greek: *men*) and «my» (23b), and, especially, «by my Father» at the end (23g) which corresponds to his essential amendment: while in Mark it is Zebedee's sons who make their request (and they are called by their name in 35b), in Matthew it is their mother who intervenes on behalf of her two sons (20b).

Despite all these differences, the composition of the two passages is the same.

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

The cup

We can say the same about «the cup» as we did in Mark (see p. 160). In Matthew, too, the cup is found twice in the first Passover sequence, at the Last Supper (26:27) and during the prayer in Gethsemane (26:39.42).⁸

At Jesus' right and left

In Matthew this expression appears only once in 27-38 at the point of Jesus' execution – this is the place of the two bandits crucified with him.

The mother's request

Just as Bathsheba knelt and prostrated herself before David, so the mother of Zebedee's sons «prostrated herself» (Matt 20:20) before Jesus. The two mothers make a similar request: Bathsheba implored the king that he designate her son Solomon to be his successor on the throne of Israel, in the place of another of the king's sons, Adonijah son of Haggith (2Sam 3:4) who had set his sights on the kingdom (1Kgs 1:1-10).

INTERPRETATION

The disciples and their mother

The two disciples are called «Zebedee's sons» and their mother calls them «my sons». No-one, not even the narrator, calls them by their proper names. The mother «bows low and asks» (20b); she replies to the question Jesus asks her (21). The two brothers are there, of course (20a) and she shows them to Jesus, but still as «these two sons of mine» (21d), as though they only existed through their relationship to their father and, particularly, her, as though they had not yet separated from her. The mother is not even described as Zebedee's

⁸ See *Jésus passe*, 62-63, 67.

wife, but with an expression whose strange nature is notable: «the mother of Zebedee's sons» (20a). Note too that, with other women, she is present, even «at a distance», when Jesus dies, crucified between the two bandits, while her two sons have abandoned him (27:56).

Jesus and his Father

No sooner has the mother expressed her request than Jesus cuts her short and turns to his two disciples: «You do not know what you are asking» (22a). He separates them from their mother and treats them as adults with their own wishes. From this moment the dialogue, which in the first part of the account, took place between the mother and him, is now between the master and the two sons. Jesus thus plays the role of the father, whose function is precisely to separate the sons from their mother. The two brothers express their determination to share their master's fate, when they drink his cup. However, Jesus does not swap one disordered attachment for another. He does not take the mother's place; on the contrary, he refers them to the ultimate origin on whom he himself depends, «his Father» (23d). In this way he totally fulfils the function of parents to their children, sending them to the only one from whom all good comes, the only one to whom judgment belongs.

2.2 THE DISCOURSE ON SERVICE (Matt 20:24-28)

COMPOSITION

²⁴ And having heard, the ten were indignant at the two brothers.
²⁵ Now Jesus having called them to him, said:

«You know that				
.	the rulers	of the NATIONS ,	exercise lordship	over them
.	and the GREAT-ONES		exercise authority	over them;
.....				
²⁶	it shall not be so	among you,		
+	but who wants GREAT	among you to become	shall be OF YOU the servant	
+	²⁷ and who wants to be	among you the first	let be OF YOU the slave ,	
.....				
²⁸	As the Son of Man did not come			
.	to be served		but to serve	
.	and to give his life		a ransom	for MANY ».

After a short narrative introductory part (24-25a), Jesus' discourse has three pieces. The commandment given to the disciples (26-27), in opposition to the law which governs relations of authority for the nations (25bcd), is motivated by the Son of Man's behavior (28).

The parallelism between the final two segments of the first two pieces is clear (25cd; 26b-27), with some variation in the order of words in the second piece. The last segment in the third piece (28c) develops and explains the second member of the previous segment (28b: «to serve»). The progression from «servant» to «slave» in the second piece (26b.27) is repeated and developed in the second piece: «to serve» matches «servant» precisely, but «give his life as a ransom» seems to be much stronger and to mean «to sacrifice one's own life», that is, «to die». The «many» at the end of the last piece (28c) could be considered to make an inclusio with «the nations» at the start of the first piece (25c), particularly if we consider the links between this text and the Songs of the Servant (see the second point of 'Biblical Context' in Mark, p. 162).

SYNOPTIC COMPARISON (see pp. 173 and 161)

Matt 20:24-28

²⁴ AND HEARD, THE TEN
WERE INDIGNANT AT the two brothers.
²⁵ Now JESUS, CALLED THEM TO HIM, SAID:

«YOU KNOW THAT
the rulers of THE NATIONS
EXERCISE LORDSHIP OVER THEM
AND THE GREAT-ONES
EXERCISE AUTHORITY OVER THEM ;

²⁶ IT SHALL NOT BE SO AMONG YOU,
BUT WHO WANTS GREAT AMONG YOU TO
BECOME

SHALL BE OF YOU THE SERVANT
²⁷ AND WHO WANTS TO BE AMONG YOU THE
FIRST

let be OF you THE SLAVE,

²⁸ as THE SON OF MAN
DID NOT COME TO BE SERVED
BUT TO SERVE AND TO GIVE HIS LIFE
A RANSOM FOR MANY».

Mark 10:41-46a

⁴¹ AND HEARD, THE TEN *began to*
BE INDIGNANT AT James and John.
⁴² and CALLED THEM TO HIM, JESUS SAID *to them*:

«YOU KNOW THAT
those considered to command THE NATIONS
EXERCISE LORDSHIP OVER THEM
AND *their* GREAT-ONES
EXERCISE AUTHORITY OVER THEM.

⁴³ IT SHALL NOT BE SO AMONG YOU,
BUT WHO WANTS GREAT TO BECOME AMONG YOU
SHALL BE OF YOU THE SERVANT

⁴⁴ AND WHO WANTS AMONG YOU TO BE THE FIRST
shall be OF *all* THE SLAVE.

⁴⁵ For THE SON OF MAN
DID NOT COME TO BE SERVED
BUT TO SERVE AND TO GIVE HIS LIFE
A RANSOM FOR MANY».

^{46a} *And they come to Jericho.*

The most notable difference between the two versions is that Mark makes the start of v.46 the conclusion of his passage, which has no corresponding piece in Matthew. As usual, Matthew is shorter than Mark. He does not repeat «began to» (Mark 41a), he shortens «those considered to command» (Mark 42c) to «the rulers» (25c) and «their great ones» (Mark 42e) with simply «the great ones», he emphasizes the parallelism of 26-27, changing Mark's «all» (44b) to «you» (27b, as in 26c). Finally, he makes the last piece subordinate to the previous piece, using «as», rather than Mark's simple coordination («For», 45a).

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

Matthew's text is so similar to Mark's that the biblical context is the same (see p. 162).

INTERPRETATION

The differences between Matthew and Mark are so minimal that we can re-use the interpretation of the Markan passage for the Matthean passage (see p.174).

THE DISCOURSE ON SERVICE IN LUKE

Luke does not report Zebedee's sons' request, and integrates discourse on service into the first Passover sequence, which I refer to as «Jesus' testament». While Matthew and Mark make the account of the Last Supper the center of their sequence, Luke focuses his sequence on the discourse on service⁹.

Matt 26:1-56

Mark 14:1-52

Luke 22:1-53

<i>Jesus announces his Passion</i> 1-2 = The authorities decide to kill Jesus 3-5 <i>The anointing at Bethany</i> 6-13 = Judas the disciple decides to sell Jesus 14-16 Preparation of the Passover 17-19	= The authorities decide to kill Jesus 1-2 <i>The anointing at Bethany</i> 3-9 = Judas the disciple decides to hand over Jesus 10-11 Preparation of the Passover 12-16	= The authorities decide to kill Jesus and Judas the disciple decides to hand him over 1-6 = Preparation of the Passover 7-13
Prediction of the betrayal by Judas 20-25 CELEBRATION OF THE PASSOVER 26-29 Prediction of Peter's denial 30-35	Prediction of the betrayal 17-21 CELEBRATION OF THE PASSOVER 22-25 Prediction of Peter's denial 26-31	: Celebration of the Passover 14-20 Prediction of the betrayal 21-24 DISCOURSE ON SERVICE 25-30 Prediction of Peter's denial 31-34 : <i>Swords of the apostles</i> 35-38
+ Gethsemane 36-46 + Arrest 47-56	Gethsemane 32-42 = Betrayal by Judas Ear is cut = Fight of the disciples 43-52	= Agony of Jesus 39-46 = Arrest 47-53

⁹ See *Jésus passe*, 113-173; *Luc*, 831-876.

2.3 JESUS OPENS HIS DISCIPLES' EYES (Matt 20:20-34)

COMPOSITION OF THE SUB-SEQUENCE

²⁰ Then came to him the mother of the **SONS OF ZEBEDEE** with her sons, prostrating and asking for something from him. ²¹ He said to her:

«**WHAT DO YOU WANT?**».

She said to him: «Say that these my **two** sons **MAY SIT** one at your right and one at your left in your **KINGDOM**». ²² Answering, Jesus said: «**YOU DO NOT KNOW** what you ask. Can you drink of the cup that I am about to drink of?». They say to him: «We can». ²³ He says to them: «My cup, you shall drink of; but to **SIT** at my right or at my left is not mine to give, but it is for those to whom it has been prepared by my Father».

²⁴ Having heard, the ten were indignant at the **two** brothers.

²⁵ Now Jesus having summoned them, said:

«**YOU KNOW** that

: the rulers of the nations exercise **lordship** over them

: and the great-ones exercise authority over them;

²⁶ it shall not be so among you;

but who **WANTS** among you to become great, shall be your servant,

²⁷ and who **WANTS** among you to be the first, shall be your slave,

²⁸ as **THE SON OF MAN** did not come

: to be served but to serve

: and to give his life a ransom for *many*».

²⁹ And while they were leaving from Jericho, followed him a *numerous* crowd. ³⁰ And behold, **two BLIND-MEN SITTING** along the way, having heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, saying: «Have mercy on us, **Lord, SON OF DAVID!**». ³¹ The crowd rebuked them so that they would be silent; but the more they cried out, saying: «Have mercy on us, **Lord, SON OF DAVID!**». ³² And stopped, Jesus called them and said:

«**WHAT DO YOU WANT** that I may do for you?».

³³ They say to him: «Lord, that our eyes may be opened!». ³⁴ Moved with pity, Jesus touched their eyes and immediately they saw again and they were **FOLLOWING** him.

In the outer passages (20-23; 29-34) Jesus' first (21b) and last (32b) questions, which are very similar, act as outer terms (or «inclusio») for the sub-sequence as a whole. In addition, «seated» re-appears in 21c, 23b and 30b (which is opposed by «accompany» at the end of the last passage in 34b); «reign» (21d) matches the two occurrences of «son of David» (30c.31b).

The three passages of the sub-sequence are linked by the series «sons of Zebedee» (20a), «Son of man» (28a) and «son of David» (30c.31b), by the repetition of «two» (21c.24c.30b); «to want» is found once in the outer questions (21b.32b) and twice at the center of the sub-sequence (26b.27); «you do not know» in 22a in the first passage is opposed to «you know» in 25d in the second passage, which «blind men» in 30b in the third passage (the blind man is one who does not see, or does not understand) matches.

«Many» in 28c and «numerous» in 29, which translate words with the same root in Greek (*pollōn* et *polys*), act as median terms (or «link-words») for the last two passages. The verb translated by «exercise lordship over» at the start of Jesus' discourse (25e) is from the same root as «Lord» (30c.31b).

SYNOPTIC COMPARISON

Matt 20:20-34

²⁰ Then came to him the mother of the sons of Zebedee with her sons, prostrating and asking for something from him. ²¹ He said to her:

«WHAT **DO YOU WANT**?».

She said to him: «Say that these my **two** sons **MAY SIT** one at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom». ²² Answering, Jesus said: «**YOU DO NOT KNOW** what you ask. Can you drink of the cup that I am about to drink of?». They say to him: «We can». ²³ He says to them: «My cup, you shall drink of; but **TO SIT** at my right or at my left is not mine to give, but it is for those to whom it has been prepared by my Father».

²⁴ Having heard, the ten were indignant at the **two** brothers. ²⁵ Having summoned them, Jesus said: «**YOU KNOW** that the rulers of the nations dominate them and the great-ones subdue them;

²⁶ it shall not be so among you, but who **WANTS** to become great among you, shall be your servant ²⁷ and who **WANTS** among you to be the first, shall be your slave, ²⁸ as the *Son of Man* did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many».

²⁹ And while they were leaving from Jericho, a numerous crowd followed him. ³⁰ And behold **two BLIND-MEN, BEING SEATED** along the way, heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, saying: «Have mercy on us, Lord, *son of David*!». ³¹ The crowd rebuked them so that they would be silent; but the more they cried out, saying: «Have mercy on us, Lord, *son of David*!». ³² Stopped, Jesus called them and said:

«WHAT **DO YOU WANT** THAT I MAY DO FOR YOU?».

³³ They say to him: «Lord, that may be opened our eyes!». ³⁴ Moved with pity, Jesus touch their eyes and immediately they saw again and they were **FOLLOWING** him.

Mark 10:35-52

³⁵ And come to him James and John, the **sons of Zebedee**, saying to him: «Master, we want that what we will ask you, you may do for us». ³⁶ He said to them:

«WHAT **DO YOU WANT** THAT I MAY DO FOR YOU?».

They said to him: ³⁷ «Grant to us that we **MAY SIT** one at your right and the other at your left in your glory». ³⁸ Jesus said to them: «**YOU DO NOT KNOW** what you ask. Can you drink of the cup that I drink of or be baptized with the baptism in which I am baptized?». ³⁹ They said to him: «We can». Jesus said to them: «The cup of which I drink you shall drink and the baptism in which I am baptized you shall be baptized. ⁴⁰ But **TO SIT** at my right or at my left, is not mine to give; it is for those to whom it has been prepared».

⁴¹ Having heard, the ten began to be indignant at James and John. ⁴² Having summoned them, Jesus said to them: «**YOU KNOW** that those considered to command the nations dominate them and the great-ones among them subdue them.

⁴³ It shall not be so among you, but who **WANTS** to be great among you shall be your servant ⁴⁴ and who **WANTS** to be the first among you shall be the slave of all. ⁴⁵ For the *Son of Man* did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many».

⁴⁶ And they come to Jericho.

And while coming out of Jericho, he, his disciples and a considerable crowd, the **son of Timaeus**, Bartimaeus, **A BLIND-MAN, WAS SEATED** along the way, asking for alms. ⁴⁷ Heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he started to cry out and to say: «*Son of David*, Jesus, have mercy on me!». ⁴⁸ Many rebuked him so that he would be silent, but he cried out all the more: «*Son of David*, have mercy on me!». ⁴⁹ Stopped, Jesus said: «Call him». And they called the blind-man, saying to him: «Have courage, rise, he calls you!». ⁵⁰ Having abandoned his mantle, walking again, he came to Jesus. ⁵¹ Answering him, Jesus said:

«WHAT **DO YOU WANT** THAT I MAY DO FOR YOU?».

The blind-man said to him: «Rabbuni, that I may see again!». ⁵² Jesus said to him: «Go, your faith has saved you». And immediately he saw again and he was **FOLLOWING** him on the way.

Matthew's setting is the same as Mark's. The greatest, or at least, the most obvious difference, is that while in Mark Jesus heals only one blind man, in Matthew he heals two. We should ask, why there is this difference.

Matt 20:20-34

²⁰ Then came to him the mother of the sons of Zebedee with her sons, prostrating and asking for something from him. ²¹ He said to her:

«WHAT **DO YOU WANT?**».

She said to him: «Say that these my **two** sons **MAY SIT** one at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom». ²² Answering, Jesus said: «**YOU DO NOT KNOW** what you ask. Can you drink of the cup that I am about to drink of?». They say to him: «We can». ²³ He says to them: «My cup, you shall drink of; but **TO SIT** at my right or at my left is not mine to give, but it is for those to whom it has been prepared by my Father».

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²⁶ it shall not be so among you, but who **WANTS** to become great among you, shall be your servant ²⁷ and who **WANTS** among you to be the first, shall be your slave, ²⁸ as the *Son of Man* did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many».

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«WHAT **DO YOU WANT** THAT I MAY DO FOR YOU?».

³³ They say to him: «Lord, that may be opened our eyes!». ³⁴ Moved with pity, Jesus touch their eyes and immediately they saw again and they were **FOLLOWING** him.

Mark 10:35-52

³⁵ And come to him James and John, the **sons of Zebedee**, saying to him: «Master, we want that what we will ask you, you may do for us». ³⁶ He said to them:

«WHAT **DO YOU WANT** THAT I MAY DO FOR YOU?».

They said to him: ³⁷ «Grant to us that we **MAY SIT** one at your right and the other at your left in your glory». ³⁸ Jesus said to them: «**YOU DO NOT KNOW** what you ask. Can you drink of the cup that I drink of or be baptized with the baptism in which I am baptized?». ³⁹ They said to him: «We can». Jesus said to them: «The cup of which I drink you shall drink and the baptism in which I am baptized you shall be baptized. ⁴⁰ But **TO SIT** at my right or at my left, is not mine to give; it is for those to whom it has been prepared».

⁴¹ Having heard, the ten began to be indignant at James and John. ⁴² Having summoned them, Jesus said to them: «**YOU KNOW** that those considered to command the nations dominate them and the great-ones among them subdue them.

⁴³ It shall not be so among you, but who **WANTS** to be great among you shall be your servant ⁴⁴ and who **WANTS** to be the first among you shall be the slave of all. ⁴⁵ For the *Son of Man* did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many».

⁴⁶ And they come to Jericho.

And while coming out of Jericho, he, his disciples and a considerable crowd, the **son of Timaeus**, Bartimaeus, **A BLIND-MAN, WAS SEATED** along the way, asking for alms. ⁴⁷ Heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he started to cry out and to say: «*Son of David*, Jesus, have mercy on me!». ⁴⁸ Many rebuked him so that he would be silent, but he cried out all the more: «*Son of David*, have mercy on me!». ⁴⁹ Stopped, Jesus said: «Call him». And they called the blind-man, saying to him: «Have courage, rise, he calls you!». ⁵⁰ Having abandoned his mantle, walking again, he came to Jesus. ⁵¹ Answering him, Jesus said:

«WHAT **DO YOU WANT** THAT I MAY DO FOR YOU?».

The blind-man said to him: «Rabbuni, that I may see again!». ⁵² Jesus said to him: «Go, your faith has saved you». And immediately he saw again and he was **FOLLOWING** him on the way.

Again we find the same inclusio of Jesus' questions, even though the parallelism is less obvious in Matthew, because he does not have the subordinate clause in the first question (Matt 21b). «Seated» (Matt 21c.23b.30b; Mark

37a.40a.46d), the connection between «you do not know» (Matt 22a; Mark 38a), «you know» (Matt 25a; Mark 42b) and «blind man/men» (Matt 30a; Mark 46d), etc, are also repeated. Mark uses the repetition of «son of... » to link the three passages in his construction: «son of Zebedee» (35b) and «son of Timaeus» (46c), which is a way of paralleling characters; and we should add to these the titles to describe Jesus, «Son of man» (45a) and «son of David» (47b.48c), which link the last two passages. Matthew does not use the same method, as he, conversely uses the repetition of the figure «two»: their mother calls James and John «my two sons» (21c) in the first passage, and at the start of the second passage they are called «the two brothers» (24a). Finally, at the start of the third passage there is not one blind man, as in Mark, but «two» (30a).

In the past, exegetes wondered which, Matthew or Mark, reported the authentic historical truth – how many blind men did Jesus really heal at Jericho? This kind of question is a type of false question – on the pretext of academic work (historical work, in this case), we stop ourselves from listening to and welcoming what the text is seeking to transmit – this can blind the reader!

The first reason for such a difference might be literary (or «rhetorical» to use the terminology of the exegetical methodology which I employ). This variation is only one way of drawing the reader's attention to the links between the characters in question – as we have already seen, we need to understand that Bartimaeus' blindness, or the two blind men in Matthew, refer back to the blindness of the two brothers, Zebedee's sons.

We should add that Matthew likes to double his characters: in 8:28 he has two demoniacs in the place of one in Mark 5:2 and Luke 8:27; in 9:27 he has two blind men, just as in this sub-sequence; in addition, in 4:18.21, in the account of the first disciples, he is the only one to use the expression «the two brothers» for Simon and Andrew as well as for James and John; in Gethsemane, in 26:37, he is the only one to use «the two brothers» to mention James and John; during Jesus' trial in 26:60, he alone mentions «two» false witnesses. It is therefore a style which is characteristic of Matthew.

However, these literary explanations, which we call rhetorical or stylistic, are still external explanations. The difference in numbers between «one blind man» and «two blind men» may lead the reader to reflect, as will other numbers in the text.

We have already emphasized that the blind man, or the two blind men, refer back to the two brothers James and John – in Matthew this is four people. But there are also «the ten others», who are also blind, like the two brothers and the two blind men – now we have fourteen... without mentioning the «numerous» or «considerable crowd» who accompany the Lord (Matt 29b; Mark 46c) and which does not understand, who do not see what those who are physically

blind see; and, finally, the «many» for whom the Son of man will give his life as a ransom (Matt 28c; Mark 45c).

If the believing reader does not see that he, too, is part of this «numerous crowd», that he resembles «the ten apostles», the «two» brothers, Bartimaeus or the «two blind men», s/he risks remaining shut up in his or her own blindness. Matthew's text, just like Mark's, invites the reader to rise up, to see again, to walk on the way to Jerusalem with Jesus.

Another look at «traditional» exegesis

It is no exaggeration to say that the type of reading which we have carried out is still new. In fact, «rhetorical analysis» is based on presuppositions which are different from, and even opposed to, those of the historical-critical method, particularly form history (*Formgeschichte*) and «literary history», but also redaction history.

As we have explained¹⁰, the main presupposition of our method is that the Gospels are broadly inorganic collections of small units handed on through oral tradition, later compiled by redactors whose intervention was limited to retouching to link these units to one another, in a more or less artificial way.

This is why in commentaries pericopes are studied and interpreted independent of one another. At best, such-and-such a link between passages is indicated, but this is rare, and, in any event, not systematic. For example, in his 1963 commentary on Matthew, Pierre Bonnard is happy to indicate a single link between the account of the healing of the two blind men in Jericho with the context which comes before and after it:

This account is found in the three Synoptics, in the same place in Mark and Matthew, soon after the vital declaration, «the Son of man has come to serve» (20:28; Mark 10:45); and in Luke directly after the third prediction of the Passion. It is therefore well-integrated into the structure of the Gospel. In this context, we can give it a double significance: firstly, the one going up to Jerusalem to suffer is still the Son of David, as the two blind men publicly profess [...] In addition, and this second meaning does not contradict the first: about to enter his city, the Son of David does not disdain stopping to help a poor blind man seated at the side of the road, for this David has «come to serve and not to be served» (v. 28)¹¹.

¹⁰ See pp. 45-61.

¹¹ Bonnard, 298-299.

Paul Lamarche's commentary is much more recent (1996), and he also emphasizes a link with what comes before and after the account of the blind man Bartimeus:

In some ways this account is linked to what has preceded it (for example 10:51 evokes 10:36); however, in other ways (we are on the way to Jerusalem, and compare 10:47.48 to 11:10) the narrative is linked to what follows¹².

About 10:36 and 10:51, that is, about the two almost identical questions in which we recognized an *inclusio* for the whole sub-sequence, Lamarche is happy merely to say that:

The parallelism between Jesus' question to the blind man («what do you want me to do for you?») and the question he addresses to Zebedee's sons does not emphasize the importance of the disciples' will, but, by this question, Jesus forces men to be aware of their deepest desire, and to express it (p. 262).

As for the double apostrophic «son of David» (10,47-48), he notes merely that it is repeated at 11:10 with the acclamation with branches: «Blessed is the coming kingdom, the kingdom of our father David» (pp. 263-264) and makes no link to the passage with Zebedee's sons' demand.

The same goes for Camille Focant's 2004 commentary. He is happy to briefly indicate the links between the passages at the end of his interpretation of Mark 10:35-45, which he considers to be a single pericope: «In contrast with the disciples' blindness, the pericope which follows will describe the healing of the blind man Bartimaeus»¹³. When he then studies the pericope of the blind man, he notes that, «Jesus asks the blind man a question (v. 51) whose terms are almost identical to those in the question asked to Zebedee's sons some verses above (10:36). The effect is to bring out for the reader the contrast between the two responses»¹⁴.

These examples illustrate the essential difference between traditional exegesis and rhetorical analysis. In rhetorical analysis, the formal links between the passages carry a meaning which not only goes beyond the total meaning of all the passages taken individually, but enables them to be better understood.

Other commentaries, even recent ones, do not note any link between the pericope of the blind man and the pericope of Zebedee's sons. For example, in his commentary on Matt, Donald Hagner notes that the title «son of David» is repeated at the welcome with branches at 21:9 and that, in the Temple, Jesus

¹² Lamarche, 263 ; see too S. Légasse, 646, n. 3.

¹³ Focant, 399.

¹⁴ Focant, 406.

will again heal the blind and the lame (21:14)¹⁵, but he says nothing about the links between the first and third passages of the sub-sequence¹⁶.

Others resist what they think of as a «symbolic» reading, which, they say, is impossible to prove. At the end of his commentary, Rudolph Pesch writes about Bartimaeus' healing:

It is not possible to establish whether now, at the start of the fourth main part (8:22-26), Mark intends to give a symbolic meaning to the healing of a blind man (10:46-52), by referring back to the victory over the disciples' incomprehension. His composition indicates, however, that the healing faith which restores sight, leads one to follow Jesus' way in the community of service of the disciples. For the community, Zebedee's sons show, in an exemplary fashion, that Jesus' suffering opens their eyes: their positive response to the question, confirmed by Jesus, presupposes that their incomprehension is overcome¹⁷.

Earlier, Pesch adds, «If we do not sufficiently take *Mark's respectful attitude to tradition* into account, it is easy to over-evaluate the account's *symbolic content which is not demonstrable* (p. 267; my emphasis).

In his analysis of the account of the blind man at Jericho¹⁸, Vittorio Fusco emphasizes the ancient difference between historical exegesis and symbolic exegesis (pp. 213-214); he does not hide his reluctance for the latter type:

¹⁵ Hagner, II, 584.

¹⁶ Other commentaries, such as Gnika II 277-94, may also be consulted.

¹⁷ Pesch, II, p. 255. My emphasis.

¹⁸ In the introductory volume to the Synoptics: M. LÀCONI *et al.*, ed., *Vangeli sinottici e Atti degli Apostoli*, 213-225.

Less certain, but possible, other links with earlier scenes¹⁹: the beggar Bartimaeus, by abandoning his cloak (the inalienable property of the poor man: cf. Exod 22:25f; Deut 24:12f), takes the place of the rich man who refuses to *follow Jesus* (10:17-31); he is also opposed to James and John (10:35-45), who, in answer to Jesus' question, «What do you want me to do for you?», asked for the first places in the Kingdom (p. 216; I have emphasized the first words, which are so cautious).

Finally, note Jean Radermakers' commentary on Mark, in which he gives great importance to the book's composition, but unfortunately does not identify the sub-sequence which we have examined²⁰.

3. THE SUB-SEQUENCE IN LUKE 18:35–19:10

Mark and Matthew integrate their account of the healing at Jericho in a very similar, three-passage setting. We will now see what the Third Gospel does with the parallel passage of the blind man of Jericho. Luke does not link this scene to Zebedee's sons' request; conversely, he has joined the account of the blind man (18:35-43) to the account of Zacchaeus, a passage which is only found in Luke (19:1-10).

¹⁹ Interesting references to B. Standaert, J. Dupont and L. Di Pinto.

²⁰ J. RADERMAKERS, *La Bonne Nouvelle de Jésus selon saint Marc*. Note his hesitation on the text's structure, II, 281-286.

3.1 THE CONVERSION OF ZACCHAEUS (LUKE 19:1-10)

COMPOSITION

<p>+ ¹ And having entered, + he WAS PASSING <i>through Jericho.</i></p> <p>: ² And behold a man : by name called Zacchaeus,</p> <p>- and he was a chief-of-the tax-collectors - and he (was) rich.</p> <p>³ And he <i>was seeking to SEE</i> Jesus WHO HE WAS.</p> <p>- And he was unable because of the crowd, - for in stature he was small.</p> <p>: ⁴ And running forward before, : he climbed upon a sycamore</p> <p>+ to SEE him + because <i>through that (way)</i> he was about to PASS BY.</p>	<p>+ ⁵ When he arrived at the place, + HAVING LOOKED UP, <i>Jesus said to him:</i></p> <p>- «Zacchaeus, in haste come down! - For today in your house I must stay.</p> <p>: ⁶ And in haste he came down : and received him by rejoicing.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>= ⁷ HAVING SEEN it, = all were murmuring, saying: = «With a SINNER HE WENT IN to lodge!»</p>
<p>⁸ Having stood, Zacchaeus said to the Lord:</p> <p>. «Behold: <i>the half of my goods, LORD,</i> .. to the poor I give;</p> <p>. and if I have defrauded anything from anyone, .. I will give back fourfold».</p>	<p>+ ⁹ <i>Jesus said to him:</i></p> <p>- «Today salvation to this house has come, : because he is also a son of Abraham ;</p> <p>.....</p> <p>= ¹⁰ For HAS COME the Son of Man = to seek and save what was LOST».</p>

This passage is made up of two parts: Zacchaeus looks for Jesus (1-4), and Jesus finds Zacchaeus (5-10). The boundary of the first part is formed by the inclusio «passing through» (1a.4b). The first piece describes the place first (1), and then Zacchaeus²¹ (2). The very short central piece (3a), expresses Zacchaeus' desire. The third piece (3b-4) recounts how the chief tax-collector managed to overcome his disability to obtain what he wanted. The final member (4b) refers back to the center (3a) and to the first member of the part (1a).

The second part (5-10) is also concentric: two sub-parts (5-7 and 9-10) frame Zacchaeus' declaration (8). The four tenses of each of the outer sub-parts are parallel, but the last part saves the first member of each segment. The symmetry between the end of 5a and 9a is total, it is significant between the end of 5b and 9b, and it is still clear between the end of 7 and 10²², which consequently leads us to place the third segments (6 and 9c) in parallel, even though from the linguistic point of view they have nothing in common.

In the center (8), introduced by a narrative phrase, are Zacchaeus' only words. The main verbs share the same root, have the same subject and the same moods; at the outer parts are two fractions (1/2 and 1/4), the beneficiaries being «the poor», and then those whom Zacchaeus has wronged.

The joining of the parts is achieved by the end of 4 and the start of 5:

<i>because</i>	through there	<i>he was about TO PASS BY,</i>
<i>When HE ARRIVED</i>		at that place.

If in the first part Zacchaeus is identified in detailed fashion (2ab.3b), the whole text, like the character described, is focused on Jesus. The problem, for the chief tax-collector, is how to «see» Jesus (twice: 3a.4b), how to identify him (3a). Conversely, the second part is focused on Zacchaeus' new identity, which is opposed to his former identity («sinner» in 7, «lost» in 10b), or, more precisely, on his decision to convert which makes him move from his former identity to his new description as a «son of Abraham». Jesus' identity («me» in 5b), presented as the savior («salvation» in 9b and «to save» in 10b) is in the second part – Zacchaeus, who wanted to see «who Jesus was», in the center of the first part (3a), acknowledges him as «Lord» in the center of the second part

²¹ *Zakchai*os is the Hellenized form of the Hebrew name *Zakkai*. According to Fitzmyer (1223), this name means «pure», «innocent». Is this irony on Luke's part? But the *piel* of the verb means «to make innocent» or «to declare to be innocent», «to acquit», and it is probably this meaning which we should understand, since after Zacchaeus' confession, Jesus declares him to be «a son of Abraham».

²² The first verb, *eis-elthen* (lit. «come-into»), is usually rightly translated by «enter»; the translation «came» as the *elthen* in v. 10 better shows, albeit by reinforcing it, the similarity of the two verbs in the original.

(8d). Note, too, the lexical repetition of «seek», where the subject is Zacchaeus in 3a, and Jesus in 10.

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

The symmetrical position of 9c («because he is also a son of Abraham») and 6 («And in haste he came down and received him rejoicing») was indicated above. Here we can see a reference to the account in Genesis 18 where Abraham offers hospitality to the three men who appear to him at the oak of Mamre. Here we find the same haste: like Zacchaeus (Luke 19:4), Abraham «runs» (Gen 18:2.7), like Zacchaeus (Luke 19:5b.6), he «hastens» (Gen 18:6) as do his wife (6) and servant (7). Note the presence of a tree in both accounts (an oak and a sycamore, both sacred trees) and, above all, that the three men in the Genesis account are identified from the beginning as «Lord» (Gen 18:1; the same word is used twice in Luke 19:8).

INTERPRETATION

A mutual quest

Two characters are each seeking one another: Zacchaeus, the chief tax-collector, «looks» to see who Jesus is (3ab) and Jesus, «the Son of man», declares that he has come «to seek» those who are lost (10), «tax-collectors and sinners». Seeking to see Jesus, Zacchaeus uses the means he needs (4ab). He is small in stature, which stops him seeing Jesus (3b). He does what he needs to to turn the situation around – he climbs a tree to see the one he is looking for (4). But, having arrived under the sycamore, it is not Zaccheaus who see Jesus, but the other way around – it is Jesus who «raises his eyes» towards him (5), for he, too, searches him. To see Jesus, Zacchaeus had climbed a tree (4); at Jesus' request, he quickly comes down (6), always ready to do what he has to, ready for any change, to meet the one seeking him, and this time to meet him closer.

Who is Jesus?

Who is Jesus? This is the question which bothers Zacchaeus (3a). He has heard people speaking about Jesus, and desperately wants to see him. Not only will he see him, but he will speak to him, receive him in his home, offer him food and shelter (6). Like Abraham his father (9c), he recognizes God visiting in his guest. He calls him «Lord» (8) and treats him as such. He will hear Jesus declare himself to be both «Son of man» (10a) and Savior (10b). Zaccheaus' expectation is satisfied beyond anything he could have hoped for.

Who is Zacchaeus?

And yet, we might say that the real question is not who Jesus is, but who this man is. Zacchaeus wants to know who Jesus is (3), but he is referred back to himself (8). The first word Jesus speaks is his name (5b). He calls him to do something immediately (5b) which leads him back to the house he left to seek the one he had heard people talking about. The chief tax-collector, who lost himself in the anonymity of the crowd, is led into the full light of his status as public sinner (7). Jesus does not say that all those who see Zacchaeus as a sinner are wrong. For Jesus, too, he is a sinner, since it is precisely these lost people, like him, whom «the Lord» (8) has come to find (10); to find, and to save, since Zacchaeus will definitively become a «son of Abraham» (9c).

The conversion of a man of money

Here we see Zacchaeus, standing up, making a solemn declaration of conversion to Jesus (8), but not a beautiful declaration of principles, rather a tax declaration. Zacchaeus remains a man of money even at the very heart of his conversion – he pays, not in words, but in figures. His words are percentages – he will give «half» (8d), he will give back «a quarter» (8e). The change, or conversion, is not an affair of the heart, but a financial matter – the heart changes, money changes hands. With the same movement he expresses a double judgment, what he has stolen and what he will give back, a judgment which is both on the past and on the future, joined together in conversion from this moment on, in the today of salvation.

Salvation

«Today salvation has come to this house» (9b). It is salvation in person which has come to Zacchaeus' house, Jesus, the one who «has come to save» (10b). This is, of course, salvation for Zacchaeus, but also, as a consequence of this, for the poor and for those he has defrauded. Zacchaeus sought to see Jesus (3a); Jesus' entire action consists in opening his eyes to other people. Referred back to himself, he is also referred to his brothers, «the poor» (8d), and to those whom he «had defrauded» (8e) of what they had to live on; in summary, those who, like him, need to be saved (10b).

3.2 THE BLIND MAN AND ZACCHAEUS (18:35-43 AND 19:1-10)

COMPOSITION OF THE SUB-SEQUENCE

<p>³⁵ It happened as he was approaching to Jericho, that a BLIND-MAN was seated along the way, asking (for alms). ³⁶ Heard a crowd going by, he was inquiring WHAT THIS WAS. ³⁷ They announced to him: «Jesus the Nazorean comes here!». ³⁸ He exclaimed saying: «Jesus, SON OF DAVID, have mercy on me!». ³⁹ Those who were going before rebuked him so that he might stop speaking.</p>	
<p>But he all the more cried out: «SON OF DAVID, have mercy on me!».</p>	
<p>⁴⁰ Jesus, having stopped, ordered that he might be led to him. While he was approaching, he asked him: ⁴¹ «What do you want that I may do for you?». He said: «LORD, that I may see again». ⁴² Jesus said to him: «See again! Your FAITH has SAVED you».</p>	<p>⁴³ Instantly he saw again and was following him, glorifying God; and all the people, having seen, gave praise to God.</p>
<p>¹⁹ ¹ Having entered, he was passing through Jericho. ² And behold a man by name called Zacchaeus, and he was a chief of the tax-collectors and he was rich.</p>	
<p>³ He WAS SEEKING TO see Jesus WHO HE WAS.</p>	
<p>BUT HE COULD NOT because of the crowd, for in stature he was small. ⁴ And running forward before, he climbed upon a sycamore to see him because he was about to pass by there.</p>	
<p>⁵ When he arrived at the place, having looked up, Jesus said to him: «Zacchaeus, come down quickly! For today I must stay at your house». ⁶ And he came down quickly and received him joyfully. ⁷ Having seen it, all murmured saying: «It is with a sinner that he went in to lodge!».</p>	
<p>⁸ Stood up, Zacchaeus said to the LORD: «Behold: the half of my goods, LORD, to the poor I give; and if I have defrauded anything from anyone, I will give it back four-fold».</p>	
<p>⁹ Jesus said to him: «Today SALVATION has entered into this house, because he is also SON OF ABRAHAM! ¹⁰ For the SON OF MAN has come to seek and SAVE what was lost».</p>	

Both accounts begin by noting a similar place – the first scene takes place on the outskirts and the second, shortly afterwards, within the same city of «Jericho» (18:35 and 19:1).

Even though the blind man is poor (he is «asking for alms»; 18:35b) and Zacchaeus «rich» (19:2b), the two characters are similar. Like the blind man, Zacchaeus «cannot see» Jesus (19:3); one «inquires» about what is happening (18:36), the other «seeks» to see it (19:3-4); a similar question moves them: «what was this?». (18:36), «who Jesus was?». (19:3).

Jesus recognizes the blind man as a believer (18:42), and Zacchaeus as a son of Abraham (19:9), the father of believers. Their faith «saves» them both (18:42 and 19:9). – Jesus is called «son of David» by the blind man (18:38-39); he calls himself the «Son of man» (19:10). The second title does not usually refer to his glory, but to his humiliation and Passion. The two titles are complementary. –

Jesus is described as the one who «comes»: he says about himself that he «has come to seek and save what was lost» (19:10). This might seem fortuitous if Luke were not the only of the Synoptic writers to use the same word (with the prefix *para-* in 18:37) in the account of the blind man.

There are frequent verbs of seeing: *ana-blepō*, translated by «to look up» in 19:5 and «see-again» in 18:41.42.43a (that is, three times in the first passage and once only in the second); *oraō*, translated as «see» in 18:43b and 19:3.4.7 (that is, only once in the first passage, and three times in the second).

Both characters call Jesus «Lord» (18:41a; 19:8a), from where comes the title given to the sub-sequence.

INTERPRETATION

The wish of the blind man and the tax-collector

The two characters might seem to be opposed to one another in every way – the former is poor and has to beg to survive (18:35), the chief tax-collector is rich (19:2); the former is anonymous, while all know the name of the second; like all the unfortunates of those times, despite of his disability the blind man had the pity of people, who helped him with their alms, while the chief tax-collector was despised and rejected. And yet, despite appearances, the two also in a strange way resemble one another. Both live at the margins: the blind man, seated at the roadside, was considered to be impure by the Law, which did not allow him to make an offering at the Temple, and did not even allow him to enter it; the tax-collector was also impure, because he dealt with the pagans for whom he collected taxes. Furthermore, both are unable to see. The first is blind, and does not see Jesus but has to ask passers-by what is happening (18:36); Zacchaeus is small and, like the blind man, cannot see Jesus (19:3). Both are moved by the same desire and take the necessary steps to get what they want – the blind man cries out (18:38-39) and gets up to go towards Jesus (40), while the tax-collector runs to climb a tree (19:4). Both wish to see, and both get for more than they could have hoped for at the start.

The crowd's blindness

As he moves about, Jesus is always surrounded by the «crowd» (18:36 and 19:3). Luke does not say why so many people accompany him all along the journey. Rather, he emphasizes the fact that they form a barrier around him, as though to protect him from, or to stop him coming into contact with people it would not be appropriate for him to be in touch with. Whether they mean to or not, the crowd prevents Zacchaeus from seeing Jesus (19:3). They do, of course answer the blind man's question, and inform him (18:36-37), but when he starts imploring for Jesus' mercy, the crowd threatens him to silence him

(38-39). When Jesus decides to go to the home of the chief tax-collector, they condemn Zacchaeus' sin as much as Jesus' choice, as though they think that Jesus is blind to the extent that he cannot identify his host. But who is really blind – those who only see Jesus as «the Nazorean» (18:37) or the one who calls him «son of David» (38-39), those who only «see» Zacchaeus as a «sinner» (7) or the one who recognizes him as a «son of Abraham» (9)?

Jesus opens the eyes of the blind

Jesus restores sight to the blind man who asks him for this (18:42-43); he is also led to acknowledge Jesus not only as «son of David» (38-39) but also as the «Lord» (41), the son of the one who will finally «glorify» him (43). Jesus also opens the eyes of «the crowd» (36), which is led to become the «people» of God (43). All call the one they are accompanying «the Nazorean» (37); at the end, like the blind man, they «see» God's work in him, and they «give [God] praise» (43). In the meantime, Jesus had called them to change the way in which they see the blind man, who is no longer an inconvenience who should be pushed away, but a person who is to be invited to encounter his savior – and theirs. In the same way, Jesus invites the crowd who «murmur» against Zacchaeus and him (19:7) to convert in its way of seeing, and, like him, to acknowledge the conversion of the chief tax-collector, who has become a «son of Abraham» (9), and the coming of «salvation» (9); not only Zacchaeus «was lost», but all those who had made themselves, rather than God judges – and blind judges at that. Jesus restores sight to all.

Note, in reference to what we have said (see pp. 180-183) about the hesitation of traditional exegesis about what it calls «the symbolic meaning», which cannot be «demonstrated» or «established».

Let us say clearly that this meaning, even it relies on the text and on links between different passages, cannot be «proven», as a theorem can be proven, or as a mathematical demonstration can be given, which imposes itself and forces one to follow.

The symbolic meaning is, on the contrary, «felt», as a sentiment is felt, for example, faced with the beauty of a landscape, a work of art, and existential truth. With biblical texts, this experience is not only understanding what *the text says about what my own truth, what it reveals to me personally* intellectually, with the brain, but with what the Bible calls «the heart»²³.

²³ See *Lire la Bible* (2003), 240-242; *Traité*, 630-635.

B. THE ACCOUNTS OF THE CALLING OF THE RICH MAN IN THEIR IMMEDIATE CONTEXTS

1. THE SUB-SEQUENCE IN MATT 19:1-26

Following a short introduction the length of a piece (1-2), this sequence has five passages. In the table below the headings follow those in the *Jerusalem Bible*.

The penultimate passage, «The rich young man», was already studied in the first chapter. Now we need to analyze and comment on each of the other passages in themselves, following which we will study the composition of the sub-sequence as a whole. However, before starting out, it would be useful to glance at a roadmap, so here is the general plan of the sub-sequence:

Introduction	1-2
THE QUESTION ABOUT DIVORCE	3-9
<i>Continence</i>	10-12
JESUS AND THE CHILDREN	13-15
THE RICH YOUNG MAN	16-22
<i>The danger of riches</i>	23-26

The «Question about divorce» and «The rich young man» are long (seven verses each), while the other three passages are short (three or four verses).

SYNOPTIC COMPARISON

We shall leave the synoptic comparison until the point where we have examined the parallel sub-sequence in Mark, for the synoptic study must be undertaken at the right moment. Each Gospel has its own coherence which will be drawn out without taking the others into account, otherwise there would be a risk of projecting the characteristics of one Gospel onto another. However, at a later point, the synoptic comparison will be indispensable for drawing out the specific points of each, as we saw for the two parallel sub-sequences in Matthew and Mark which include the request of Zebedee's sons, the discourse on service and the healing of the blind man or men. We should add that the synoptic comparison, as we do it, is carried out not only at the

level of the passages, but also at the higher levels, of sub-sequences, (in this chapter) and sequences (in Chapter Three).

1.1 THE QUESTION ABOUT DIVORCE (MATT 19:3-9)

COMPOSITION

The passage is organized into two parallel parts (3-6; 7-9): a short question from the Pharisees (3.7), to which Jesus responds at length (4-6 and 8-9).

<p>– ³ And came near to him some Pharisees, – tempting him and saying:</p>			
: «Is it lawful for		A MAN	
: to	REPUDIATE	HIS WIFE	for any motive?».
<p>• ⁴ And he answering said:</p>			
+ «Have you not read			
+ that <i>the Creator</i>	FROM THE BEGINNING		“male and female made them”
+ ⁵ and he said:			
.....			
. “For this man	will leave	the father and the mother	
- and	BE JOINED to	HIS WIFE	
- and the two	will be	one flesh only?”.	
.....			
– ⁶ So, they are no more two			
– but one flesh	only.		
+ Therefore what	God HAS JOINED,		
+ let not MAN	SEPARATE».		
<p>– ⁷ They say to him:</p>			
: «Why then <i>MOSES</i>		commanded	
- to “give	a roll of divorce		
- and to	REPUDIATE	her?”».	
<p>• ⁸ He says to them:</p>			
= « <i>MOSES</i> for the hardness of hearts	of you	allowed you	
= to	REPUDIATE	YOUR WIVES,	
- but	FROM THE BEGINNING	it was not so.	
.....			
= ⁹ Therefore		I say to you:	
- whoever	REPUDIATES	HIS WIFE,	except in case of immodesty,
- and	marries	another,	
- he commits-adultery».			

In the second sub-part (4-6) of the first part, Jesus' words are in a concentric construction around the quotation of the words of God (5bcd). The outer pieces match one another in mirror fashion: «God» in 6b matches «the Creator» in 4b; «two» in 6a matches «male and female» in 4c. The last segment (6b) answers the Pharisees' question directly (3b) with the repetition of «man» and the connection between «repudiate» and «separate».

In the second sub-part of the second part (8-9), Jesus opposes his position and Moses': «I say to you» in 9a is opposed to «allowed you» in 8a.

The exception, «except in case of immodesty» in Jesus' final statement (9b) is opposed to «for any motive» in the Pharisee's initial question (3b). In the first part, Jesus opposes the Pharisees' question to the words which originated with God; in the second part he explains Moses' concession (8b) to oppose it again to the same words of God (the link is indicated by the repetition of «in the beginning» in 4b and 8c), after which he gives his own interpretation of the divine words in the account of the beginning (9).

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

The account of creation

Matthew quotes Gen 1:27 in v.4c, and Gen 2:24 at the center of the first part (5bcd).

The Mosaic Law of divorce

¹ Supposing a man has taken a wife and consummated the marriage; but she has not pleased him and he has found some *impropriety of which to accuse her*; so he has made out a writ of divorce for her and handed it to her and then dismissed her from his house; ² she leaves his home and goes away to become the wife of another man.

³ If this other man... (Deut 24:1-3).

Strictu sensu, this text is not expressing a law, but describes a normal case of divorce. The law followed this introduction, and did not allow anyone who had repudiated his wife to take her back after she had been repudiated and married by another man.

The Greek word grec *porneia*, which translates the Hebrew expression «a vice» ('*erwat dābār*; literally, «something shameful») means «fornication», that is, either «adultery» or «prostitution»²⁴.

In Jesus' time, the legitimacy of divorce was in not in question, but scholars of the Law did not agree on the extension of the reason allowing divorce. The School of Hillel was very broad and accept any reason of complaint from the

²⁴ See BJ, note b.

husband (even burning the dinner!), while for the School of Shammai, only scandalous behavior by the wife or being unfaithful to her husband could be a reason for divorce²⁵.

The opposition to divorce in Judaism

Even before Christ, there was a tendency which clearly opposed divorce. So, Mal 2:13-16 says:

¹³ And here is something else you do: you cover the altar of Yhwh with tears, with weeping and wailing, because he now refuses to consider the offering or to accept it from your hands. ¹⁴ And you ask, «Why?». It is because Yhwh stands as witness between you and the wife of your youth, the wife with whom you have broken faith, even though she was your partner and your wife by covenant. ¹⁵ *Did he not create a single being that has flesh and the breath of life?* And what is this single being destined for? God-given off-spring. Be careful for your own life therefore, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. ¹⁶ For I hate divorce, says Yhwh the God of Israel, and I hate people to parade their sins on their cloaks, says Yhwh Sabaoth. Respect your own life, therefore, and do not break faith like this.

Mal 2:15 alludes to this same text in Gen 2:24 which Matthew quotes literally in v. 5.

Jesus and the Law

The Matthean version of the passage, with its opposition between «what Moses allowed» (8) and what Jesus «says» (9) recalls the long series of «You have heard it said... » [...] But I say to you... » in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:21-47), and particularly the second of the so-called «antitheses»²⁶.

²⁵ See P. BENOIT – M.-É. BOISMARD, *Synopse*, II, 306.

²⁶ On the incorrect name of «antitheses», see T. KOT, «Accomplir la justice de Dieu. Mt 5,17-48», 18; Jesus' words are not to be considered as opposing the law, but as a commentary, a reading, the proper interpretation.

Opposition between the Law of Moses and the earlier account

In the letter to the Galatians, Paul uses the argument of the earlier promise to Abraham, which he declares superior to the law of Moses:

But my point is this: once God had expressed his will in due form, no law that came four hundred and thirty years later could cancel that and make the promise meaningless (Gal 3:17).

+ ²⁷ <i>You have heard that it was said:</i>				
.	«YOU SHALL NOT	COMMIT-ADULTERY».		
.....				
= ²⁸ <i>Well then, I tell you:</i>				
:: everyone who	looks at	a woman	to desire her,	
– already	COMMITTED-ADULTERY	with her	in his heart.	

.. ²⁹ If your right eye scandalizes you,				
.	pluck it			
.	and cast it	(away) from	you:	
: for it is good for				
- that perishes				
- and not your whole body				
		be cast away	one of your members,	
			in Gehenna.	
.....				
.. ³⁰ And if your right hand scandalizes you,				
.	cut it			
.	and cast it	(away) from	you:	
: for it is good for				
- that perishes				
- and not your whole body				
		in Gehenna	one of your members,	
			goes away.	

+ ³¹ <i>It was also said:</i>				
.	«Who	repudiates	his woman,	
.		let him give	to her	a bill of divorce».
.....				
= ³² <i>Well then, I tell you:</i>				
:: everyone who	repudiates	his woman,	[except in case of immodesty],	
– makes	her	COMMIT-ADULTERY		
:: and whoever	marries	a repudiated,		
–		COMMIT-ADULTERY.		

INTERPRETATION

This passage has been greatly studied and discussed, not only by exegetes, but particularly by theologians and ethicists, for it deals with the very concrete and sensitive matter of the indissolubility of marriage. The various Christian Churches have adopted different practices: the Orthodox Churches, and the Protestant Churches allow divorce in the case of adultery, while the Catholic

Church is more inflexible and does not accept any breaking of the marriage contract. To a certain extent, in brief, the former Churches follow Matthew and the exception he gives, while the Catholic Church follows Mark's radical direction. This is not the place to enter into this discussion: we will limit ourselves to a few points of reflection on Jesus' attitude in relation to the Pharisees and the Law as Matthew presents it.

Temptation

When, at the start, Matthew says that the Pharisees only came to Jesus to «tempt» him (3a), he is interpreting their behavior. For him, the Pharisees are not moved by a desire for the truth; what interests them is putting Jesus to the test to make him stumble. In their malice, they can find no better subject-matter than the highly sensitive and much discussed one of the reasons for divorce. Their question is a trap, just like the hunter's trap: a lure whose aim is to catch the victim in a net, to capture or kill. According to their expectations, Jesus will not be able to escape, but will be forced to take one side or the other. To use a Matthean terminology, he will have to choose between right and left. If he goes to the right, to the House of Shammai, which only accepted divorce in the case of adultery or prostitution by the woman, he would be accused of being hard and merciless; if, however, he went to the left, to the House of Hillel, which allowed the husband to repudiate his wife for any reason, he would be accused of laxity. There is no escape route for him!

Going back to the beginning

Jesus escapes the trap in his reply; but this is not a crafty trick, as a first, superficial reading might suggest. It is not that he seeks to avoid the problem by extricating himself. On the contrary, he shows a sure path for anyone who would risk remaining the prisoner of an incorrect problem, which does not give a satisfactory solution for anyone; the path of returning to the beginning. This is exactly what one does, spontaneously, in any group – a religious order, for example – when a difficult problem arises and trips us up. One turns back to one's basic intuition, to the source which is not yet polluted by the passing of centuries and the possible deviations and inevitable flagging. Jesus sends those talking to him back to the first pages of the Scriptures and thus to the «Creator» himself (4b), «God» in person (6b). Jesus does not go either to the right with the House of Shammai, or to the left with the House of Hillel, but turns to the heavens, towards God (Psalm 124).

The hardened heart

Despite the lesson they are given, the Pharisees do not see themselves as beaten. Jesus refers them to the first two chapters of Genesis, and they do not even attempt to discuss the scriptural reference; it seems, therefore, that they accept it. However, they note a contradiction between the first law, and Moses' law allowing divorce (7). Jesus does not deny that the Teacher of Israel granted this possibility, but he interprets it as a concession to the weakness of the children of Israel, «because of the hardness of your hearts». It is probably significant that Jesus does not use the first person plural, but the second person plural, in an insistent way, three times, in each of the three members of the phrase, when he could have left it out: «It was because of the hardness of *your* hearts that Moses allowed *you* to repudiate *your* wives» (8b). In this way, returning again to the «beginning» which he has already developed at length (4-6), he keeps his distance.

The Matthean exception

Along with the great majority of exegetes, we can see in the formulation of Jesus' final statement (9) the intervention of the final Matthean redactor, who would have added «except in the case of immodesty» (9b), to take account of the practice of the Judeo-Christian Churches for which the first Gospel was written. These communities had kept the rules which the most demanding of their Jewish brethren followed: like the House of Shammai, divorce was only allowed if the wife was adulterous or prostituted herself. This was a very restrictive interpretation of the Mosaic law, which reflected Jesus' basic attitude in his faithfulness to God's original desire. However, even if the exception does not go back to the historical Jesus, the final canonical text has it and it seems that it is legitimate to think that the Matthean Church would not have accepted it, had they thought that it did not faithfully represent the message of Christ.

1.2 VOLUNTARY CONTINENCE (Matt 19:10-12)

COMPOSITION

This passage has two parts, the disciples' declaration (10), followed by Jesus' declaration (11-12). Jesus' words are in a concentric composition. In the center there is a piece made up of three bimembers which result from the disciple's choice (12c); the two bimember segments which frame this piece (11b, 12d) match, with the triple occurrence of the verb «to understand».

+ ¹⁰ *The [his] disciples say to him:*

: «If this is the condition of man with respect to the wife,
: **it is not good** **to marry!**».

+ ¹¹ *And he said to them:*

- «Not all **understand** [this] word, but only those to whom (it) **is given**.

.....
 . ¹²For **there are eunuchs** who from the mother's womb are born so
 . and **there are eunuchs** who are made eunuchs by men
 . and **there are eunuchs** who are made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of Heavens.

- Who can **understand**, let him **understand!**».

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

«The kingdom of Heavens»

The expression «the kingdom of heavens» is typical of Matthew; the other synoptic authors never use it. Even now, the Jews avoid pronouncing the ineffable Name, also known as the sacred tetragram, which we transliterate as Yhwh. When it appears in biblical texts it is read as «Adonai» which the Septuagint translated as *Kyrios*, «Lord». Other names are also used through respect for the name of God: «the Name» (in Hebrew, to say «Blessed be the Lord!», one says «Blessed [be] the Name!»,), «the Power» (see, for example, Matt 26:64, «Then you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of the Power»; the Douay-Rheims translates it as «at the right hand of the power of God»), «the Heavens», in the plural only because in Hebrew the word is always in the plural. This is why we use a capital letter.

Only the High Priest was allowed to pronounce the name, when, one day a year, on the day of Kippur, he entered the Holy of Holies.

The eunuch excluded from worship

Like all those with disabilities – the blind, the lame, and others (see p. 70), eunuchs were excluded from the priesthood and from worship (Lev 21:16-24)²⁷.

Eunuchs welcomed into the House of the Lord

The third part of the book of Isaiah begins with the following proclamation, which announces the coming of the time of salvation for all, including those who are excluded, foreigners and the marginalized among the people of Israel, symbolized by the eunuchs:

¹ Thus says Yhwh:

Have a care for justice, act with integrity, for soon my salvation will come and my integrity be manifest. ² Blessed is the man who does this and the son of man who clings to it: observing the sabbath, not profaning it, and keeping his hand from every evil deed [...]

+ ^{3c} Let no **eunuch** say:

«And I, I am a dried-up tree».

⁴ For Yhwh says this:

+ To **the eunuchs** who observe my sabbaths, and resolve to do what pleases me and cling to my covenant ⁵ I will give, in my house and within my walls, a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall never be effaced. (Isa 56:1-2.3c-5)

INTERPRETATION

The disciples' dismay

Having heard Jesus' reply to the Pharisees about the indissolubility of marriage, the disciples are horrified: if the husband is to tolerate an intolerable wife for his whole life, it would be better not to marry! Here we can see an echo of some of the wisest proverbs: if it is true that «a prudent wife is [an inheritance] from the Lord» (Prov 19:14), it is also clear that «It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a contentious woman, and a house in common» (Prov 21:9; 25:24); «It is better to dwell in a desert land than with a contentious and irritable woman» (Prov 21:19). The disciples' dismay suggests that the practice of divorce was very different from what the Master had just said.

²⁷ This law is in force in the Catholic Church, where a disabled man may only be admitted to Holy Orders with a dispensation.

Something even more incomprehensible

In his reply, Jesus seems to accept his disciples' conclusion. It is better to make oneself a eunuch (12c) than to marry (10c). However, the reason he gives for such a choice is rather different from theirs. It is better not to marry, not to avoid putting up with an impossible woman, but to give oneself entirely to God. Celibacy is not a refuge «in a desert», «in the corner of the roof», but a dedication «for the kingdom of Heavens» (12c)²⁸. Matthew does not report the disciples' reaction to this statement, but Jesus himself, aware of the difficulty they have in accepting this, is careful to solemnly warn them twice that only those who have been given this gift by God will be able to understand his words (11b.12d).

1.3 JESUS AND THE CHILDREN (Matt 19:13-15)

COMPOSITION

+ ¹³ Then	<i>were presented</i>	to him	children	
:: that	HE MIGHT LAY	THE HANDS	on them	and pray.

= Now	<i>the disciples</i>	rebuked	them.	
			
	¹⁴ Now Jesus said:			
		. «Leave	the children	
		. and do not prevent	them	
		: to come to	ME!	
			
= For	to such as these	is	THE KINGDOM OF HEAVENS».	

:: ¹⁵ And	HAVING LAID	THE HANDS	on them,	
+	<i>he departed</i>		from there.	

This short passage is made up of three parts. The members of the outer segments (13ab.15) mirror one another. The syntagma «laid the hands» + object appears in 13b and 15b; «left» in 15b matches «were presented» in 13a. The central part has three pieces: in the center (14bcd), Jesus' command; the final phrase of 14 matches 13c, for Jesus oppose those who are «like» children to the «disciples» who «rebuke» them.

²⁸ See R. MEYNET, «*Tu vois cette femme?*», «La parabole de l'arbre de la vie», 123-131.

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

This passage is very enigmatic. It says absolutely nothing about the special qualities children have which are needed to reach the kingdom of God.

Being like little children

The comparison with Matt 18:1-4 shows that the quality those who are to become like children should have is «humility» (*tapeinōsis*):

¹At this time the disciples came to Jesus and said: «Who is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven?». ²So he called a little child to him and set the child in front of them. ³Then he said, «I tell you solemnly, unless you change and become *like little children*, you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven. ⁴And so, the one who makes himself as little *as this child* is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven».

INTERPRETATION

If this passage is so enigmatic, this suggests that we need to wait until we have completed our study of the sub-sequence as a whole to understand the role and meaning it has in its context.

We should also recall that this brief passage is found at the center of the construction. Now, it is very common that the center of a composition is taken up by a question, a proverb, or a parable, that is, by something which is problematic or enigmatic. The solution can only be found by relating the center to the rest of the literary unit: see, for example, Ps 113, focused around the question: «Who is like the Lord our God?»²⁹ or the Song of the Sea (Exod 15), focused on a very similar, although much more developed, question³⁰.

SECOND EXCURSUS:

TWO VERSIONS OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

Many Christians, even those who are most faithful in their religious practice, have not the slightest idea that the text of the Our Father which they recite every day is not the only version of the Lord's prayer in the New Testament. Matthew is not the only one to locate this prayer at the center of the Sermon on the Mount. Luke also tells us that, in response to his disciples' request, Jesus gave them a prayer, the text of which is quite different to that of Matthew.

²⁹ See *L'Analyse rhétorique*, 273 ; *Traité*, 199-201, 572-573.

³⁰ See R. MEYNET, «Le cantique de Moïse et le cantique de l'Agneau», 54 ; ID., *Appelés à la liberté*, 72. On the center, see R. MEYNET, «The Question at the Center»; *Lire la Bible* (2003), chap. 7, 121-144 ; *Traité*, 417-435.

THE LORD'S PRAYER ACCORDING TO MATTHEW (6:9-13)³¹

The Our Father according to the Matthean version (Matt 6:9-13) is probably the best-known text of the whole of the New Testament. This is the one which Christians know off by heart, and it is the prayer they say most often. The habit of reciting it antiphonally has imposed a division of the prayer into two parts, which is now deeply engrained in the mind, similar to the division of the Decalogue, also known as «the two tables», most often interpreted as: 1) a table of duties towards God and 2) a table of duties towards one's neighbor. A clear analysis of the Decalogue showed, on the contrary that «the ten words» are arranged concentrically³², and the same is true of the Our Father.

I. COMPOSITION

How many petitions are in the Our Father?

Some are of the opinion that this prayer has six petitions³³, with the final clause effectively being joined to the previous one by «but», giving a single clause: «and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil»³⁴. As the «temptation» comes from «the Evil one»³⁵, the final phrase is just a sort of repetition, with different words, of the previous phrase.

However, we should note that, from a purely syntactical point of view, these final two clauses are independent phrases (that is, they are main clauses, without subordinate clauses), joined by «but» (the opposing weight of «but» should not intervene in the syntactical analysis). Note, too, that the penultimate clause, «lead us not into temptation» is itself joined to the previous main clause by «and»: «Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us, *and* lead us not into temptation». Strictly speaking, we should consider these three clauses as forming a single phrase, made up of the first main clause, «Forgive us our trespasses»³⁶ to which the other two main clauses, «lead us not into temptation» and «deliver us from evil» are joined:

³¹ Here I am returning to my article «La composition du Notre Père».

³² See above, pp. 96-126.

³³ On the history of the composition of the Our Father, see J. ANGÉNIEUX, «Les différents types de structure du Pater dans l'histoire de son exégèse»; for a list of those who think it has six or seven requests, see J. Carmignac (*Recherches sur le « Notre Père »*, 312 ff) is more precise than Angénieux (44, n.11). Of the Fathers, Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose and John Chrysostom appear to blend the last two sentences into a single request; Tertullian, Cyprian, Cassian and Augustine, on the other hand, list seven requests. Luther opted for the figure seven, while Calvin held that there were only six requests. Carmignac's demonstration (312-317) supporting seven requests appears to be decisive; I could only add an additional argument. One might also look at J.-F. BAUDOZ – G. DAHAN – J.-N. GUINOT, *La Prière du Seigneur*.

³⁴ For the moment we will follow the official liturgical translation.

³⁵ See p. 211.

³⁶ This clause is the «main» clause because a comparative («as we forgive those who have trespassed against us»; lit. «our trespassers») is subordinate to it.

Ø. **Forgive** us our trespasses,
 1. as we forgive those who trespass against us,
and
 Ø. **Lead us not** into temptation
but
 Ø. **deliver** us from evil.

If we wanted to follow through the syntactical analysis, we should also add that in Greek the clause «forgive us our trespasses» begins with the coordinator *kai* («and»), just as the next phrase does, and that it can thus be considered to coordinate with the previous clause, «Give us today our daily bread». We must go back to the precise nature and function of the *kai* which precedes «forgive us»³⁷. Suffice to note that no one dreams of making these last four main clauses of the text, from «give us» to «deliver us», into a single petition. «Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil» are two petitions, purely because they coordinate two commands which, from the syntactical point of view, are of the same order.

The Our Father, then, has seven petitions. This should not surprise us; on the contrary, once we know the value of this figure in the Bible, from the seven days of creation at the start of Genesis to Revelation, which is full of sevens (the seven churches, the seven seals, the seven trumpets, the seven golden bowls, etc.): it is well known that the figure seven symbolizes totality. Matthew is particularly fond of it³⁸: even his genealogy is organized into three groups of «fourteen», which is the first multiple of seven; chapter 13 has even parables; chapter 23 has the seven curses spoken against the scribes and the Pharisees. To these we can add the seven petitions of the Our Father, and the seven Beatitudes at the start of the Sermon on the Mount, to which we will return.

The «classical» division into two

The custom of reciting the psalms antiphonally was applied to the recitation of the rosary, and so the «Our Father» as well as the «Hail Mary» were thus divided into two parts:

³⁷ See p. 207.

³⁸ See too CARMIGNAC, *Recherches*, 315.

Our Father who art in heaven,

1. hallowed be **thy** name
 2. **thy** kingdom come
 3. **thy** will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
.....
 4. Give **us** today our daily bread,
 5. and forgive **us** our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us
 6. and lead **us** not into temptation
 7. but deliver **us** from evil.
-

The criteria for the division of the Our Father is clear to all – it is based on pronouns. The first part includes the first three petitions, which use «you», the second has the last four petitions which use «us». This is the opinion of, among other modern scholars, M. Dumais who, in his article in the *Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible*, reflects the popular opinion³⁹:

The structure of the Our Father in Matthew is well balanced. After a solemn invocation («Our Father who art in heaven»), the first part has three petitions in the form of desires addressed to the second person singular (you). These end with a hinge-formula («on earth as it is in heaven»). Next, this time addressed to the first person plural (us) come three petitions in the form of a request (or four, if we consider the antithetical petition which continues the petition about temptation and linked to it by *alla*)⁴⁰.

If we quote an authoritative document which represents the most common opinion, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* presents it as follows:

After we have placed ourselves in the presence of God our Father to adore and to love and to bless Him, the Spirit of adoption stirs up in our hearts seven petitions, seven blessings. The first three, more theological, draw us toward the glory of the Father; the last four, as ways toward him, commend our wretchedness to his grace. (§ 2803).

The first series of petition carries us toward Him, for His own sake: *thy* Name, *thy* kingdom, *thy* Will (§ 2804).

³⁹ M. DUMAIS, «Sermon sur la montagne» ; ID., *Le Sermon sur la montagne*.

⁴⁰ « Sermon », 878.

The second series of petitions [...] go up from us and concern us from this very moment, in our present world: 'give *us* (...) forgive *us* (...) lead *us* not (...) deliver *us*.' The fourth and fifth petitions concern our life, as such – to be fed and to be healed of sin; the last two concern our battle for the victory of Life – that battle of prayer (§ 2805)⁴¹.

Of course, it is not incorrect to note the difference in the second-person-singular pronouns in the first three petitions, and the first-person-plural pronouns in the last four petitions; but this is only one indicator of the composition. There are others which are just as important. By sticking to just one indicator there is a strong chance of missing the text's real organization, and, thus, losing much of its meaning. To be sure, the text's composition must always be based on a body of convergent criteria.

J. de Fraine offers another criteria to support the same division into two parts (3 + 4 petitions): «The first group has no grammatical link, while in the second, the petitions follow one another with the link-word *kai*»⁴². We will have to return to this to see if it is possible to interpret it in another way.

Concentric composition

Internal criteria

In addition to the play on pronouns which we have just discussed, we should also note several other facts.

1. First of all, the last three petitions are directed towards freedom from bad things, «trespasses», «temptation», «evil» (or «the Evil One»). Conversely, «the bread» of the fourth petition is not a bad thing, but a good thing, like the first three petitions, «the name» (of God), his «kingdom», his «will». So we can see that, while from the morphological point of view the fourth petition belongs with the last three (in «us»), from the semantic point of view it belongs with the first three (good things).

2. In addition, the third and fifth petitions are the only ones which finish with an expansion which in Greek begin with the same «as» (Greek *hōs*): «in earth as it is in heaven» and «as we forgive those who trespass against us». In technical terms, these two petitions are bimember segments, while the first two and last two petitions are each only one member. The third and fifth petitions therefore form a frame for the fourth.

⁴¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1994; commentary on the Our Father, §§ 2803-2806. Note the sub-division of the last four petitions into two groups.

⁴² J. DE FRAINE, «Oraison dominicale», 598.

Father of us who	hallowed be	your	NAME,	1		
	come	your	KINGDOM,	2		
	be done	your	WILL,	AS in heaven	so on earth;	3
the BREAD of <i>us</i> the daily give to <i>us</i> today;						4
in	and forgive	to <i>us</i>	our <i>DEBTS</i> ,	AS we also forgive	our debtors	5
the	and lead not	<i>us</i>	into TEMPTATION			6
heavens,	but deliver	<i>us</i>	from EVIL.			7

3. To this, we should add evidence which is blindingly obvious, although not often seen: the fourth petition is the one which is numerically central.

4. This is not all. Like those which frame it, the fourth petition is also a bimember segment; however, it is distinguished from the other two by the fact that, in the literal translation, its two members are strictly parallel:

THE BREAD	of us	<i>the daily</i>
GIVE	to us	<i>today</i>

Each phrase begins with the two main terms (the direct object and the verb), followed by the indirect objects «of us» and «to us», and then the two synonyms⁴³, the adjective «daily» and the adverb «today».

5. In addition, the central petition is different from all the others in that it is the only one which begins with an object, rather than a verb⁴⁴.

⁴³ Synonyms in this translation; on the meaning of the adjective translated by «daily» (we are following the liturgical translation which follows the *vetus latina* translation), see p. 7, n. 20.

⁴⁴ I owe this criterion, which had escaped me, to J. CARMIGNAC, *Recherches sur le « Notre Père »*, 192.

6. Again, it is the only petition where a material thing is requested, which distinguishes it clearly from the petition for the hallowing of the Name, the kingdom, God's will, the forgiveness of sins, and the avoidance of temptation and evil/the Evil One.

7. Last but not least, the petition for daily bread is the one which agrees best with the name of the One to whom the «Our Father» prayer is addressed⁴⁵. If we had to begin each of the first and last three petitions with the most appropriate divine name, the second petition would clearly begin with «Our King» («your *kingdom* come»); the first probably with «the *Holy One*» («*hallowed* be thy name»); the third with «our Lord» or «our Teacher», as here it is «doing his will»; the fifth with «God of Mercy and Compassion», «slow to anger, abounding in love», the sixth with «our Aid», and the seventh with «our Liberator» or «our Savior». Strictly speaking, however, it would only be the central petition which required the name «Father», for the common experience of children, at that time at least, was that it was the father who earned and gave out the daily bread.

8. In terms of the coordinators, «and», at the start of the fifth and sixth petitions, and «but» at the start of the final, it is clear that the second «and» coordinates the fifth and sixth petitions, and that «but» coordinates the last two. What about the first «and», at the start of the fifth petition? It is possible to interpret it as coordinating the fourth and fifth petitions (as J. de Fraine does). It is also possible to consider it to be a coordinating conjunction⁴⁶, as it appears so often in the text of the Gospels. To give but three examples among so many, and only in Matthew, the two accounts of the controversy about divorce (Matt 19:3-9; see p. 192) and the healing of the two blind men of Jericho (Matt 20:29-34; see p. 68) each begin with *kai*; the whole of the sequence which makes up chapters 19 and 20 of Matthew also begins with *kai* (see p. 307). The fact that only the last three petitions begin with a real coordinator can therefore be understood as a higher indicator of their unity. The last three petitions are coordinated, just as the first three are juxtaposed.

⁴⁵ In our re-writing of the text, this single vocative is put on the side to demonstrate that it introduces both the prayer as a whole, and each of the seven petitions.

⁴⁶ See F. BLASS – A. DEBRUNNER, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*, § 442.

Given the convergence of all these indications, a concentric organization, rather than a division into two, imposes itself⁴⁷, reproducing the form of the seven-branched candelabra⁴⁸. This should not surprise us, given that we know how many biblical texts are composed in this way⁴⁹.

External criteria

Until now we have only looked at criteria which are internal to the Our Father itself. They were, it seemed, more than enough to prove the text's concentric composition. However, it is also helpful to support them using some external criteria.

The first is surely that Luke's version of the Our Father, even though it has only five petitions in place of Matthew's seven, is also a concentric construction, as we will see below (see p. 221). The central petition, as in Matthew, is the request for bread.

The discussions which the description next to «bread» has given rise to are well known. *Epiouision* is a hapax legomenon: in the whole of the New Testament, it is only found in Luke's Our Father (11:3) and it is used but once in the Septuagint. The problem of identifying the «bread», material and/or spiritual bread, finds a partial response, which is probably decisive, in another text which is structurally linked to the Our Father⁵⁰.

⁴⁷ I myself discovered the concentric composition of the Our Father, and was then delighted to discover that I had not been the first; far from it. See in particular J. ANGÉNIEUX, «Les différents types de structure du Pater dans l'histoire de son exégèse». According to this scholar, it was Théodore of Mopsuestia (d. 428) who, in the patristic era, was the first to recognize the concentric composition of the Our Father in Matthew (52); in the scholastic period (start of the twelfth century) Pseudo-Anselm of Laon returned to it (59-62), followed by others, particularly Alexander of Hales, St Albert the Great, St Bonaventure and, in modern times, different authors, but E. Lohmeyer in particular (339-342).

⁴⁸ The text which describes the candelabra (Exod 25:31-37 = 37:17-22) is itself a wonderful example of concentric construction; see the analysis of this text in R. MEYNET, *Quelle est donc cette Parole? Analyse «rhétorique» de l'Évangile de Luc (1-9 et 22-24)*, LeDiv 99, Les Éditions du Cerf, Paris 1979, vol. A 135-137, vol. B, planche 1; ID., «Au cœur du texte. Analyse rhétorique de l'aveugle de Jéricho selon Lc», *NRTh* 103 (1981) 696-697.

⁴⁹ It is enough to refer to *Luc* and *Amos*. See too R. MEYNET, *Traité*, 266-268. We should add that many note that the «heaven» at the end of the third petition recalls the «heaven» of the initial address and conclude that these two occurrences make an inclusio, which would prove the prayer's division into two parts. It is true that the inclusio in question marks the boundaries of the first side (9b-10), but this does not prevent the prayer being a concentric construction; the second side is made up of the last three petitions, the four being the pivot for the whole.

⁵⁰ For the various interpretations of *eipouision*, see J. CARMIGNAC, *Recherches*, 121-143; 214-220. Let us recall some of the solutions he offers: «of tomorrow», «of the time to come», «of always», «necessary», «sufficient», «substantial», «supersubstantial», etc. Carmignac concludes that «Whether we examine the Fathers, Greek philology or Semitic philology, until now no irrefutable argument has been able to truly establish the meaning of the mysterious *eipousios*» (143). Rather than deplore our ignorance, we would be better to rejoice!

It is acknowledged that the heptameter of the Lord's prayer sits at the center of the whole Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7)⁵¹. But there is another heptameter at the very start of the sermon. Elsewhere I have shown that the long blessing on those who are persecuted (5:10-12) is not an integral part of this heptameter, but that it makes up the center of the first sequence of the address as a whole (5:3-16)⁵². The first seven beatitudes, according to the order given in the Beza Codex and some other manuscripts, and accepted by most translations including Osty, the JB, are organized concentrically:

+ ³ BLESSED	the poor	<i>in spirit</i>	for theirs	is the kingdom of	HEAVENS!
+ ⁴ BLESSED	the meek		for they	WILL INHERIT	the earth!
<hr/>					
⁵ BLESSED	the mourners		for they	will be comforted!	
⁶ BLESSED	the hungry and thirsty	FOR JUSTICE	for they	will be satisfied!	
⁷ BLESSED	the merciful		for they	will be done mercy!	
<hr/>					
+ ⁸ BLESSED	the pure	<i>in heart</i>	for they	will see	God!
+ ⁹ BLESSED	the peacemakers		for they	will be called <i>sons</i> of	God!

Contrary to what many authors say, the repetition of «for theirs is the kingdom of heaven» in verses 2 and 10 does not make an «inclusio». The inclusio is not the only figure of biblical rhetoric. Of course, this repetition does have a function in Matthew's composition of the text, but it is the function of «initial terms» (anaphora, if one prefers the Greek terminology): it marks the start of different units, the heptameter of verses 3-9 and the long beatitude of those who are persecuted (10-12). The central three beatitudes (5-7) are the only ones which end with a single lexeme. In addition, all three are divine passives, where God is the real, but unspoken, subject. The segments of the first piece (3-4) end with two complementary terms, «heavens» and «earth»; in the last piece (8-9) God is the penultimate word of each segment. At the end of the first segments of the outer pieces (3.9) «God» corresponds to «heavens». In the second members of the second segments (4-9) «sons» recalls «will inherit», for sons inherit. The central beatitude is the one in which the first member is most developed. The first members of the outer pieces (3.8) are the only ones in which the subjects have an object (the dative in Greek: «the poor in spirit», «the pure in heart»).

⁵¹ For example, see H. LUZ, *Matthew 1-7. A Commentary*, Mineapolis: Augsburg 1989, 212 (German original, 1985) ; M. DUMAIS, *Le Sermon*, 87-90.

⁵² R. MEYNET, «Les fruits de l'analyse rhétorique», www.retoricabiblicaesemitica.org: *StRh* 14 (13.02.2004 ; 19.06.2006).

The concentric composition of this passage, made up of the first seven beatitudes, is, therefore, similar to the composition of the Our Father. The similarity in construction between the first passage of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5–7) and its central passage are a weighty external criteria.

In addition, the central beatitude (5,6) corresponds to the central petition of the Our Father. Here the subject of food also arises, for those who are «hungry and thirsty» just like for those who ask for «bread». This typically «structural» connection should lead us to reflect on the nature of the «bread» which is asked for in the Our Father, the more so since, in the long beatitude about those who are persecuted, which follows the heptameter, «justice» is closely linked to the person of Jesus.

+ ¹⁰ Blessed	THE	PERSECUTED	<i>BECAUSE OF JUSTICE</i>
	:: FOR	theirs is the kingdom of	HEAVENS!
.....			
+ ¹¹ Blessed are you			
		when they insult <i>you</i> and PERSECUTE	
		and say all kind of evil against <i>you</i>	<i>BECAUSE OF ME</i>
.....			
+ ¹² Rejoice and be glad			
	:: FOR	your reward (is) great in	HEAVENS!
.....			
+ For THUS	THEY	PERSECUTED	<i>the prophets before you.</i>

The two beatitudes in vv.10 and 11 shed light on one another. Those who are persecuted are persecuted «because of justice» (10a) and «because of me» (11d); thus Jesus is identified with justice. The «bread» which is asked for at the center of the Our Father therefore has something to do with «justice» and, if Jesus is identified with «justice», we are right to understand this «bread» as «the bread which comes from heaven» (John 6:32). Jesus' words reported in the Fourth Gospel, «I am the bread of life. He who comes to me *will never be hungry*; he who believes in me *will never thirst*» (John 6:35), are effectively a direct echo of the central beatitude, «Happy are *those who hunger and thirst* for righteousness, for they will be satisfied».

As we might expect, of course, there are other connections between the two heptameters of the Beatitudes and the Our Father. St Augustine viewed them as paralleling one another⁵³. It is plenty to note two connections: the «kingdom» of God⁵⁴, in the first beatitude, is repeated in the second petition in the Our Father; the verb «inherit» in the second beatitude announces the «sons of God» in the seventh – because only sons inherited – and refers to the apostrophe in the Lord's prayer, «Our Father, who art in heaven» (note that this last word already appeared at the end of the first beatitude).

Connections between the symmetrical petitions

Returning to the Our Father, we should examine the links which unite the first three petitions, on the one hand, with the last three petitions, on the other. Most commentators do so and it is unnecessary for our thesis to return to this. On the contrary, we should examine, in brief, the connections between the petitions which mirror one another on either side of the central petition; the concentric construction invites us to do so quite naturally.

The first and last petitions

The last word of the last petition, *ponēron*, is ambiguous, as we have already indicated. It can be interpreted as the neuter common noun, «evil», but also as the masculine proper name, «the Evil One». In addition to the reasons which support this latter interpretation⁵⁵, the symmetry between the outer petitions leads us to hear that this proper name is opposed to the divine «Name» of the first petition⁵⁶. It is true that, generally, «evil» is directly opposed to «good» (e.g., Matt 5:45; 7:11), but it is possible to see an oblique opposition between «evil» and «holy» («be hallowed»). In 1Macc 1:15, «they abandoned the *holy* covenant, submitting to the heathen rule as willing slaves of *impiety*», «impiety» is clearly opposed to the holiness of the covenant (see too Isa 1:4). Luke does not have the final petition of the Our Father which Matthew has, but at the end of the commentary which he adds to the Lord's prayer, he repeats the adjective «evil» which is opposed in some way to the «Holy Spirit»: «If you, then, who are *evil*, known how to give to your children

⁵³ AUGUSTIN, *De Sermonibus Domini in monte*, II, 11,38; St Augustine parallels the two central petitions.

⁵⁴ «The heaven» is a traditional Jewish way of indicating God without pronouncing his ineffable name. This is why, unlike the other evangelists, who only use the expression «the kingdom of God», Matthew mostly prefers «the kingdom of heaven(s)» (32 times, against «the kingdom of God» three times).

⁵⁵ See J. CARMIGNAC, *Recherches*, 306-312.

⁵⁶ Carmignac presents a similar argument (*Recherches*, 310, n. 12), but he links the last petition to the initial apostrophe.

what is good, how much more will the heavenly Father give the *Holy Spirit* to those who ask him!». (Luke 11:13)⁵⁷.

The second and penultimate petitions

The relation between the «kingdom» of God and «temptation» (by the «Evil One») does not seem immediately obvious. However, in the Gospel, these two opposite realities are realities into which one does or does not enter. In the Sermon on the Mount itself, «if your righteousness does not surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees, *you will never get into the kingdom of Heaven*» (Matt 5:20)⁵⁸. In Gethsemane, Jesus warned the disciples, «Watch and pray *that you enter not into temptation* » (26:41). «To enter into temptation» is to enter the designs of the Evil One, to enter his company, to submit to his authority, while «entering the kingdom of Heaven» is totally opposed to this. Note, too, that these are the only two petitions which begin with a verb of movement: «to come» (*erchomai*) and «to enter» (*eispherō; eis-erchomai* in 26:41).

The third and fifth petitions

The two petitions which frame the center are similar in form, with their second member beginning with the same «as», which distinguishes them from all the others. This «as» obviously indicates an equivalence, in the first case between «heaven» and «earth», where the person praying asks that «God's will» be done; in the second case between asking God («in heaven») to forgive trespasses and the forgiveness of trespasses carried out by «us», that is, humanity («on earth»). The movement in the two petitions is parallel, «heaven» and «earth» in one, God, and «us» in the other. This leads us to ask whether God's «will», which the third petition mentions, would not be the forgiveness of sins, the forgiveness which human beings grant to one another as much as the forgiveness the Father wishes to offer. The only commentary which Matthew offers on the Our Father relates precisely to the forgiveness of sins:

For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses (Matt 6:14-15).

⁵⁷ In Matt 4:5, «the devil» takes Jesus to «the Holy City»; in 24:15, «disastrous abomination» is established in «the holy place».

⁵⁸ See too Matt 7:21; 18:3; 19:23-24; 23:13.

In addition, the first and last passage of the commentary which Jesus gives on the Law, just before the works of justice at the heart of which we find the Our Father (Matt 5:21-26; 43-47) also deal with reconciliation and forgiveness⁵⁹; and chapter 5 ends with this summary order, «You must therefore be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect» (5,48), where the «as», which recalls the two petitions of the our Father, indicates that humanity, created «in the image of God» (Gen 1:26-27) is called to realize its original vocation.

It is, therefore, possible to interpret the third petition in the light of the fifth petition. We do not ask God to do his will on earth as in heaven, but humanity to accomplish God's will on earth, as he accomplishes it in his home, heaven.

Why is the request for bread at the center of the Our Father?

The center of concentric constructions is often taken up by a question, a proverb, or a parable; in other words it is always enigmatic⁶⁰. The center of the Our Father does not deviate from this law of biblical rhetoric. The reader will not fail to be astounded that the request for bread is at the center of the Lord's prayer⁶¹; this is not usually what one would expect to find here. «The kingdom of God» is what constitutes the center of the Our Father. This is more noble, more theological, than «bread». This is what one often hears, and what can be read in authorized commentaries⁶².

Working on a text while expecting to find in it what one already knows – or imagines one knows – is certainly not a good methodology. A formal analysis, which demands technical skill and rigor, is the guarantor of greater objectivity. This is the condition *sine qua non* of the respect of the other who is addressing me through the text. A text is not a mirror in which we contemplate our own image. Formal analysis supposes a total renunciation; it demands that, temporarily, we place the meaning in parenthesis (I refer to this as the ascesis of meaning), in the certainty that an unexpected meaning will be given at the end, far richer than I might have been able to imagine to begin with. This kind of reading, stripped, as far as it can be, of any preconceived ideas, inevitable leads us to allow ourselves to be moved, dislodged. A reading which does not

⁵⁹ See T. KOT, «Accomplir la justice de Dieu. Mt 5,17-48».

⁶⁰ See *Traité*, chap. 8, 417-469.

⁶¹ «In the past people were often scandalized by the fact that physical demands were mentioned first [...] The request for bread thus presents itself as the most provocative of all those found in the Our Father» (J. GNILKA, *Il vangelo di Matteo*, 333.335).

⁶² For example, H. SCHÜRMANN, *La prière du Seigneur, à la lumière de la prédication de Jésus*. From the very first page he states that, «it is the prayer of those who are vowed body and soul to the “seeking” of the kingdom of God, who have made it their only raison d'être» (7); the first part of his work is entitled «The one great wish of the prayer» and essentially focuses on the second petition (40-47); «The preoccupation with translating the ardent desire for the coming of the Kingdom is such that it seems impossible to add others to it. This desire, like a giant, rises, solitary and sovereign, to heaven» (63).

shake up the reader, which does not change him or her, runs a strong risk of being nothing more than a projection.

To read, truly read, a text, is not a cozy fireside chat between well-brought up people, in which one shares information, recalls memories, has a good time. Reading a text is a confrontation, a row, hand-to-hand fighting, which one can only leave marked and changed. It is Jacob wrestling with the angel (Gen 32:23-33), a bloody fight, which went through the night «until daybreak»; an obstinate battle which refused to give up until it had obtained what it wanted: «I will not let you go until you bless me»; a fight which left its mark, as it did on the patriarch's hip; a fight, at the end of which, while the reader is not allowed to know the angel's name, Jacob still receives an unexpected revelation, in addition to the blessing, a new name which marks a change of identity:

He asked, «What is your name?». «Jacob», he replied. He said, «Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have been strong against God, you shall prevail against men» (Gen 32:28-29).

The constant discussions which have been going on since Christian antiquity on the nature of the bread of the fourth petition bear witness to the huge difficulty which it harbors. Theodore of Mopsuestia, the main representative of the Antiochene school, characterized by its attachment to the literal meaning, held that it meant only the material bread which is necessary to our bodily subsistence⁶³, while Origen, who developed the fourth petition at length, clearly privileged the spiritual meaning, almost passing in silence over material bread⁶⁴.

2. INTERPRETATION

Bread is never simply material

Anyone who suffers from hunger and lives with the constant preoccupation of subsistence, in the agony of tomorrow to feed himself and support his family, will probably be more aware than the well-fed of the material meaning of bread. The millions of Christians who today still find themselves in this position, are right to ask the Father in heaven to help them to survive from day to day. However, it is not at all clear that it is they who are most closed to any spiritual interpretation. The poorest know, probably better than anyone else, that «man does not live on bread alone», that he hungers for words as much as

⁶³ THÉODORE DE MOPSUESTE, *Les homélies catéchétique*, French translation by R. Tonneau – R. Devresse, Vatican 1949, 309-315.

⁶⁴ ORIGEN, *Prayer*, 86-95.

for a crust of bread, for respect and dignity more than for help in satisfying those needs which we call basic⁶⁵. Having said this, the literal meaning is certainly not to be excluded; on the contrary.

But limiting oneself to the literal meaning is to reduce the text unduly. The first reason is that what is requested is «bread», not, for example «fruit», which is there to be gathered, as in the garden of Eden. Bread is part of nature, from the wheat produced by the earth; but even the wheat, before the transformation which makes it into bread, is not given directly from nature, it is not a wild grass, but a cereal, the fruit of humanity's work. The human input into bread pre-supposes not only the long work of sowing and harvesting, threshing and flailing, but also the grinding, the kneading and the baking; all these actions imply the cooperation of several men and women, who unite their efforts for a common aim. Once baked, bread is also something one does not eat alone, but which one shares with family and friends, with guests, with the hungry. So bread is never simply just a material object; it is pre-eminently a symbolic food, in the original meaning of the word «symbol», which indicates relationship and recognition. This primary dimension of bread is anthropological. It is from here that we have to begin, before any truly biblical or theological consideration. Let us add that it is called «our bread», not «my bread»; it is the bread of an «us», made by us and for us. Nor is it called «your bread», for it is not first of all God's bread, but the bread of our bodily subsistence, which humanity makes with their own hands.

Bread and blessing

For the Jews, bread is also what the blessing at the start of the meal is spoken over, in a particularly solemn way at the start of the Sabbath, before sharing it among all those present. «Blessed are you, Lord our God, king of the universe, who has brought this bread from the earth!». Note, first of all, in this line, that the Lord is called «our God», in the plural. In addition, the brevity of the formula is surprising. It acknowledges God as the only giver of the bread, passing in silence over the human intermediaries, as though the essential part which humanity plays in making its food was the blessing alone.

⁶⁵ This is what Fr Joseph Wresinski, founder of ATD–Quart Monde continually proclaimed; see, for example, *Les pauvres sont l'Église ; Heureux vous les pauvres*.

It is known that the Jewish blessing over the bread, as well as that over the wine which is parallel to it («Blessed are you, Lord our God, king of the universe, who has ripened the fruit of the vine!».) is taken up and amplified at the Offertory prayer of the Mass. By doing this, Jesus' disciples merely take up the gesture which their Master made and repeat his words, in memory of him. So, for a Christian, the gift of bread necessarily refers to the Last Supper and the Eucharist. But let us not go too fast; or, rather, let us go back, as far as the beginnings.

The first words which God addressed to the humans he had just created, male and female, were a double blessing, of which this is the first side:

God blessed them, saying to them:

«Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. Be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven and all living animals on the earth». (Gen 1:28).

The first of the six hundred and thirteen commandments of the Torah is the command to be fruitful, to give life, to become a parent, «in the image of God» (1:27). God is the Father and the first gift which he gives humanity is parenthood. God gives the gift of giving. God's second word, which includes the verb «to give», concerns food:

God said, «See, I *give you* all the seed-bearing plants that are upon the whole earth, and all the trees with seed-bearing fruit; this shall be [as] your food.

To all wild beasts, all birds of heaven and all living reptiles on the earth I give all the foliage of plants for [as] food» (Gen 1:29-30).

God gives; and he gives «all». The text emphasizes this «all», seven times, the very figure of totality, just like the seven days of the first week, which has just ended: to humanity, «*all* plants [...] upon the *whole* earth and *all* trees»; to *all* beasts, *all* birds, *all* which moves, *all* foliage. What God is giving is «food» for both humanity and animals. Food is life which maintains itself and evolves. In giving food, God thus behaves like a father, as much to the animals as to the man and the woman.

God's blessing is part of his creative act. It immediately follows on from the three formula which separate each of the first five days of creation, now joined for the first time:

And so it was. God saw all he had made, and indeed it was very good. Evening came and morning came: the sixth day (Gen 1:30-31).

It is only on the sixth, final day of creation, that the narrator modifies the second refrain by adding «all he had made» and the adverb «very».

The curse is turned into a blessing

But humanity was not slow to make itself and all creation unhappy, by paying attention to the voice which made them believe that God was jealous and did not wish to give them everything. This is what brings the second creation account into play, which is nothing more than the testing of faith in God's gift (Gen 2-3). It is surely not coincidence that the test of tests is linked to «eating», and more precisely to the gift of food; and it will end with the cursing of the soil, and with these words from God to Adam: «With sweat on your brow shall you eat your bread» (Gen 3:19). This is the first time that the word «bread» appears in the Bible. We might wonder whether the central petition of the Our Father is responding in some way to this; as though the curse were, not erased, but overturned, transformed into a blessing. This implies that the petition for bread is because no longer will humanity eat bread «with sweat on their brow», but will receive it freely from the hand of God. The manna in the desert was already a gift from heaven; but it only lasted for a while, for the time that the people crossed the desert to settle in the promised land where they cultivated the earth. The bread which Jesus has us ask for in the Our Father, the bread that he himself will give, is his body, «given» with his blood, poured out «for the forgiveness of sins» (Matt 26:28). Jesus is the new Adam, who gives himself rather than wishing to take, and in this way he redeemed the first sin. In the Fourth Gospel, John, who leaned against the Lord during the Last Supper, will explain at length that the bread which has come down from heaven, the new and definitive manna, which gives eternal life, is none other than Jesus (John 6). Recall, too, that, from his very birth, Jesus was placed «in a manger»; if Luke's account (2:1-20) emphasizes the manger by repeating it three times, it is doubtless to indicate that the new-born is a food, which will be realized at the other end of the Gospel in the gift of his body during the Paschal meal⁶⁶; we should also add that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, which means, «the house of bread».

⁶⁶ See R. MEYNET, «La Nativité de Jésus (Lc 2,1-20)».

Bread and the «works of righteousness»

We do not wish to go over hackneyed arguments about the nature of bread. We recall, for instance, that the first of the devil's temptations is, precisely, about «bread» (Matt 4:3); the words Jesus opposes him with recall that what makes humanity live, its true bread, are «the words which come from God's mouth».

What is perhaps less clear, is the connection between the Our Father and the three works of righteousness which form the central sequence of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 6:1-18). The petition for bread is not only the key-stone of the Lord's prayer, but also represents the key to the reading of the group made up of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. An initial question could be phrased in these terms, like an enigma: what do fasting and almsgiving have in common? These two religious practices must be correlated, since they are symmetrical, they are matching one another on either side of the prayer which frames them; in addition, they are constructed on precisely the same model.

In both cases, there is an acceptance of something lacking. The person giving alms and the person who fasts give up the bread which they have, which they have petitioned the Father for and obtained from him. Alms are the bread which one gives up to give it to those who are poor and hungry. In giving alms, humanity does God's work, imitating the generosity of the Father and showing that we are his children. As Job said, «I was the father of the poor» (Job 29:16). The person who is fasting also gives up eating bread, for a while. In this way he indicates that he does not owe his origin to himself, that he does not subsist through his own work, that life does not come to him from bread, but from the One who gives it – in other words, before God – before God alone, Jesus says – he recognizes his sonship. In brief, to give alms is to be a parent, to fast is to be a child. «To practice righteousness» is therefore to find one's proper place in the line of sonship, the place one receives and the place one gives, like the bread which symbolizes it⁶⁷.

⁶⁷ On the theme of food in the Bible as a whole, see A. WÉNIN's lovely book, *Pas seulement de pain... Violence et alliance dans la Bible*.

AS A CONCLUSION, AN ILLUMINATING COMPARISON

The connections between the heptameter of the Our Father and the heptameter of the Beatitudes have given an external criterion which confirms the validity of the analysis which we have carried out of the Lord's Prayer.

Another comparison, with a text which is outside the biblical corpus, will enable us to draw the specificity of the Our Father out still further, in its essential dimensions. Muslim tradition has a prayer which is very similar to the one which Jesus taught⁶⁸. The literal translation is:

...of Fadâla ben 'Ubayd al-Ansârî who said: the prophet taught me a prophylactic prayer and commanded me to use it for whom I want, saying to me: Say:

Our LORD who art	<i>in heaven,</i>	1
.....		
: Sanctified be	your name	2
: YOUR-COMMANDMENT (be)	<i>in heaven</i> and the earth	3
+ O God,		4
– as YOUR-COMMANDMENT (be)	<i>in heaven,</i>	5
– so place	your mercy	6
:: ON us	on the earth	7
+ O God, LORD of goods,		8
– forgive us	our sins, our faults and our trespasses	9
– and let come down	your mercy and a healing of your healings	10
:: ON what A such suffer of	and heal him.	11

The similarities are striking, from the apostrophe in line 1. The first petition (2) is identical to the first petition in the Our Father, the second (3) is very similar to the start of the third petition of the Our Father; the petition for forgiveness is found in line 9. We will not carry out a precise analysis of this text, but simply note what differentiates it, in essence, from the Our Father.

From the first word, the person who is addressed is not called «Our Father» but «Our Lord»; the whole difference is already here. Many Christians, so used to considering God as their Father, cannot even imagine that he could be considered otherwise by other believers. Islam is distinguished from Christian belief on the fundamental point of divine filiation. For Islam, Jesus is not in any way the Son of God; his disciples certainly are not! So we can understand why the central petition of the Our Father, which is the child's specific petition, should be totally absent from the prayer which Muslim tradition says goes back

⁶⁸ IBN HANBAL, *Musnad*, n° 23839; the same text, with minor variants, is to be found in ABÛ-DÂWÛD, *Sunan*, Book 22, *Tibb*, 19 *bâb kayfa al-ruqy*.

to Mohammad himself. We can also understand that, while this prayer asks for God's forgiveness, it is careful not to repeat «as we forgive». Note that an «as» is found in the third petition (5), later matched by a «so» (6); but this «as» only indicates the work of the one God «in heaven» and «on earth». In the Our Father, on the other hand, God's will is granted to humanity, so that it can be accomplished «on earth as it is in heaven».

THE LORD'S PRAYER ACCORDING TO LUKE (11:2b-4)

The version of the Our Father in Luke is markedly shorter than that in Matthew (see the re-writings pp. 201 and 216).

Matt 6:9b-13	Luke 11:2b-4
FATHER of us who (art) in heavens,	FATHER,
HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME, ¹⁰ COME YOUR KINGDOM, be done your will, as in heaven, so on earth.	HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME, COME YOUR KINGDOM.
----- ¹¹ THE BREAD OF US THE DAILY <i>give</i> TO US <i>today</i> . -----	----- ³ THE BREAD OF US THE DAILY <i>give</i> TO US <i>every day</i> . -----
¹² AND FORGIVE TO US THE <i>debts</i> OF US, <i>as we also forgive</i> TO THE DEBTORS OF US	⁴ AND FORGIVE TO US THE <i>sins</i> OF US, <i>because we ourselves forgive</i> TO everyone WHO IS INDEBTED TO US
¹³ AND LET NOT US ENTER INTO TEMPTATION but deliver us from Evil.	AND LET NOT US ENTER INTO TEMPTATION.

In Luke, the apostrophic address is reduced to Matthew's first word. The last words of the central petition are different, but synonyms. Luke uses the synonymous «sins» (4a) rather than Matthew's «debts» (12a). Matthew has an «as» instead of Luke's «because» (4b), which matches the «because» in the symmetrical petition (10c). Also, where Matthew talks about «debtors» in the plural (12c), Luke uses the singular and adds «every» (4c)⁶⁹.

⁶⁹ For completion, we should also note that the same «give» in the central petition translates a present imperative in Matthew and an aorist imperative in Luke, just as the same «we forgive» translates a perfect in Matthew (12b) and a present in Luke (4b).

Those of Matthew's petitions which are not repeated, the third and the seventh, are precisely those which are at the end of the two groups each of three petitions which frame the central petition. In this way the concentric construction around the petition for bread is maintained.

Luke's composition is certainly slightly imbalanced, to the extent to which the second member of the petition for pardon (4b) does not have a corresponding member in the first part; however, the essential structure of the composition is respected, particularly the central position of the petition for bread.

FATHER,		hallowed be	the	NAME	of you,
		come	the	KINGDOM	of you;
	3	THE BREAD of us the daily GIVE to us every day;			
	4	forgive	us	the	SINS of us
		for we also forgive	every debtor	of us,	
		and let not enter	us	into	TEMPTATION.

Just as with the Decalogue, the fact that Lord's Prayer has been handed down in two similar, but still quite different, forms, leads us not to let the text tyrannize. Through these words, and beyond their material nature, is the voice of the one who gave us his prayer, who places his own words in our mouths, like a delicious morsel, to which we are invited to listen; just like the voice of God which comes out of the space which simultaneously separates and unites the two cherubim framing it.

THE TWO CHERUBIM

Here it is worth pausing briefly at the sequence which begins with the description of the temple which God orders Moses to build, after having given him the Decalogue (Exod 20) and made a covenant with the people (Exodus 24). This first sequence (Exod 25:10-40), which describes four objects, is in a concentric construction⁷⁰. The first two objects have several points in common. The most obvious is that the mercy-seat is placed on the ark like its cover, which is what the last verse of this pair of passages says, v.21. The same v.21 obviously matches the last verse of the passage on the ark (16).

⁷⁰ See G. PAXIMADI, *E io dimorerò in mezzo a loro*, 78; see too R. MEYNET, «Es 25,10-40. A proposito del libro di G. Paximadi».

The last two passages are also twinned: among others, they end in the same way, with the description of the accessories, those of the table in 29, and of the candlestick in 37-28. We also know that these two objects were placed together in the first room of the Dwelling.

The most surprising thing, for those who do not know the laws of biblical rhetoric, is that the passages match remotely, the first matching the fourth, that is, the ark matching the table, and the second with the penultimate, that is, the mercy-seat with the candelabra. Note in particular that the candlestick and the cherubim are arranged symmetrically as objects. The two cherubim are facing one another at either side of the mercy-seat, while from the central trunk of the candlestick were three arms on each side, matching in pairs.

Let us come to the significance of the whole, the meaning of the composition, or rather the meaning which the composition points to.

The center is the not just the physical focal point, but also the semantic, that is, theological focal point. The ark and mercy-seat, just like the table and candlestick are objects, and only objects. But the ark with its cover, the mercy-seat, contain «the witness», that are the tablets of the Law, the Decalogue, that is, the words written by the Lord himself on the stones; these are the divine words of the past, even though that past is very recent. We should not forget that all the words of this text (Exod 25:10-40) are pronounced by God, addressed to Moses; these are the divine words of the present. Then in the center of the sequence the future words are spoken – the Lord foresees and promises to continue to speak in the future. His word will not be shut up in the objects described, not even in the ark of the covenant or the Decalogue; his words will come out from the space between the two cherubim placed facing one another on the mercy seat: «from between the two cherubim», says the text, at the very heart of the central passage, the place of the *Shekhina*, the Presence.

¹⁰ THEY SHALL MAKE **AN ARK** OF ACACIA WOOD.
Two and a half cubits long and one and a half cubits wide and one and a half cubits high.
¹¹ AND YOU SHALL OVERLAY IT WITH PURE GOLD; inside and outside you shall plate it. AND YOU SHALL MAKE A MOLDING OF GOLD AROUND IT.
 — ¹² And you shall cast for it **FOUR RINGS OF GOLD**, and you shall fix them on *its four feet*, and two rings on it first side and two rings on its second side.
 — ¹³ AND YOU SHALL MAKE **POLES** OF ACACIA WOOD AND YOU SHALL OVERLAY THEM WITH GOLD. ¹⁴ And you shall put the poles into the rings, on the side of the ark, **to carry** the ark **with them**. ¹⁵ In the rings of the ark shall be the poles; they shall not be removed from it.
¹⁶ AND YOU SHALL PUT **INTO THE ARK** **THE TESTIMONY** *WHICH I WILL GIVE YOU*.

¹⁷ YOU SHALL MAKE **A MERCY-SEAT** OF PURE GOLD;
two and a half cubits long and one and a half cubits wide.
¹⁸ And you shall make two cherubim OF GOLD. **Hammered work** shall you make them at the two ends of the mercy-seat.
¹⁹ And make one cherub at the one end and one cherub at the other end. Of one piece with the mercy-seat you shall make the cherubim on its two ends. ²⁰ And the cherubim shall have their wings stretched out above, covering with their wings the mercy-seat; and their faces one towards another, towards the mercy-seat are **THE FACES** of the cherubim. ²¹ And you shall put the mercy-seat on the top of the ark,
AND INTO THE ARK **YOU SHALL PUT** **THE TESTIMONY** *WHICH I WILL GIVE YOU*.

+ ²² And I will meet *you* there, and I WILL SPEAK *with you*
 - from **above** the mercy-seat,
 - **BETWEEN** **THE TWO CHERUBIM**
 - that (are) **above** the ark of the Testimony,
 + all that which I COMMAND *you* *for the Sons of Israel*.

²³ YOU SHALL MAKE **A TABLE** OF ACACIA WOOD.
Two cubits long and a cubit wide and one and a half cubits high.
²⁴ AND YOU SHALL OVERLAY IT WITH PURE GOLD. AND YOU SHALL MAKE A MOLDING OF GOLD AROUND IT.
²⁵ And you shall make a frame of a handbreadth around it, and you shall make a molding of gold to its frame round about.
 — ²⁶ And you shall make for it **FOUR RINGS OF GOLD** and you shall put the rings on the four corners which are on its *four feet*. ²⁷ Over against the frame shall the rings be placed for the poles to carry the table.
 — ²⁸ AND YOU SHALL MAKE **THE POLES** OF ACACIA WOOD AND YOU SHALL OVERLAY THEM WITH GOLD and **one shall carry with them** the table.
²⁹ And you shall make its plates, and its cups, its covers, and it bowls by which they pour libations; of pure gold you shall make them.
³⁰ AND YOU SHALL PUT **ON THE TABLE** **THE BREAD OF THE PRESENCE** before me always.

³¹ YOU SHALL MAKE **A CANDELABRA** OF PURE GOLD.
Hammered work shall you make the candelabra; its base and its branch, its calyxes, its buds and its flowers shall be one piece with it. ³² And six branches shall come out of its sides. **Three branches of candelabra on its first side, and three branches of candelabra on its second side.** ³³ **Three calyxes made like almonds in the one branch, with a bud and a flower, and three calyxes made like almonds in the other branch, with a bud and flower.** So for the six branches that are coming out from the candelabra. ³⁴ And in the candelabra shall be **FOUR** calyxes made like almond, with their buds and flowers. ³⁵ **And a bud under two branches of one piece with it, and a bud under the second pair of branches of one piece with it.** So for the six branches that are coming out from the candelabra.
³⁶ Their buds and their branches shall be one piece with it. All of it shall be one **hammered work, PURE OF GOLD**.
³⁷ And you shall make its lamps, seven; and the lamps shall be mounted so that it will shed light on its front side. ³⁸ And its snuffers and its fire pans shall be pure of gold. ³⁹ Of a talent of pure gold shall one make it with all these utensils. ⁴⁰ Notice and make them according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain.

1.4 THE DANGER OF WEALTH (Matt 19:23-26)

COMPOSITION

+ ²³ <i>Jesus said to his disciples:</i>					
.	«Truly	say to you			
:	that	a rich-man	WITH DIFFICULTY	shall enter	into the kingdom of HEAVENS!
. ²⁴ <i>Again say to you:</i>					
:	it is	EASIER	for a camel	through the eye of a needle	to pass
:	than for	a rich-man		to enter	into the kingdom of GOD! ».

+ ²⁵ <i>Hearing, the disciples were greatly amazed saying:</i>	
« Who then CAN	be saved? ».

+ ²⁶ <i>Looking at, Jesus said to them:</i>				
:	«For	men	this	is IMPOSSIBLE;
:	for	GOD	all	is POSSIBLE».

The disciples' question (25) is framed by two of Jesus' sayings (23-24 and 26). In the first sentence, Jesus' statement is repeated and emphasized in each case by a formula of emphasis, «truly I say to you» and «again I say to you».

«With difficulty» (23c), «easier» (24b), «can» (25b), «impossible» (26c) belong to the same semantic field. The interrogative pronoun «who» at the center (25b; a further example of the law of the question in the center) refers to «a rich man» in 23c and 24c in the first part and to «men» in the last part (26b). «God» (24c), matching «Heavens» (23c), is repeated at the end (26c). «Being saved» (25b) matches «enter into the kingdom of heavens» (23c) and «enter into the kingdom of God» (24c) in the first part, and is then repeated with the pronoun «this» in the last part (26b).

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

«The kingdom of heaven»

As was said above (see p. 198), the expression «the kingdom of heaven(s)», which Matthew is fond of, is the equivalent to «the kingdom of God». Here, the two expressions are in symmetrical positions, acting as final terms for the two segments 23bc and 24abc.

Wealth is a blessing from the Lord

In the Old Testament, wealth, along with heirs, is one of the clearest signs of God's blessing. The servant sent by Abraham to find a wife for his son Isaac introduces himself in these terms:

He said: «I am the servant of Abraham. ³⁵Yhwh has overwhelmed my master with blessings, and Abraham is now very rich. He has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, men slaves and women slaves, camels and donkeys. (Gen 24:34-35)⁷¹

*INTERPRETATION***Only difficult for the wealthy, or impossible for everyone?**

The disciples were not «amazed» without reason (25a)! What Jesus stated with such conviction and force (23-24) was radically opposed to what all the people of Israel had always believed – that wealth was a sign of God's blessing. The wealthy, blessed by the Lord, were to be considered as already being part of the kingdom of God. The disciples were therefore right to ask, if it would be so difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of Heaven, «who can be saved?». (25b). And Jesus does not reply that it will be easier for the poor to reach salvation. In reply to the disciples' question, he states that it is not only difficult for the rich to enter the kingdom of God, but for «men» (26b), that is, for all; and what is more, he does not mention difficulty any longer (23c) but rather impossibility (26b). Salvation is beyond human ability, and can only be God's work – for him alone are «all things possible» (26c).

1.5 THE SUB-SEQUENCE AS A WHOLE (Matt 19:1-26)*COMPOSITION*

Leaving the introduction (1-2) to one side for the moment, *the first two passages* (3-9 and 10-12) are closely linked. With their question (10b), the disciples react to what Jesus has just said; note the repetition of «condition» and «woman» at the start of the two passages (3b and 10b).

– In *the last two passages* (16-22 and 23-26), the dialogue between Jesus and his disciples after the rich young man had gone deal with the same subject, wealth which risks preventing «entering» (17b and 23b.24b) «into life», that is, «in the kingdom of Heaven» (which refers back to «treasure in heaven» in 21b); «having heard that» in 25 matches «having heard this word» in 22a.

⁷¹ For example, Gen 24:1; 26:13-14; 30:43; 32:6; 33:11; Deut 28:3-6.11-12; Lev 26:3-10; Ps 112:3; 1Kgs 3:13; 10:14-25 (see Légasse, 617, n. 51).

The first two passages (3-9 and 10-12) match the last two (16-22 and 23-26) in parallel; at the center (13-15), is the scene with the children.

– *The first and fourth passages* have the same composition: a question addressed to Jesus (3b.16b) by people who «approach him» (3a and 16a; these terms act as initial terms); – Jesus' reply quoting the Torah (4b-6 and 18b-19); in both cases the syntagma «father and mother» is at the center of the quotation; – there follows a question from the interlocutors (7 and 20), – and a last reply from Jesus (8-9 and 21-22). Note, too, that «to commit adultery» is repeated at the end of the first passage (9b) and at the center of the other one (18b).

– *The second and last passages* (10-12 and 23-26) introduce «the disciples» (10a and 23a.25a), who were not mentioned in the previous passages. «The kingdom of heaven» is repeated in 12c and 23b.24b; note too, at the end of the passages, words from the family «can/be able to» (12c and 25), «impossible» and «possible» (26ab), which act as final terms.

– *The central passage* (13-15) begins like the first and fourth passages, but the verb is different, for the children do not approach on their own initiative, but «are presented to him» (13a). Here too are «the disciples» (13b) and also «the kingdom of heaven» (14b), as in the second and the last passages. «The children» at the center of the construction (14a) match «father and mother» at the center of the first and fourth passages (5a.19a). «Come to me» (14b) matches «follow me» in the fourth passage (21b) which takes up «followed him» in the introduction (2). This passage is thus linked to all the other passages of the sub-sequence, including the introduction.

The introduction: we have already noted that «to follow» (with the same object) is used in the introduction and in the fourth passage 2 and 21b; note that, leaving Galilee to go into Judea, Jesus leaves the region of his father and mother.

¹ It happened when Jesus had finished these words,
He departed from Galilee and came into the territory of Judea beyond the Jordan.
² And a large crowd **FOLLOWED HIM** and he healed them there.

— ³ Some Pharisees **CAME NEAR TO HIM** to tempt him, saying:
«Is it lawful for a man to repudiate his *wife* for any *condition* whatsoever?».
+ ⁴ Answering he said:
«Have you not read that the Creator from the beginning
“male and female made them” and he said:
⁵ “For this man will leave **THE FATHER AND THE MOTHER**
and be joined to his wife and the two will be one flesh only?”.
⁶ So they are no more two, but one flesh only.
Therefore what God has joined, let not man separate».
— ⁷ They said to him: «Why then Moses commanded to «give a roll of divorce and to repudiate her»?».
+ ⁸ He says to them: «Moses because of the hardness of your hearts allowed you to repudiate your
wives, but from the beginning it was not so. ⁹ Therefore I say to you, whoever repudiates his wife, except
in the case of immodesty, and marries another **COMMITTS-ADULTERY**».

¹⁰ The **disciples** say to him:
«If this is the *condition* of man with respect to the *wife*, it is not good to marry». ¹¹ He said to them:
«Not all understand this word, but only those to whom it is given. ¹² For there are eunuchs who from the
mother’s womb are born so; and there are eunuchs who are made eunuchs by men; and there are eunuchs
who are made themselves eunuchs for **THE KINGDOM OF HEAVENS**. Who **can** understand, let him
understand!».

¹³ Then children **WERE PRESENTED TO HIM** that he might lay the hands on them and pray;
and the **disciples** rebuked them. ¹⁴ But Jesus said: «Leave **THE CHILDREN** and do not
prevent them to **COME TO ME**; for to such as these belongs **THE KINGDOM OF HEAVENS**». ¹⁵
And having laid the hands upon them, he departed from there.

— ¹⁶ And behold someone **COMING TO HIM**, said:
«Master, what good shall I do so that I might have **ETERNAL LIFE**?».
+ ¹⁷ He said to him: «Why do you interrogate me on good? Only one is good. If you want to *enter* into
the **LIFE**, observe the commandments». ¹⁸ He says to him: «Which?». Jesus said:
«These: “You shall not kill, you shall not **COMMIT-ADULTERY**,
you shall not steal, you shall not testimony falsely,
¹⁹ honor **THE FATHER AND THE MOTHER**”,
and “love your neighbor as yourself”».
— ²⁰ The young man says to him: «All these I kept; of what still I lack?».
+ ²¹ Jesus declared to him: «If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor and
you will have **TREASURE IN HEAVENS**; and come, **FOLLOW ME**». ²² **Heard this word**, the young man went
away afflicted; for he was having great wealth.

²³ Jesus said to his **disciples**:
«Truly, I say to you, that a rich-man shall with difficulty *enter* into the **KINGDOM OF HEAVENS**.
²⁴ Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of e needle than for a rich-man to
enter into the **KINGDOM OF GOD**». ²⁵ **Heard this** the disciples were greatly amazed saying: «Who then
can BE SAVED?». ²⁶ Looking at, Jesus said to them: «For men this is **impossible**, but for God all is
possible».

*BIBLICAL CONTEXT***Like angels in heaven**

To the Sadducees who questioned him on the ultimate fate of the woman who had married seven brothers one after the other, Jesus replied, «At the resurrection men and women do not marry; no, they are like the angels in heaven» (Matt 22:23-33)⁷². What defines man at the very end is not his married state, nor family relationships, but being a son.

*INTERPRETATION***Recognizing the voice of a brother**

The two commandments which deal with father and mother (5, 19), appear contradictory. How can a man «honor» them by «leaving» them? Man is not called to leave his father and mother to remain alone, closed up in himself. He separates from them to «unite himself to his wife, to become one flesh» (5b); he honors them by «loving his neighbor as himself» (19), that is, by not doing him any harm, by not taking his life, his wife, his property, or the truth. In other words, by leaving his parents to go to the other, he honors them as a person who has become another in relation to them, free to live a truly new life, different from theirs. If a man remained «united» to his parents, making one flesh with them, he would not be an independent being, an individual, and could not «unite himself» to his wife; he would be unable of «loving his neighbor as himself». Living as a prisoner in the maternal bosom, not having «entered into life» (17), he would be incapable of «observing the commandments» (17). These, in fact, are not given to the child, but to the man, the «son of the commandment» (*bar mitzvah*), that is, to someone who is able to recognize the voice of the Father as the voice of another. In this condition man can also recognize the call of the «neighbor» (19b), and especially that of his own wife (5b), but also of each of his brothers.

Recognizing the voice of the Father

All men are invited to hear God's voice, «to enter the kingdom» (14.23.24) through the voice of their father and mother, the voice of their wife and neighbor, if they not only wish to «enter into life» (17), that is, be born, but also «be perfect» (*teleios*; 21), that is, reach the end (the *telos*), if they wish to «have treasure in heaven» (21). His father and mother point out his beginnings to him, while his wife and neighbor show him his end. It appears that this type of listening is out of reach for man; no one «can get it» if it is not «given» to him by God himself (11.12c): «for men this is impossible, but with God all

⁷² See the commentary on the parallel passage in Luke in *Luc*, 768-771.

things are possible» (26). However, those to whom this has been given – the person who «has made himself a eunuch for the kingdom of heaven» (12), the person who has cast away his property «to have treasure in heaven» (21), «to enter into the kingdom of God» (23.24) – are the prophets who hand down to all, those who have married and kept their property, the revelation received from God. Not all are called to eternal life; and at the end, no one is defined by his wealth, by his marriage, by the fact that he has children, but only by the fact that he is a child of God, of the only Father.

Recognizing the voice of the Son

When Jesus suggests to the rich young man that he leave behind the inheritance he received from his father and mother to follow him (21), he is inviting him to imitate his filial attitude. He had just left Galilee, his earthly family's region, to turn his steps to Judea, towards the end which had been appointed for him by his Father. Following Jesus thus means accompanying the person who has left his father and mother for the kingdom of God, the first one to be similar to children (14). To recognize the voice of the Son means listening to the person who blesses children in the name of the Lord, who «prays» to their Father and his Father⁷³. It might appear strange that all the events reported by Matthew should be introduced by with the comment that, having «finished these words» (1a), «he healed them there» (2). After such an introduction, the reader might expect an account of a healing. We need to recognize that Jesus heals by the word, the word given to those who hear him, but particularly, perhaps, the word which he addresses to God in blessing and prayer (13), a word which the believing reader knows will be granted to him if he too agrees to become like a child.

⁷³ Note that only Matthew uses the verb «to pray» in this context.

2. THE SUB-SEQUENCE IN MARK 10:1-27

In Mark, the passage about the rich man is integrated into a sub-sequence which is very similar to Matthew's, including, in addition to a short introduction, five passages focused around the scene with Jesus and the children.

Introduction	1
THE QUESTION ABOUT DIVORCE	2-9
<i>To the disciples: The indissolubility of marriage</i>	10-12
JESUS AND THE CHILDREN	13-16
THE RICH MAN 17-22	
<i>To the disciples: The danger of richness</i>	23-27

2.1 THE QUESTION ABOUT DIVORCE (Mark 10:2-9)

INITIAL GLANCE AT THE SYNOPTICS

The first thing to note is that Matt 19:10-12 («Voluntary continence») has no parallel in the other synoptics; this passage begins with a question from the «disciples» (10a).

– In Mark, however, the «disciples'» question is anticipated (10) before Jesus' statement about the indissolubility of marriage (11-12). By changing the location («in the house») and those speaking with Jesus, Mark has made a passage out of these verses; in addition, he has developed Matthew's v.9 with the addition of the disciples' question at the start (10), and the addition of the repudiation by the woman at the end (12), while in Matthew v.9 is part of the controversy with the Pharisees.

– In Luke, there is no parallel of either the discussion about divorce or voluntary continence; only 16, 18 return to Matthew's v.9, while adding that a man who marries a woman who has been repudiated is also an adulterer (18ef)⁷⁴. Finally, we should note that only Matthew (9d) gives an exception to the rule about the indissolubility of marriage.

The controversy with the Pharisees about divorce begins in a similar way in Matt 19:3 and Mark 10:2. Mark moves «to tempt» to the end. More importantly, only Matthew adds «for any reason» to the end (3e), which is matched by the Matthean exception at the end in 9d. The material in the rest of the passage is very similar, but organized in a very different way:

- Jesus' first reply in Matthew (4-6) is moved to the end of the passage by Mark (6-9).
- but the Pharisees' final question and the start of Jesus' reply in Matthew (7-8) is anticipated in Mark (3-5). However, this movement has led to significant differences – the Pharisees' question in Matthew (7) matches a question from Jesus in Mark (3), which is followed by the Pharisees' reply. These differences are made necessary by the inversion of the elements.

⁷⁴ Luke 16:18 is the last verse of the central passage of the central sub-sequence (16:9-18) of sequence C5 (15:1–17:10). See *Luc*, 650.

Matt 19:3-12	Mark 10:2-12	Luke 16:18
<p>³ <u>AND CAME NEAR</u> to him <u>SOME PHARISEES</u> <i>TEMPTING HIM</i> and saying: «<u>IS IT POSSIBLE FOR A man</u> <u>TO REPUDIATE his WIFE</u> <u>for whatever reason?</u>».</p> <p>⁴ <u>NOW ANSWERING HE SAID:</u> «Have you not read that the Creator <i>from the beginning</i> <i>male and female made them</i> ⁵ and he said:</p> <p><i>For this</i> <i>man will leave (his) father and (his) mother</i> <i>and be joined to his wife and the two will be one</i> <i>flesh only?</i></p> <p>⁶ <i>So, they are no more two</i> <i>but one flesh only. Therefore what God has joined, let</i> <i>not man separate».</i></p> <p>⁷ <u>They SAID to him:</u> «Why then <u>MOSES COMMANDED</u> to give <i>A ROLL OF DIVORCE</i> <u>AND TO REPUDIATE HER?</u>».</p> <p>⁸ <u>HE SAYS TO THEM:</u> «<u>MOSES</u> <u>BECAUSE OF THE HARDNESS OF</u> <u>YOUR HEART</u> allowed you to repudiate your wives but from the beginning it was not so.</p>	<p>² <u>AND CAME NEAR</u> <u>SOME PHARISEES</u> who were asking him <u>IS IT POSSIBLE FOR A husband</u> <u>TO REPUDIATE HIS WIFE</u> <i>TEMPTING HIM.</i></p> <p>³ <u>NOW ANSWERING HE SAID</u> to them: «What did Moses command you?».</p> <p>⁴ <u>Now they SAID:</u> <u>«MOSES PERMITTED</u> <u>A ROLL OF DIVORCE</u> to write <u>AND REPUDIATE HER».</u></p> <p>⁵ <u>Now Jesus SAID TO THEM:</u> <u>«BECAUSE OF THE HARDNESS OF</u> <u>YOUR HEART</u> he wrote for you this commandment.</p> <p>⁶ <i>Now from the beginning</i> of the creation <i>male and female he made them.</i> ⁷ <i>For this man will leave his father and his mother</i> <i>[and be joined to his wife]</i> ⁸ <i>and the two will be one flesh only so they are no</i> <i>more two but one flesh only. Therefore what God</i> <i>has joined, let not man separate».</i></p>	
<p>⁹ <u>Now I say</u> to you that</p> <p><u>WHOEVER REPUDIATES</u> <u>HIS WIFE,</u> except in case of immodesty, <u>AND MARRIES ANOTHER</u> <u>COMMITTS-ADULTERY».</u></p>	<p>¹⁰ And in the house again <u>THE DISCIPLES</u> on this were asking him.</p> <p>¹¹ And he <u>said</u> to them: <u>«WHOEVER REPUDIATES</u> <u>HIS WIFE</u> <u>AND MARRIES ANOTHER</u> <u>COMMITTS-ADULTERY</u> against her; ¹² and if she repudiates her husband, and marries another <u>she commits-adultery».</u></p>	<p>¹⁸ «Every one <u>WHO REPUDIATES</u> <u>HIS WIFE</u> <u>AND MARRIES ANOTHER,</u> <u>COMMITTS-ADULTERY</u> and one who marries a woman- repudiated by man <u>commits-adultery».</u></p>
<p>¹⁰ To him say <u>THE DISCIPLES:</u> «If this is the condition of man with respect to his wife, it is not good to marry». ¹¹ He said to them: «Not all understand this word, but only those to whom it is given. ¹² For there are eunuchs who from the mother's womb are born so; and there are eunuchs who are made eunuchs by men; and there are eunuchs who are made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of Heavens. Who can understand, let him understand!».</p>		

COMPOSITION

<p>+ ² <i>And having come near some Pharisees</i></p> <p>:: if is it lawful for a husband</p> <p>+ </p>	<p><i>were asking him:</i></p> <p>to REPUDIATE a wife,</p> <p><i>tempting him.</i></p>
<p>- ³ <i>And he answering</i></p> <p>: «What did Moses</p> <p>.....</p> <p>- ⁴ <i>And they</i></p> <p>: «Moses permitted</p>	<p><i>said to them:</i></p> <p>COMMAND you?».</p> <p><i>said:</i></p> <p>a roll of divorce <i>TO WRITE</i> and to REPUDIATE».</p>
<p>+ ⁵ <i>And Jesus said to them:</i></p> <p>= «For the hardness of your heart</p> <p>:: ⁶ but from the beginning of the creation</p> <p>.....</p> <p>- ⁷ «For this will leave man the father of him and the mother</p> <p>[and be joined to his wife]</p> <p>- ⁸ and will be the two for one flesh only».</p> <p>.....</p> <p>:: So they are no more two, but one flesh only;</p> <p>= ⁹ therefore what God has joined,</p>	<p><i>HE WROTE</i> for you this COMMAND;</p> <p>“male and female he made them”.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>let not man SEPARATE!».</p>

Mark's passage is organized into three parts: the last part (5-9) is the reply to the Pharisees' initial question (2); in the center (3-4), is Jesus' question about the law of Moses and the Pharisees' reply. – In the first part (2), Mark has inserted the question (2b) between the two syntagmas «asking him» (2a) and «tempting him» (2c), the second one interpreting the first. – The two segments of the second part (3 and 4) are parallel: «[what] did Moses command you» (end of 3b) is taken up by «Moses permitted» (start of 4b); the question at the start of 3b is matched by the end of 4b. – Jesus' reply to the last part (5-9) is much more developed than the initial question (2). It is justified by a literal reference to the start of Genesis (Gen 2:24), on which Jesus' statement is focused (7-8a). The first piece (5-6) places Moses' concession in opposition to «the beginning of creation»; the last piece (8b-9) has two bimember segments introduced by a balancing concluding conjunction, «and» and «so»; we might say that the four members are like matching mirrors, «two» being taken up by «separate» and «one» by «has joined». The last segment (9) refers to the start (5b): Jesus' commandment is opposed to Moses'. – The final verb, «separate» (9) refers back to «repudiate» in the first question (2b); «to repudiate» is taken up at the end of the central part (4b); «[did] command» in the central question (3b) is repeated at the start of the last part (5b).

Problems with textual criticism

– to begin with, some manuscripts have: «Now the Pharisees approaching... », and others have: «And some Pharisees approaching»; while the difference between the coordinations (*kai* or *de*) and the word order do not change the meaning, the definite article («the Pharisees», that is, all the Pharisees) is very different from the indefinite article («some Pharisees», that is, «some of the Pharisees»). However, the fundamental problem is the identification of those speaking with Jesus: the Beza (C) codex and some ancient versions do not mention the Pharisees, or only say: «And they questioned him... », without giving an explicit subject. The following commentary gives an idea of the way specialists reason:

The chief problem posed by the variant readings involves the presence or absence of the words «having come near some Pharisees». Did the original text read merely «were asking», an impersonal plural [...] and has the reference to the Pharisees come into many [textual] witnesses by assimilation to the parallel passage in Matthew (19.3)? Despite the plausibility of such a possibility, the fact that the Matthean passage is not absolutely parallel [...] and the widespread and impressive support for the longer reading led a majority of the Commission to retain the words in the text⁷⁵.

– in 10:7 were the words in brackets added to a large number of manuscripts to harmonize Mark and Matthew, or were they omitted by haplogy (when the eye jumps from one *kai* to another)? If they were not there, there would be some ambiguity, as «two» might refer to «father and mother»⁷⁶.

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

This is the same as it was for the parallel passage in Matthew (see pp. 193-195).

⁷⁵ B. METZGER, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 103-104.

⁷⁶ See B. METZGER, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 104; see L. VAGANAY – C.B. AMPHOUX, *Initiation à la critique textuelle du Nouveau Testament*.

SYNOPTIC COMPARISON

See the following page.

INTERPRETATION

Jesus does not envisage any exception to the law of the indissolubility of marriage; here he makes no reference to the case of «immodesty» in Matthew. In addition, in their first question (2), the Pharisees did not add the Matthean «for any reason». For Mark, the law is absolute, as it is for Malachi 2 (see p. 194). We might thus conclude that Mark is older and that Matthew added this limitation to respond to problems which had arisen in his communities⁷⁷. We might also note, in particular, that Matthew reflects the Jewish-Christian communities which followed the practice of the strict house of Shammai; in early days adultery was punished by death (Lev 20:10; Deut 22:22; see too John 8:4), and divorce for reasons of infidelity, even if it was obligatory, would have represented an alleviation of the punishment.

⁷⁷ For a hypothesis on the history of the text, see for example P. BENOIT – M.-É. BOISMARD, *Synopse*, II, 307-308.

SYNOPTIC COMPARISON (see pp. 192 and 233)

Matt 19:3-9

<p>³ AND CAME NEAR to him <u>SOME PHARISEES</u> TEMPTING HIM and saying: «<u>IS IT POSSIBLE FOR A man</u> <u>TO REPUDIATE his WIFE</u> for whatever motif?».</p>
<p>⁴ NOW ANSWERING HE SAID: «Have you not read that the Creator FROM THE BEGINNING “MALE AND FEMALE MADE THEM” ⁵ and he said: “For this MAN WILL LEAVE FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE AND THE TWO WILL BE ONE FLESH ONLY?” ⁶ So THEY ARE NO MORE TWO BUT ONE FLESH ONLY. THEREFORE, WHAT GOD HAS JOINED, LET NOT MAN SEPARATE».</p>
<p>⁷ THEY SAID to him: «Why then MOSES commanded to give A ROLL OF DIVORCE AND TO REPUDIATE her?».</p>
<p>⁸ HE SAYS TO THEM: «Moses BECAUSE OF THE HARDNESS OF YOUR HEART allowed you to repudiate your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.</p>
<p>⁹ Now I SAY to you that WHOEVER REPUDIATES HIS WIFE, except in the case of immodesty, AND MARRIES ANOTHER COMMITS-ADULTERY».</p>

Mark 10:2-9

<p>² AND HAVING COME NEAR <u>SOME PHARISEES</u> were asking him if IT IS POSSIBLE FOR A husband TO REPUDIATE HIS WIFE, TEMPTING HIM.</p>
<p>³ NOW ANSWERING HE SAID, to them: «What did MOSES command you?».</p> <p>⁴ Now they SAID: «MOSES permitted TO WRITE A ROLL OF DIVORCE AND TO REPUDIATE».</p>
<p>⁵ Now Jesus SAID TO THEM: «BECAUSE OF THE HARDNESS OF YOUR HEART he wrote for you this commandment.</p>
<p>⁶ Now FROM THE BEGINNING of the creation “MALE AND FEMALE HE MADE THEM”.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>⁷ “For this MAN WILL LEAVE his FATHER AND (HIS) MOTHER [AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE] ⁸ AND THE TWO WILL BE FOR ONE FLESH ONLY”».</p> <p>-----</p> <p>So THEY ARE NO MORE TWO BUT ONE FLESH ONLY. ⁹ THEREFORE WHAT GOD HAS JOINED, LET NOT MAN SEPARATE».</p>
<p>¹⁰ And in the house again the disciples on this were interrogating him.</p> <p>¹¹ And HE SAYS to them : «WHOEVER REPUDIATES HIS WIFE AND MARRIES ANOTHER COMMITS-ADULTERY against her; ¹² and if she, having repudiated her husband, marries another, commits-adultery».</p>

The composition of the two passages is very different, essentially because their boundaries do not match. The last verse in Matthew (9) is part of the

passage, while its parallel in Mark (9-12) is part of another passage. The two passages have much material in common, but apart from the first verse (Mt: 3; Mc: 2), it is arranged in a very different manner. The biblical quotations are at the end of the first part in Matthew (4-6), while in mark they are at the end of the third part (6-9). However, the Pharisees' statement in the second part in Mark (4) has its match in Matthew, but as a question at the start of the second part (7). Finally, Jesus' reply on the «hardness of heart» is found in different places (Matt: 8; Mark: 5). In other words:

– Matthew starts by referring back to the accounts of the beginning of creation (in his first part, 4-6) in reply to the Pharisees' initial question. After this, in reply to their second question, he refers back to Moses' law (7), and explains the reason for this law.

– Mark reverses this order – in response to their initial question (first part, 2) Jesus leads the Pharisees, with another question, to recall the law of Moses (second part, 3-4). After this he gives a reason, before referring them to the first law (third part, 5-9).

In addition to minor differences, we should say again that neither the syntagma «for any reason» (Matt 3e) nor the Matthean exception which matches it (9c) has an equivalent in Mark.

2.2 THE INDISSOLUBILITY OF MARRIAGE (MARK 10:10-12)

COMPOSITION

+ ¹⁰ And in the house again the disciples on this		<i>were asking</i>	<i>him.</i>
+ ¹¹ And		<i>he says to</i>	<i>them:</i>
.....			
– «Whoever	repudiates	his wife	
: and	marries	another,	
=	COMMITTS-ADULTERY	against her;	
– ¹² and if she,	having repudiated	her husband,	
:	marries	another,	
=	COMMITTS-ADULTERY».		

The passage is the length of a part, made up of two pieces. The first piece has a single narrative bimember (10-11a).

In the second piece (11b-12), the two trimembers of Jesus' statement are clearly of parallel construction, with a slight abbreviation in the second one: «against her» in 11d has no equivalent at the end of the last segment.

SYNOPTIC COMPARISON (see pp.192 and 237)

Matt 19:9

Mark 10:10-12

<p>⁹ Now I <u>SAY</u> to you that</p> <p>«<u>WHOEVER REPUDIATES</u> <u>HIS WIFE,</u> except in the case of immodesty, <u>AND MARRIES ANOTHER</u> <u>COMMITTS-ADULTERY</u>».</p>	<p>¹⁰ <i>And in the house again</i> <i>the disciples were asking him on this.</i> ¹¹ And he <u>SAYS</u> to them:</p> <p>-----</p> <p>«<u>WHOEVER REPUDIATES</u> <u>HIS WIFE</u> <u>AND MARRIES ANOTHER</u> <u>COMMITTS-ADULTERY</u> <i>against her;</i> ¹² <i>and if she, having repudiate her</i> <i>husband,</i> <i>marries another, commits-adultery</i>».</p>
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In addition to our earlier observations (pp. 230-232 and 236-237), Mark adds to Matthew the case of the woman who repudiates her husband (12).

*BIBLICAL CONTEXT***Divorce pronounced by the woman**

There is no case of this type of divorce in the Bible, and it does not exist in the Jewish world; however, it was a practice which was recognized in the Roman world.

INTERPRETATION

The fact that Mark considers the case of the woman who repudiates her husband (12) proves that his Gospel was written for communities which included many Christians of pagan, particularly Roman, origin. This trait would confirm the ancient tradition according to which Mark was Peter's translator, and wrote his Gospel in Rome⁷⁸.

2.3 JESUS AND THE CHILDREN (Mark 10:13-16)*COMPOSITION*

Two parts of the account (13.16), each of a single trimember only, frame a more developed part of discourse (14-15). The central member of the first segment (13b) expresses what is at stake in the opposition between those who brought their children to Jesus (13a) and the disciples who wish to prevent

⁷⁸ See for example M. LÀCONI – *al.*, ed., *Vangeli sinottici e Atti degli Apostoli*, 136.

them from doing so (13c)⁷⁹. The outer members of the last segment (16a.16c) match the center of the first segment («kissing»/«laid his hands» and «touching»). The main verb of the last segment, «bless», at the center of the segment, indicates a significant difference between the parents' desire («that he might touch them») and Jesus' action, «blessing», that is, blessing God and invoking his blessing upon them.

+ ¹³ And they were bringing to him	CHILDREN,	that he might touch them;
+ but the disciples <i>REBUKED</i>	<i>them.</i>	

¹⁴ Having seen,
JESUS
WAS INDIGNANT.

= and he said to them:

:: «Let	the CHILDREN
· come	to ME,
:: do not prevent	them.

For to such as these	is	THE KINGDOM OF GOD.
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= ¹⁵ Truly I say to you:

· Who does not receive	THE KINGDOM OF GOD,
:: like	a CHILD,
· shall not enter into	IT».

+ ¹⁶ And <i>KISSING</i>	<i>them,</i>	He blessed,
+ laying his hands on	<i>them.</i>	

The central part, introduced by the narrative phrase in 14abc, is made up of three pieces. The outer pieces begin with a brief introductory member in which «say» (14d.15a) appears and continue with a trimember (14efg and 15bcd); «children» matched by «them» at the outsides of the first of the two segments (14e.14g) is repeated from one center to another (15c), «The kingdom of God», repeated by «it» at the outside of the last segment (15b.15d) seems to correspond to «me», that is, Jesus, at the center of the symmetrical segment (14f). In addition «to come» in 14f heralds «to welcome» and «to enter» in 15b.15d. At the center of the construction (end of 14), is a very short piece which summarizes the law of the «kingdom of God».

⁷⁹ The pronoun «them» at the end of the verse is ambiguous. It could be considered to be masculine and to refer to the subject of the verb «brought» or a neuter describing «the children» (as it is twice in v.16). Textual variants (manuscript D among others), «the disciples threatened those who brought them» sought to remove the ambiguity; however, as this pronoun comes into the list of the four final terms of the outer members of the outer verses (13.16), we might imagine that the pronoun «them» in 13c refers to «children» like those in 16a and 16c.

SYNOPTIC COMPARISON (see pp.200 and 239)

Matt 19:13-15

¹³ Then were presented TO HIM CHILDREN THAT he might lay the hands on THEM and pray.

NOW THE DISCIPLES REBUKED THEM.

¹⁴ Now JESUS SAID:

«LET THE CHILDREN and DO NOT PREVENT THEM to come TO ME.

FOR TO SUCH AS THESE IS THE KINGDOM of Heaven».

¹⁵ And HAVING LAID THE HANDS on THEM, he departed from there.

Mark 10:13-16

¹³ And THEY were bringing TO HIM CHILDREN THAT he might touch THEM.

NOW THE DISCIPLES REBUKED THEM.

¹⁴ Having seen, JESUS was indignant and SAID to them:

«LET THE CHILDREN come TO ME, DO NOT PREVENT THEM.

FOR TO SUCH AS THESE IS THE KINGDOM of God.

¹⁵ Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter in it».

¹⁶ And kissing them, he blessed, LAYING HIS HANDS on THEM.

Mark's text is more developed. The main difference is the addition of v.15. This addition means that the composition of the two passages is different: although the last parts have the same boundaries (Mt 15; Mc 16), the first part of Mark includes 13c which in Matthew belongs to the second part (13d). According to Matthew's composition, the disciples (13d) are opposed to the children to whom the kingdom of heaven belongs (14de); in Mark, on the other hand, the disciples (13c) directly oppose those who bring their children to Jesus (13a), but in the central part, their behavior (14abc) is paralleled with the behavior of those who do not welcome the kingdom of God (15). The criticism of the disciples is therefore emphasized in Mark. «Laying on hands» in Matthew (13b, repetition in 15a) is more solemn than Mark's simple «touch» (13b); only Matthew uses the verb «to pray» at the start (13c), but «to bless» is its equivalent at the end of the passage in Mark (16a, to which «kiss» is added).

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

The theme of the child as the model of discipleship has already appeared in Mark 9:35-37:

^{35b}If anyone wants to be first, he will be last of all and servant of all». ³⁶He then took a little child, set him in front of them, put his arms around him, and said to them, ³⁷«Anyone who welcomes one of these little children in my name, welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me welcomes no me but the one who sent me».

INTERPRETATION

Jesus criticizes people's wishes

Jesus is a man who is out of the ordinary, so people want to see him and everyone wants to touch him, probably a bit like those people who are proud and happy to have had the opportunity to shake the Pope's hand. They want to be able to say that they have touched him, for a long time afterwards, and particularly after the great man's death; and if they manage to be touched, to have their small child kissed and blessed, they can talk about that for even longer! Jesus does not refuse this moving display of popular affection – he agrees to the contact, embraces the children brought to him, and lays his hands on them. But he does not stop there. He continues, and tries to continue the movement which brought those who have come to him. Through the blessing he addresses to the Lord, God of the universe, he invites them to look and think beyond himself, towards and about the One from whom those who listen to him, as well as he himself, come. It is towards Him that their desire should be extended, as towards the Father whose children they are.

Jesus criticizes the disciples' wish

With all the sensitivity of chimpanzees, the disciples seek to protect their teacher from the pressure of the crowd. Don't these people understand that he has better things to do than touch their kids? Just as for those who brought their children, the disciples' wish, while totally understandable, is also misplaced. Jesus, who is so patient with other people, is cross for good reason with those who have even given up their own families to follow him. It is because it is so important – this is about nothing more or less than the *sine qua non* of entry into the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God belongs to those who are like little children (14h). And, lest they have not understood, he repeats it, more strongly – no one will enter the Kingdom of God if he does not welcome him like a child (15). The juxtaposition of the two images, which appear different, if not even opposed, is full of teaching. If the Lord God is presented as the King of the universe, and those who wish to enter into his Kingdom are called to be like children, it is because this King is their true Father. Not to behave like children would be a sort of blasphemy which would see God as a king like any other earthly king, a despot whose whole power is for no other reason than to crush his subjects to exploit them. To be like a child

before the King is the opposite of idolatry, that perversion which consists of making oneself a god in the image of one's own poverty. Being like a child is to acknowledge joyfully the small children created in the image and likeness of the One who gives us life.

He is the path who leads to life

When he embraces the children who are brought to him and lays his hands on them, Jesus is behaving like a father. In the blessing which he addresses to God, Jesus states that, first and foremost, they are children of God; he thus acknowledges that he, too, is a child of the Father from whom he has received everything. It is those who come to Jesus like children who will enter the kingdom of God. To come to Jesus to follow the path which he walks is, like and with him, to go towards his Father and our Father (John 20:17), to enter his Kingdom. The disciples have not yet understood this, and so they treat Jesus like a king who needs to be protected from his subjects' fervor, just as earthly monarchs are guarded. By making a false image of Jesus for themselves, they make for themselves a caricature of God. As long as they are not like those children they are rejecting, they will not enter the kingdom of God.

2.4 THE DANGER OF WEALTH (Mark 10:23-27)

COMPOSITION

+ ²³ And looking around, : «WITH WHAT DIFFICULTY – ²⁴ <i>The disciples</i>	<i>Jesus says</i> THOSE WHO HAVE WEALTH <i>were amazed</i>	to his disciples: into the kingdom of God will enter». <i>at his words.</i>
+ <i>Jesus</i> again answering : « CHILDREN, ²⁵ IT IS EASIER : than	<i>says to them:</i> HOW HARD IT IS for a camel for A RICH-MAN	into the kingdom of God to enter! through the eye of a needle to pass in the kingdom of God to enter!».
– ²⁶ <i>They exceedingly</i> «And WHO + ²⁷ Looking at them, : «For MEN : for all	<i>were astonished</i> CAN <i>Jesus says:</i> IS IMPOSSIBLE, IS POSSIBLE	<i>saying to one another:</i> be saved?». God; but not for God ; to God ».

The outer parts (23-24a; 26-27) mirror one another. At the outsides (23,27), the narrative phrases begin with a participle verb of vision from the same family followed by «Jesus said». Jesus' first statement (23b) leads to the disciples' «amazement» (24a), and his last statement (27bc) answers their «astonishment» (26).

In the center, after the introductory phrase (24b), Jesus' second statement is an ABA'-type trimember, the first member of which (24c) refers to 23b.

«Those who have wealth» (23b) will be repeated by «a rich man» in the last member of the central part (25b), while «men» at the end (27b) are called «children» in the first member (24c). «God» is mentioned in 23b, 24c and 25b in the center, and twice more in the last part in 27b and 27c.

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

«Children»

This is the only time in the four Gospels that Jesus calls his disciples «(my) children» (*teknon*; from *tiktō*, «to give birth to»).

«Abba Father, for you everything is possible»

The last member of the passage (27c) recalls Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane: «Abba, Father, *for you everything is possible*. Take this cup away from me. But let it be as you, not I, would have it». (Mark 14:36). Only Mark uses the affectionate term «Abba»; «children» also, which is only in Mark, is a term of affection.

«Though he was rich ... »

The theme of wealth which Jesus has given up comes up several times in Paul's letters. «His state was divine, yet he did not cling to his equality with God, but emptied himself, to assume the condition of a slave, and became as men are» (Phil 2:6-7); «Remember how generous the Lord Jesus was; he was rich, but he became poor for your sake, to make you rich out of his poverty» (2Cor 8:9).

SYNOPTIC COMPARISON (see pp.224 and 242)

Matt 19:23-26

Mark 10:23-27

²³ Now **JESUS**
SAID TO HIS DISCIPLES :
«**Truly I say to you**
that a rich-man WITH DIFFICULTY
SHALL ENTER IN THE KINGDOM of heavens!»

²⁴ NOW AGAIN
I SAY to you:

IT IS EASIER FOR A CAMEL
THROUGH THE EYE OF A NEEDLE TO PASS
THAN FOR A RICH-MAN
TO ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD».

²³ And **looking around** **JESUS**
SAYS TO HIS DISCIPLES:
«WITH **what** DIFFICULTY
those who have wealth
IN THE KINGDOM of God SHALL ENTER!».
²⁴ Now the disciples were amazed
at his words.

Now **Jesus** AGAIN **answering**
SAYS to them:
«**Children, how it is difficult**
into the kingdom of God to enter!
²⁵ IT IS EASIER FOR A CAMEL
THROUGH THE EYE OF A NEEDLE TO PASS
THAN FOR A RICH-MAN
INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD TO ENTER».

²⁵ Now **having heard** the disciples
WERE ASTONISHED **greatly**
SAYING:
«**WHO then** CAN BE SAVED?».

²⁶ Now they
exceedingly WERE ASTONISHED
SAYING to one another:
«AND WHO CAN BE SAVED?».

²⁶ Now LOOKING AT **JESUS** SAID TO **them**:
«FOR MEN
this IS IMPOSSIBLE;
now FOR GOD ALL (is) POSSIBLE».

²⁷ LOOKING AT **them** **JESUS** SAYS:
«FOR MEN
IT IS IMPOSSIBLE,
but not for God;
for ALL is POSSIBLE TO GOD».

Once again, Matthew is more concise than Mark. He suppresses Mark's «looking around» (23a), summarizes Mark 10:24 in four words (24ab), suppresses «them» (26c) and «but not for God» in Mark (27c) just as the verb «is» in 27d. On the other hand, he adds «having heard the disciples» (25a).

The differences between Mark (24) and Matthew (24a-d) are not only quantitative. In Mark, Jesus' first words in 23cde are interrupted by the narrative phrase in 24ab; this is why Mark introduces a second discourse into 24cd, with «he says» in the third person. Matthew, however, turns his first two verses into a single discourse: «Now again I say to you» in 24ab is in the first person and is part of Jesus' words.

It follows from this that the compositions are very different. In Matthew the it is the disciples' question (25) which joins Jesus' two declarations together; in mark, this question, at the start of the third part (26) is symmetrical with the disciples' first reaction at the end of the first part (24ab), and thus it is Jesus'

second statement, introduced by «children» (24e) which constitutes the central part of his passage (24c-25).

INTERPRETATION

The temptation of wealth

Matthew twice repeats that it will be difficult «for a rich man» to enter the kingdom of God (19:23 and 24). However, when Mark repeats the first statement (23), after which the disciples are amazed (24ab), he is no longer only looking at «the rich»; his second statement might appear to be general, if it were not addressed to those whom he calls «my little children». This warning, therefore, is also for the disciples. One might interpret these words as Jesus' faith in his small children – for him, too, «how difficult it is to enter into the kingdom of God». At the decisive moment of entering his Passion, he asks his father to take the cup away from him, and it was «difficult» for him to accept his Father's will. Calling his disciples «little children», he invites them to enter into the kingdom of God with him, and, like him, to trust in his all-powerful grace (27d).

Wealth is a transparent idol, the more harmful because it does not look away. Elijah forbade the following of YHWH and Baal. In a more developed society, God is not rejected so that money can be chosen; God and money are confused. The rich man is not thrown out of the Kingdom, but «how hard it is» to go «through the eye of the needle» (Mark 10:25); a strong way of saying «be born».

Jesus says this twice: «How hard for the wealthy to enter...» and «How hard it is to enter...» (Mark 10:23f). This emphasis, and the disciples' horror, end the scene with such a strong emphasis that we cannot allow ourselves to attenuate it.

It is then that a comforting word comes: «For men, it is impossible, but not for God». The obvious meaning is that God can make us able to do what only the hero of the account can do.

Let us hazard another meaning – what is «possible for God», is to leave behind all wealth. And what wealth has God, but his divinity? God leaving his divinity? Saint Paul is not far from saying this. We hear it in two passages: «The Lord Jesus... he was rich, but he became poor for your sake, to make you rich out of his poverty... » (2Cor 8:9.) However, Jesus did not have capital to share around. And again, «His state was divine, yet he did not cling to his equality with God, but emptied himself», becoming a servant and dying (Phil 2:6f).

So that the account goes deeper than the surface and further than the narcissistic areas of our generosity, we need to understand this: Jesus is not asking any more of the rich than what he himself has done. Without this, do we not risk believing that God asks us to abandon our property because he is insatiable? Such a divinity, which both wants our property and holds it as nothing, is lacking in nothing as an idol.

P. BEAUCHAMP, *D'une montagne à l'autre, la Loi de Dieu*, 27-28).

2.5 THE SUB-SEQUENCE AS A WHOLE (MARK 10:1-27)

COMPOSITION

Let us leave the introduction (1) to one side for the time being.

– *The first two passages* (2-9 and 10-12) are closely linked, to the extent that most commentators consider them to be a single pericope on divorce⁸⁰. The two occurrences of «interrogated him» (2.10) act as initial terms. «Wife» is used once in each passage (2b.11a); «to repudiate» is repeated twice in each of the two passages (2a.4 and 11a.12).

– *The last two passages* (17-22 and 23-27) are also closely linked, so that some consider them to form but a single pericope⁸¹. Jesus «looks» at the rich man (21a) and, twice, the disciples (23a.27b); these last two occurrences act as initial terms for the outer parts. «At this word» in 22b is repeated with «at his words» in 24a; this is how the disciples' amazement is related to the rich man's sadness. «To have» with synonymous objects («great wealth» in 22b and «wealth» in 23b) act as median terms, as do «at his word» (22b) and «at his words» (24a). «To inherit» in 17b must be linked not just to «father and mother» (19c), but also to «children» (24b); «to inherit» and «children» are only in Mark. In addition, «eternal life» (17b) and «treasure in heaven» (21b) in the penultimate passage correlate to «to be saved» (26) and «the kingdom of God» (23b.24b.25b) in the last passage.

The first two passages parallel the last two.

– *The first and penultimate passages* (2-9 and 17-22). The two occurrences of «was/were interrogating him» (2a.17b) act as initial terms. «Command» at the center of the first passage (3; and «commandment» in 5) is repeated in the plural in the penultimate passage (19b) and also in the center of the passage with the syntagma translated by «all these» (20b). The two occurrences of «only» in the first passage (twice in 8b) match «only» (21) in its symmetrical passage. «His father and mother» in 7b is repeated with «your father and mother» in 19c, to which the two occurrences of «God» (9a.18) should be added.

⁸⁰ For example, the JB treats the first two passages as a single pericope, entitled «The question about divorce», as do most recent commentaries: Pesch (188), Ernst (460), Lamarche (240), Légasse (590), Mazzucco (111), Trochmé (255).

⁸¹ Trochmé (263) treats this as a single pericope. Others treat these two passages and the following one (28-31) as a single pericope: Pesch (210), Ernst (471), Lamarche (246), Légasse (608-609), Mazzucco (113).

¹ And rising from there, he comes into the territory of Judea [and] beyond the Jordan.
And the crowd *departs together* again **towards him**.
And as usual he **teaches** them again.

² Coming near, some Pharisees **WERE ASKING HIM** if it is possible for a husband to *repudiate* his *wife*, in order to tempt him.

³ But answering, he said to them: «What did Moses **COMMAND** you?».

⁴ They said: «Moses permitted to write a roll of divorce and to *repudiate* her».

⁵ Jesus said to them:

«Because of the hardness of your heart he had written for you this **COMMANDMENT**.

⁶ But from the beginning of the creation “male and female he created them”. ⁷ “For this man will leave **HIS FATHER AND MOTHER** [and be joined to his wife] ⁸ and the two will become one flesh **ONLY**”. So they are no more two but one flesh **ONLY**. ⁹ Therefore what **GOD** has joined, let man not separate».

¹⁰ And in the house again the *disciples* **WERE ASKING HIM** on this.

¹¹ And he says to them: «Whoever *repudiates* his *wife* and marries another, **COMMITTS-ADULTERY** against her; ¹² and if she *repudiates* her husband and marries another, she too **COMMITTS-ADULTERY**».

¹³ They were bringing to him **CHILDREN** so that he might touch them, but the *disciples* rebuked them. ¹⁴ Having seen this, Jesus was indignant and said to them: «Let the **CHILDREN** come to me and do not prevent them; for to such as these is the **KINGDOM OF GOD**. ¹⁵ Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the **KINGDOM OF GOD** like a **CHILD**, shall not enter in it». ¹⁶ And kissing them, he blessed them laying his hands upon them.

¹⁷ While he was going out on the way, someone, having run towards and knelt before him, **WAS ASKING HIM**: «Good **Master**, what shall I do so that I might **INHERIT ETERNAL LIFE**?». ¹⁸ Jesus said to him: «Why do you tell me good? No one is good, if not the **ONLY GOD**. ¹⁹ You know the **COMMANDMENTS**: “Do not kill, do not **COMMIT-ADULTERY**, do not steal, do not testimony-falsely”, do not defraud, “honor **YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER**”».

²⁰ He declared to him:

«**Master, ALL THESE** I kept by myself from my youth».

²¹ Jesus, **looking at him**, loved him and said to him: «**ONLY** one thing you lack: go, sell what you have and give it to the poor and you will have **TREASURE IN HEAVEN**; then come, *follow me*». ²² But he, gloomy *at this word*, went away afflicted; for *he was having great wealth*.

²³ And, **looking** around, Jesus says to his *disciples* :

«With what difficulty those who *have wealth* will enter into the **KINGDOM OF GOD**!». ²⁴ The *disciples* were amazed *at his words*; but Jesus again answering says to them: «**CHILDREN** how it is difficult to enter into the **KINGDOM OF GOD**! ²⁵ It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich-man to enter into the **KINGDOM OF GOD**». ²⁶ They were exceedingly astonished, saying to one another: «And who can **BE SAVED**?». ²⁷ And **looking** at them Jesus says: «For men it is impossible, but not for **GOD**! For all is possible to **GOD**».

- The second and final passages (10-12 and 23-27) are both addressed by Jesus to the «disciples» (10 and 23a.24a), the first time after they have returned «to the house», therefore out of the presence of the Pharisees, and the second time after the rich man has left. The two passages do not have any other vocabulary in common, but their symmetry invites us to look for what they share. An attachment to wealth which prevents from entering into the kingdom of God (23-27) is probably connected in some way to adultery (10-12). Note, too, that «to commit adultery» in the second passage (11.12) is repeated in the last passage (19b).
- *The central passage* (13-16) is the pivot of the whole sub-sequence. Here we find the «disciples» (13) as in the second and the last passages (10a and 23a.24a); the three occurrences of «children» (13.14a.15b) are synonymous with «children» in the last passage (24b); «children», «father and mother» (7b.19c) and «to inherit» (17b) belong to the same semantic field.
- The introduction (1): the verb «to teach» (1c) has the same root as the two occurrences of «Master» (17b.20). What is more, «departs together towards him» (1b) is repeated with a very similar expression in the central passage, «come to me» (14).

SYNOPTIC COMPARISON

The major difference with Matthew is that the Matthean passage about eunuchs (19:10-12) is not taken up by Mark; in the place in the structure where this passage is, Mark has made the final verse of Matthew's passage on divorce (19:9) a passage on its own, about the indissolubility of marriage (10-12).

While in Matthew the two «approached him» act as initial terms for the first and penultimate passages (19:3a16a), Mark repeats «interrogate him», in the same role, at the start of the first and the penultimate passages (10:2a.17b), but also at the start of the second passage (10a). – While in Matthew the syntagma «father and mother» recurs at the center of these two passages (19:5b.19a), in Mark it is «commanded» which recurs in 10:5bc and «all these» in 20a (which refers back to «commandments» in 19a) which mark the centers of the two passages.

Another difference, surely significant, is that the final verb of the introduction is not «to heal» as in Matthew (19:2), but «to teach» (10:1d); we said that this verb heralds the two occurrences of «Master» (17c.20a; Matthew has only one «Master» in 16a). In addition, unlike Matt 19:1b, Mark does not say that Jesus «left from Galilee», but only that he «came into the territory of Judea» (1a); nor does he use the verb «to follow» for the crowds (Matt 19:2; recurrence in 21c for the rich young man), but «left together with him» (1b) which is echoed by «come to me» (14b).

The following general schema shows both the parallelism and the most important differences between the two sub-sequences.

Matt 19:1-26		Mark 10:1-27	
The question about divorce	3-9	The question about divorce	2-9
<i>Eunuchs for the kingdom of God</i>	10-12	<i>Avoiding adultery in marriage</i>	10-12
THE KINGDOM OF GOD FOR CHILDREN	13-15	THE KINGDOM OF GOD FOR CHILDREN	13-16
The call of the rich man	16-22	The call of the rich man	17-22
<i>Poor for the kingdom of God</i>	23-26	<i>Avoiding idolatry of riches</i>	23-27

Matt 19:1-26

¹ It happened, when Jesus had finished his discourse, he departed **from Galilee** and came into the territory of Judea beyond the Jordan.

² A large crowd **followed him**, and there **HE HEALED THEM**.

³ **CAME NEAR TO HIM** some Pharisees and said to him, to tempt him: «Is it permitted for a man to repudiate his wife for any reason whatsoever?». ⁴ He answered: «Have you not read that the Creator, from the beginning, made them male and female, ⁵ and he said: Therefore man will leave **his father and his mother** to join to his wife, and the two will be one flesh only?». ⁶ So they are no more two, but one flesh only. Well then! What God has joined, man must not separate it». They said to him: ⁷ «Why then Moses commanded to give a roll of divorce and to repudiate her». He says to them: ⁸ «It is because of the hardness of your heart that Moses permitted you to repudiate your wives; but from the beginning it was not so. ⁹ Now I say to you: whoever repudiates his wife, except in case of immodesty, and marries another, commits adultery».

¹⁰ The disciples say to him: **«If this is the condition of man with respect to the wife, it is not good to marry».** ¹¹ **He said to them: «Not all understand this language, but only those to whom it is given. ¹² For there are eunuchs who from the mother's womb are born so, there are eunuchs who are made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heavens. Whoever can understand, let him understand!».**

¹³ Then little children were brought to him, that he might lay the hands on them and pray; but the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴ Jesus said then: «Let the little children and do not prevent them to come to me; for to such as these belongs the Kingdom of Heavens». ¹⁵ Then he laid the hands on them and departed from there.

¹⁶ And behold a man **CAME TO HIM** and said: «Master, what good shall I do to obtain eternal life?». ¹⁷ He said to him: «Why do you interrogate me on good? Only one is good. If you want to enter into the life, observe the commandments». – ¹⁸ «Which?». He says to him. Jesus answered: «You shall not kill, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not testify falsely, ¹⁹ honor **your father and mother**, and you shall love your neighbor as your self». – ²⁰ «All these», said to him the young man, «I have observed; of what still I lack?». ²¹ Jesus declared to him: «If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give it to the poor and you will have treasure in heavens; then come, follow me». ²² Hearing this word, the young man went away afflicted; for he was having great wealth.

²³ Jesus said to his disciples: «Truly, I say to you, that it is difficult for a rich person to enter into the kingdom of Heavens. ²⁴ Yes, I repeat to you, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter into the kingdom of Heavens». ²⁵ Hearing this, the disciples remained greatly astonished: «Who then can be saved?». They said. ²⁶ Looking at, Jesus said to them: «For men this is impossible, but for God all is possible».

Mark 10:1-27

¹ Rising from there, he comes into the territory of Judea and beyond the Jordan, and the crowd **departs together** again **towards him**. And, as usual, **HE TEACHES THEM** again.

² Coming near, some Pharisees **WERE ASKING HIM** if it is permitted for a husband to repudiate his wife. It was to put him to the test. ³ He answered them: «What did Moses **command** you?». They said: ⁴ «Moses permitted to write a roll of divorce and to repudiate her». ⁵ Then Jesus said to them: «It is because of the hardness of your heart that he had written for you this **commandment**. ⁶ But from the beginning of the creation He made them male and female. ⁷ Therefore man will leave his father and his mother, ⁸ and the two will become one flesh only. So they are no more two, but one flesh only. ⁹ Well then! What God has joined, man must not separate it».

¹⁰ In the house again, the disciples **WERE ASKING HIM** again about that point. ¹¹ And he says to them: «Whoever repudiates his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; ¹² and if a wife repudiates her husband and marries another, she commits adultery».

¹³ People were bringing to him little children that he might touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴ Having seen this, Jesus was angry and said to them: «Let the little children **come to me**; do not prevent them, for to such as these belongs the Kingdom of God. ¹⁵ Truly I say to you: whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a little child shall not enter in it». ¹⁶ Then he embraced them and blessed them laying his hands over them.

¹⁷ While he was going out on the way, a man running towards and, kneeling before him, **WAS ASKING HIM**: «Good **MASTER**, what shall I do to inherit the eternal life?». ¹⁸ Jesus said to him: «Why do you call me good? No one is good if not God only. ¹⁹ You know the **commandments**: Do not kill, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not testify falsely, do not defraud, honor your father and your mother». ²⁰ «**MASTER**, he said to him, **all these**, I have observed from my youth». ²¹ Now, Jesus looked at him and loved him. He said to him: «Only one thing you lack: go, sell what you have, and give it to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then, come, follow me». ²² But he was gloomy and went away afflicted for this word, for he was having great wealth.

²³ And then, looking around, Jesus says to his disciples: «How it shall be difficult for those who have riches to enter into the kingdom of God!». ²⁴ The disciples remained amazed at these words. But answering again, Jesus says to them: «Children, how it is difficult to enter into the kingdom of God! ²⁵ It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God!». ²⁶ They remained exceedingly astonished and saying to one another: «And who can be saved?». ²⁷ Looking at them, Jesus says: «For men it is impossible, but not for God: for all is possible to God».

*INTERPRETATION***Adultery (the first two passages)**

The question which the disciples ask Jesus (10-12) is clearly asked in relation to the controversy about divorce (2-9). However until this moment the question was only about whether divorce was licit, and Jesus had ended the discussion with the Pharisees with a clear condemnation of this practice. Now with the disciples, he goes further and examines the case of those people who, contract a new union after a divorce. Not only divorce is condemned (9), but also the remarriage of anyone who has repudiated his spouse, who is twice declared to be an «adulterer» (11.12). This only reinforces the invalid nature of divorce, or, in other words, the indissolubility of marriage. According to Mark, Jesus explains that adultery is committed «against» the spouse (11); it is, therefore, a sin which injures the neighbor, and the closest neighbor at that, the neighbor with whom the man or woman forms «one flesh». What is more, this same verb, «to commit adultery», which Mark uses twice (11.12), repeats the verb in the Decalogue: «You will not commit adultery» (Exod 20:14; Deut 5:18). This sin, therefore, means disobedience to the divine law, and is thus a sin against God himself. The formula «what God has joined, let no man separate» (9) already clearly stated that, by divorcing, man was in direct opposition to God's will, separating himself from him, repudiating him, and that adultery towards the spouse was also, in the final analysis, an adultery towards God.

Idolatry (the last two passages)

«No one can serve two masters: he will either hate the first and love the second, or treat the first with respect and the second with scorn. You cannot serve both God and Mammon» (Matt 6:24)⁸². Despite his desire for «eternal life» (17b), the rich man, presented with the choice between «what you have» and «a treasure in Heaven» by Jesus, finally decides to keep his «great wealth» (22). In this way Jesus sheds light on the fact that his perfect observance of God's commandments does not translate into a real respect for «the one [who is] good» (18): he «observes» (20) God's commandments as «wealth» rather than as God's word. The disciples are astonished (24), just as the young man is saddened on hearing Jesus' words (22). They do not understand that Jesus' warning, which emphasizes the difficulty for humanity to enter into God's kingdom (23-24), in reality means that God alone can save (26). Jesus must explain this to them: «For men this is impossible, but not for God» (27). The disciples are astonished because, like the rich man, they think that their salvation is dependent on their «doing» (17b); they think they can count on their

⁸² It is significant that Matthew, like Luke, gives money a proper name, thus making it like an idol (see the commentary on Luke 16 in *Luc*, 646-658).

own strength, their wealth, to enter into God's kingdom. At the root of this shared attitude is hidden an insidious form of idolatry. For them, the Lord God is not the only one who is good, the only one able to bring them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery (Deut 5:6).

Adultery and idolatry

Not only are the two sins of idolatry and adultery brought together in the Decalogue, where the first is the essential sin against God and the second emblematic of an incorrect relationship with one's neighbor; but they are both images which are particularly present in the addresses of the prophets, where idolatry is often denounced as an «adultery». Going to other gods to serve them is an infidelity to God's love, which is also referred to as «prostitution» (Deut 31:16; Exod 34:15; Judg 2:17; 8:33; 2Kgs 9:22; Isa 57:3; Jer 3:1-13; and see especially Ezek 16 and 23).

Filiation (from the central passage)

The center of the composition acts as a keystone, the stone which, at the center and the high point of an arch, ensuring its structure. The central passage of the sub-sequence is the key to the reading of the whole.

Jesus indicates that children are models for the disciples. This model is not only possible and desirable, but indispensable. Only those who welcome the kingdom of God like children can enter into it (15). Reading this passage on its own, one would not understand exactly why the disciples sought to reject the children who were brought to Jesus (13); neither do we understand why their master is so «angry» (14a); nor do we understand what it might mean to say «be like children». We only notice this when Jesus calls his disciples «my children» (24b). Children are those who «are not wealthy» (23), who are unable to «do» anything (17), who have no other security than to be entirely trusting in the love and power of another person, which was already suggested by the fact that they «were brought» (13), not on their own initiative but on that of their parents.

The link between the central passage and the two previous passages is not as clear. It is not marked by any lexical repetition, apart from «God» (9a and 14b.15b), although this is not insignificant. A further link is constituted by the semantic link between «children» (13.14a.15b) and «father and mother» (7b). The fact that «father and mother» also returns on the other side of the central passage (19c) indicates an interpretative path which should not be ignored. What humanity is invited to «honor» (19c) in father and mother is not the father, on the one hand, and the mother, on the other, but the conjunction which unites them and makes them «one flesh» (8), this «and» through which he has been begotten. It is the single parental nature which the Decalogue had presented as the image *par excellence* of the single divine nature. To honor the single nature of one's parents, that is, to respect it, to emphasize it, means avoiding being joined to them, keeping one's distance and, eventually, «leaving» them (7a), to make another unit with a spouse with whom other children can be begotten. In the central passage, in a matching manner, we see parents honoring their children: they carry them, handing them to another person who takes them and lays his hands on them as though to adopt them. Jesus honors them in turn when he presents them with his blessing to the Other *par excellence*, their Father and his Father. This prayer addressed to God was the culmination of the teaching which Jesus offered to the crowds who had come towards him (1c).

3. THE SUB-SEQUENCE IN LUKE 18:15-30

In my analysis, the pericope of the call of the rich man (Luke 18:18-27) is the central passage of a sub-sequence made up of three passages (18:15-30). The JB, on the other hand, arranges these 16 verses into four pericopes, while the French *Traduction Œcuménique de la Bible (TOB)* divides them into only two pericopes⁸³:

	JB (1966)	TOB (1972)	R. Meynet
15-17	Jesus and the children	The example of the children	The kingdom of God for the children
18-23	The Rich Aristocrat	Renouncing wealth to enter the Kingdom	The call of the rich man
24-27	The danger of riches		
28-30	The reward of renunciation		Eternal life for disciples

⁸³ Note, however, that the second passage is sub-divided into three paragraphs which correspond to the division in the JB.

The JB, which distinguishes four pericopes in these verses, reflects the exegesis of its time⁸⁴, with the *form history* tendency to divide the Gospel text into almost independent small units, or «forms».

With the TOB, on the other hand, it is possible to see the influence of *redaction history*, which takes the work of re-arrangement which the editor has carried out into consideration, so it sees only two pericopes, the latter of which brings together the final three of the JB⁸⁵.

Finally, *biblical rhetorical analysis* offers truly scientific criteria to mark the edges of various units, at every level of the textual organization and to draw out the composition of each passage taken in itself as much as for groups of passages which form sequences and sub-sequences. At the level of the passage it emphasizes links between the different parts which make it up, so at the upper level it studies links between passages. Consequently, it chooses titles for passages which draw out their symmetry: here the titles of the outer passages match – «eternal life» in the third passage is the equivalent of «the kingdom of God» in the first; «the disciples» in the third passage are called to become like «children»; «children» and «disciples» are opposed to «rich man» in the central passage.

The passage of the call of the rich man in Luke (18:18-27) was analyzed in the first chapter (pp. 146-153). It remains to examine the other two passages which frame the central passage, and then the sub-sequence as a whole which is formed by these three passages.

⁸⁴ An edition in 30 volumes published between 1948 and 1954 prepared the way for the first one-volume edition in 1956.

⁸⁵ See pp. 00-00.

3.1 THE KINGDOM OF GOD BELONGS TO CHILDREN (Luke 18:15-17)

COMPOSITION

+ ¹⁵ Now	THEY WERE BRINGING-UNTO	him also	INFANTS
		· that he may touch	them.
– Now seeing,	THE DISCIPLES	rebuked	them.

.. ¹⁶ Now Jesus	HAVING CALLED-UNTO	him	those	saying:
	+ «Let the	:	come to	CHILDREN
	+ and do not	prevent	them.	
	For to	such as these is	THE KINGDOM OF GOD.	
.. ¹⁷ Truly I say	to		YOU :	
	– Whoever	does not receive	THE KINGDOM OF GOD	
	:	like a	CHILD,	
	– shall not	enter in	IT!».	

The first part of the narrative (15) describes the scene, and the second part (16-17), which is more developed, reports Jesus' verbal reaction. In the first part, the disciples (15c) are opposed to those who carry their babies to Jesus (15a); in the center (15b), is the only member in which Jesus is the subject.

The second part has three pieces. The outer pieces have a unimember (16a.17a) followed by a trimember (16bcd.17bcd). The first links «the children» with Jesus («me») in the center; the second links «the kingdom of God» with «a child» in the center. 16c and 17d use two similar movement verbs, «to come» and «to enter», which seems to put «me», that is, Jesus, at the same level as «the kingdom of God». At the center (16e), a piece made up of a single bimember expresses a general rule.

In the passage as a whole, «having called to» in 16a matches «were bringing to» in 15a and is opposed to «rebuked» in 15c, which «does not receive» in 17b is somehow synonymous with. In addition, while 16a-d seems to be addressed in particular to children in 15a, v.17 is mainly directed to the «disciples» («I say to you» in 17a).

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

Nothing in this passage indicates which quality it is of children which the disciples are to imitate; we need to go back to ch. 9 to learn more.

⁴⁶An argument started between them about which of them was the greatest. ⁴⁷Jesus knew what thoughts were going through their minds, and he took a little child and set him by his side ⁴⁸and then said to them, «Anyone who welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For the least among you all, that is the one who is great». (Luke 9:46-48).

SYNOPTIC COMPARISON (see pp. 200, 239 and 255)

Matt 19:13-15	Mark 10:13-16	Luke 18:15-17
<p>¹³ Then <u>THEY</u> presented <u>TO HIM</u> <u>children</u> SO THAT HE might lay the hands on them and pray.</p>	<p>¹³ And <u>THEY</u> brought <u>TO HIM</u> <u>children</u> SO THAT HE might touch them.</p>	<p>¹⁵ Now <u>THEY</u> brought <u>TO HIM</u> also some infants SO THAT HE may touch them.</p>
<p><u>NOW THE DISCIPLES</u> <u>REBUKED THEM.</u></p> <p>-----</p> <p>¹⁴ <u>Now</u> <u>JESUS</u> SAID: «LET THE CHILDREN <u>and</u> DO NOT PREVENT THEM to come TO ME</p> <p>-----</p> <p><u>FOR TO SUCH AS THESE</u> <u>IS THE KINGDOM of Heavens».</u></p>	<p><u>NOW THE DISCIPLES</u> <u>REBUKED THEM.</u></p> <p>-----</p> <p>¹⁴ <u>Seeing</u> <u>JESUS</u> was indignant and SAID to them: «LET THE CHILDREN come TO ME, DO NOT PREVENT THEM.</p> <p>-----</p> <p><u>FOR TO SUCH AS THESE</u> <u>IS THE KINGDOM of God.</u></p> <p>-----</p> <p>¹⁵ Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter in it».</p>	<p><u>NOW seeing THE DISCIPLES</u> <u>REBUKED THEM.</u></p> <p>-----</p> <p>¹⁶ <u>Now</u> <u>JESUS</u> called them SAYING: «LET THE CHILDREN come TO ME <u>and</u> DO NOT PREVENT THEM.</p> <p>-----</p> <p><u>FOR TO SUCH AS THESE</u> <u>IS THE KINGDOM of God.</u></p> <p>-----</p> <p>¹⁷ Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter in it».</p>
<p>¹⁵ <u>And laying hands upon them,</u> he departed from there.</p>	<p>¹⁶ <u>And</u> kissing them, he blessed, <u>laying his hands</u> over them.</p>	

Mark's text is more developed than that of the others'; the main difference is that he adds 15 (taken from Luke, 17). «Laying on hands» in Matthew (13c; repeated in 15a) is more solemn than the «touch» in Mark (13c) and Luke (15c). Only Matthew uses the verb «to pray» at the start (13d), but «to bless» is its equivalent at the end of Mark's passage (16a; to which is added «to kiss»). Rather than the «children» (*paidion*, «child under seven years») in Matthew (13b) and Mark (13b), Luke uses «infants» (*brephos*, which means «fetus», «new-born», «unweaned infant») at the start. Luke is very close to Mark, but does not have a conclusion which matches that of either Matthew (15) or Mark (16); strangely, the Evangelist who focuses most on Jesus' prayer does not mention it in this passage.

The composition of each passage is not the same. The differences between those of Matthew and Mark have already been described (see p. 240). Luke's composition is very similar to Mark's apart from the fact that he does not use the last part (Mark: 16). Luke has suppressed Jesus' anger (Mark: 14b), substituting «was indignant» by «called them» (Luke: 16b). He has also moved «seeing» (at the start of the second part in Mark: 14a, but at the end of the first part in Luke: 15d). The effect of these two small editorial changes is to considerably soften the conflict between Jesus and the disciples: even though the words which he says to them are exactly the same, they resonate less as a complaint than as a simple teaching which he seems to give them apart rather than in front of everyone.

INTERPRETATION

A strangeness

It must be said that Luke's passage, compared to those in Mark and Matthew, seems to have amputated an essential element. Luke does not repeat the final verse of the parallel passage in Mark: «And kissing them, he *blessed* (God), laying his hands over them» (Mark 10: 16). He has not even retained the mention of prayer which the parents asked from Jesus, as in Matthew: «so that he would lay hands on them and *pray*» (Matt 19:13). It seems strange that the Gospel of Luke, which emphasizes Jesus' prayer the most, has not mentioned it here, or has suppressed it if we accept that the Evangelist at least knew Mark. A possible explanation is that the whole of the previous sub-sequence, that is, the central sub-sequence of this sequence, three passages of which are unique to the third Gospel, is entirely given over to prayer, the prayer of the importunate widow, that of the Pharisee and the tax-collector, given as an example to the disciples and the Pharisees (see p. 338).

An enigma

Regardless of the question of prayer, this passage in Luke, like those of Matthew and Mark, is totally enigmatic. While Jesus twice insists that one has to be «such as » children (16e) and that it is indispensable to «receive the kingdom of God like a child» (17bc), or to be excluded from it, he says absolutely nothing about what it is that makes children a model for the disciples. The reader, like the disciples, has to wait for what comes next to learn which specific quality Jesus is recognizing in children.

3.2 ETERNAL LIFE A REWARD FOR THE DISCIPLES (Luke 18:28-30)

COMPOSITION

+ ²⁸ <i>Peter said:</i>			
– «Behold we,	HAVING	LEFT	what (was) ours
:: have		followed	YOU!».

+ ²⁹ <i>He said to them:</i>		«Truly I say to you:	
– there is no one	who has	LEFT	house, wife, brothers, parents, children
:: for the sake of			THE KINGDOM OF GOD,
= ³⁰			
	who would not receive		MANY TIMES MORE at this moment
= and in the age that comes			ETERNAL LIFE».

Two parts follow one another, Peter's statement (28) and Jesus' reply (29-30). Peter's statement parallels the abandonment of «what (was) ours» and the attachment to Jesus («you»: 28c).

After the introductory narrative bimember (29a), the second part (29b-30) repeats both elements of the initial request in its first segment (29bc), filling in the «ours» in 28b in 29b, and then substituting «you» (28c) with «the kingdom of God» (29c); in the last segment, there is a double reward – the reward of «at this moment» (30a) and the reward of «the age to come» (30b). In this way a link is established between Jesus, on the one hand («you» in 28c), «the kingdom of God» (29c) and «eternal life» (30b), and, on the other, between «ours» (28b), «house, wife, brothers, parents, children» (29b) and «many times more» (30a).

Note about *ta idia* and *oikia*

In Peter's question, rather than Matthew and Mark's «everything» («We have left everything»), Luke uses *ta idia* («Behold we, having left *ta idia* have followed you»: 28). It is the only time that this nominalized adjective appears in the neuter plural in the synoptics; elsewhere, *eis ta idia* (John 16:32; 19:27; Acts 21:6) means «at home», «in his house». The translation with «our property» seems to come from Matthew and Mark (*ta panta*, neuter plural: «everything»), which, among all the things the disciples leave, also includes «the fields».

It is true that Luke, like Matthew and Mark, starts his list with *oikia* (29b: in the singular as in Mark, not the plural as in Matthew); *oikia*, however, does not only mean «house», in the sense of a material building, but also in the sense of «family», «household» (or, in the Hebrew, «the house of David» and «the house of Israel», whose equivalent is «the children of Israel»)⁸⁶. In Luke «house» could be understood as a generic term (the family), then made more

⁸⁶ The same can be said in English: «the House of Savoy» does not describe a building, but rather a dynastic family.

specific with «wife, brothers, parents and children». Luke's *ta idia* does not, therefore, only mean property, but also, and particularly, the members of the family.

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

Some⁸⁷ think that *ta idia* should be linked to Acts 4:32:

³²The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul; no one claimed *for his own use (idion)* anything that he had, as everything they owned was held in common [...] ³⁴None of their members was ever in want, as all those who owned land or houses would sell them, and bring the money from them ³⁵to present it to the apostles; it was then distributed to any members who might be in need.

In this case, Luke would be seeking to indicate fraternal communion (*koinōnia*) in his lexical choice.

INTERPRETATION

Jesus and the kingdom of God

Peter said to Jesus that, if they had left all that they had, including all the members of their family (28b), it was to «follow» him, him alone (28c). In his reply, Jesus does not parallel their homes and all their family members (29b) with himself, but with «the kingdom of God» (29c). Only God's love can justify separating from those who are closest to us, «wife, brothers, parents and children» (29b). Jesus does not agree to be «followed» as an absolute – he only called the Twelve, and only invites people to «accompany» him, to lead them to the Father, to make his disciples enter into the movement of his own and their own divine filiation.

What we have, much more, and eternal life

Whoever has «left what was his» (28b), «house, wife, brothers, parents, children» (29b) «will receive much more at this time» (30a). Such is the experience of anyone who has left what belongs to him to enter a community which holds property in common: what he receives goes far beyond what he has left behind, both material goods and, in particular, a much larger family than the one he has left. In addition, having left those who are his in flesh, he finds them increased, as it were, not in number but in quality, in their position of children of God, no longer destined to death but to «eternal life» (30b). As for «the time to come», this indicates what will follow death in the body, the

⁸⁷ See for example Rossé, 710.

disciple's as well as those close to him. The «eternal life» promised to the disciple is the only thing which really counts, because it is not transitory, it goes beyond the narrow limits of the pilgrimage of all humanity on this earth. Parents give life, but one day it ends in sorrow; only the life given by the Father in heaven has no end.

3.3 THE SUB-SEQUENCE AS A WHOLE (Luke 18:15-30)

COMPOSITION OF THE SUB-SEQUENCE

The three passages are strongly linked to one another. We are not told that the leader comes to Jesus (as the rich man does in Matt 19:16 and in Mark 10:17), but only that he «questioned him» (18); one might therefore think that he was already there during the previous scene. At the end of the encounter, Luke does not say that he goes away (unlike in Matt 19:22 and Mark 10:22), as though he were still there in the scene which follows.

The outer passages match in that «the disciples» are mentioned at the start (15) and «Peter» at the end (28), who is also speaking on behalf of the others («we»). In the central passage, however, there is no mention of the disciples, but only of the rich leader. It is not said that the characters who intervene at the end are disciples – they are simply called «those who had heard» (26).

«The kingdom of God» appears in each of the three passages (16c.17a; 24b. 25b; 29c). «Come to me» at the start (16b) is matched by «we have followed you» at the end (28b); in the center, the same «to follow» (22d) reappears (preceded by the adverb *deuro*, a synonym of «to come»), followed by «me» which always describes Jesus. The same link between Jesus and «the kingdom of God» or «eternal life» is therefore made strongly in these three passages.

«Eternal life» at the start of the second passage (18b) reappears at the end of the third passage (30b). «Sell all that you have» (22c) heralds «we have left all that we had» (28b); Jesus adds people to this: «wife, brothers, parents, children» (29b). The emphatic formula, «Truly I say to you», is repeated in 17a and in 29a.

Finally, note the repetition of the same verb, «to leave» in the outer passages (16b and 28b.29b).

¹⁵ People brought to him also some infants so that he may touch them. Seeing that, the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁶ But Jesus CALLED them TO **himself**, saying: «**Let the little children** COME TO ME and do not prevent them, For to persons like them belongs **the kingdom of GOD**.
¹⁷ **Truly I say to you:** who does not **RECEIVE** **the kingdom of GOD** like **a little child** shall not ENTER inside».

¹⁸ A ruler asked him: «Good Master, what must I do to **INHERIT ETERNAL LIFE?**».
¹⁹ But Jesus said to him: «Why do you call me good? No one is good, except **GOD alone!**
²⁰ You know the commandments : “Do not commit-adultery, do not kill, do not steal, do not testimony falsely, **honor your father and your mother**”». ²¹ He said: «All these I have observed from my youth».
²² Heard this, Jesus said to him:
 «You still lack **only one thing:**
all that you have, sell it and **GIVE** it to the **POOR**
 and you will have a treasure **in heavens;**
 then come, FOLLOW ME».
²³ Heard this, he became very sad for he was very rich.
²⁴ When Jesus saw this, he said: «How difficult it is for those who possess riches to ENTER into **the kingdom of GOD!**
²⁵ It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to ENTER into **the kingdom of GOD!**».
²⁶ Those who heard said: «But who then can **be saved?**». ²⁷ He said: «What is impossible for men is possible for **GOD**».

²⁸ Peter said: «Behold we have **left that was ours** and have FOLLOWED **YOU!**».
²⁹ He said to them: «**Truly I say to you:** there is no one who has **left house or wife or brothers or parents or CHILDREN,** for the sake of **the kingdom of GOD,** ³⁰ who would not **RECEIVE many times more** at this time present and in the age to come **ETERNAL LIFE**».

SYNOPTIC COMPARISON

Matt 19:3-26		Mark 10:2-27		Luke 18:15-30	
The Question about Divorce	3-9	The Question about Divorce	2-9		
<i>Eunuchs for the Kingdom</i>	10-12	<i>Avoiding adultery</i>	10-12		
The Kingdom for Children	13-15	The Kingdom for Children	13-16	The Kingdom for Children	15-17
The Call of the Rich Man	16-22	The Call of the Rich Man	17-22	The Call of the Rich Man 18-27	
<i>Poor for the Kingdom</i>	23-26	<i>Avoiding idolatry</i>	23-27		
Eternal Life for the disciples	27-29	Eternal Life for the disciples	28-30	Eternal Life for the disciples	28-30

While the Matthean and Markan sub-sequences break up in very similar ways, Luke's is very different. The first two passages in Matthew (3-9 and 10-12) and Mark (2-9 and 10-12) have no parallel in Luke. In Matthew and Mark, «The call of the rich man» and the passage which follows (Matt: 16-22 and 23-26; Mark: 17-22 and 23-27) are parallel to the first two passages of the sub-sequence (Matt: 3-12; Mark: 2-12); in Luke, however, the parallel verses form a single passage (18-27) which makes up the center of the sub-sequence. The last passage of the sub-sequence in Luke (28-30) is symmetrical to the passage «the Kingdom for the children» (15-17), while in Matthew and Mark its parallel is part of the next sub-sequence, as we will see later (see pp. 273.301). Where the passage entitled «the kingdom for the children» is the first passage of the sub-sequence in Luke, it acts as the pivot in the sub-sequence in Matthew and in Mark.

*INTERPRETATION***A tenacious leader**

The rich man in Mark, like the young man in Matthew, is spontaneous. He arrives without warning, running, and goes as he came, without waiting for anything else. Luke's leader seems more mature and less impulsive. When he speaks (18), it seems as though he has been there for the whole of the previous scene; and when, in the center of the central passage, Jesus invites him to give all to the poor and to follow him (18), he does not reply, but it does not say that he goes away. It seems that he stays there, not only until the end of the central passage where he is named, but until the end of the sub-sequence. Like the reader, he would have heard the words addressed to Peter and to the others. In other words, one could have the impression that he is the main character of the whole sub-sequence. If he really wished «to inherit eternal life» (18), he would do as the Twelve did: he would leave what he had, imitating, like them, the Master (28). Sadness does not make him go away. Another path opens up

before him – the path of the «kingdom of God» (16c.17; 24-25) that is, of «eternal life» (30).

Infants and the poor

While the first two gospels mention the «children» who are taken to Jesus, Luke uses the term «infants» (15). This word, placed right at the start, is the key to the reading of the whole sub-sequence, as long as it is linked to the central word, «the poor» (22c). The rich man is called to give all his property to the poor. If he does so, he himself will become as poor as the infant who has nothing and is unable to do anything. In reality, the new-born has a single choice, the life which he has just received. So we understand that wealth can prevent living. They do not allow us to reach «eternal life», that is, to be born into real life, unless they are given away. By distributing his wealth, the leader will allow the poor to live. In other words, it is not possible «to inherit eternal life», if one does not allow others to inherit life. To become a child, one has to become a parent.

To enter God's kingship

«The kingdom of God» is repeated in each of the three passages (16.17; 24.25; 29). One «enters» into such a reality. It is not something which one possesses, like wealth, nor is it something which one can pocket, box up, that is, «put in», which one shuts up into a strong-box. On the contrary, whoever agrees to enter into it is surrounded on all sides, enveloped, possessed, like a lover. The kingdom of God is not a place, like the kingdoms of this world, over which human dominion rules. It is the quality, the very essence of the Shepherd who feeds his sheep, who gives them life. To enter into God's kingdom means to share this quality with him, this essence of the Father who gives life to his children, who makes them inherit eternal life.