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Studies in Discipleship

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I

THE CALLING OF THE DISCIPLES

(Matt. 4:18-22; 1:1—4:16)

THERE is probably no balder piece of narrative in all literature than Matthew's account of the calling of the first four disciples (4:18-22). There is not an adjective in it, and only one adverb, and the style is so completely nondramatic that at least one scholar has spoken of its "casualness." But this sparse and lean simplicity of narrative is anything but an indication that the event here recorded is of minor or subordinate importance, for this same Matthew records the birth and the resurrection of Jesus in subordinate clauses and devotes to the act of the crucifixion a single participle. There are events so great that man dare not wrap them in his rawer breath, incidents so incisive in the history of God and man that the bare force of their having occurred blocks out rhetoric.

Jesus Takes the Initiative: The Call Is an Act of Grace

The plain facts of the narrative are pregnant with revelation. Jesus takes the initiative and calls the disciples. In many respects the circle of disciples gathered about Jesus was no startling novelty in first-century Palestine. In the terminology of "rabbi" and "disciple," in the fact that they "followed" their master, constantly attended Him, observed Him and served Him, respected and honored Him, this circle of disciples fitted naturally and unobtrusively into the given patterns of

Judaism. But in this point, in the genesis of the circle of disciples, there is a striking difference. In rabbinical circles the initiative in discipleship lay with the disciple. "Take to yourself a teacher" is the advice given to the aspiring disciple by a Jewish teacher of pre-Christian times. We have no record of a call issued by a Jewish rabbi to a disciple in all rabbinic literature, a literature which otherwise offers many instructive parallels to the association between Jesus and the men who followed Him. What in Judaism was the pious duty of the disciple is here the sovereign act of the master.

And this is a persistent trait in the record. Jesus is singularly brusque with enthusiastic volunteers. To the scribe who offers to follow Him wherever He may go, He responds with the sober and sobering word "the Son of man has nowhere to lay His head" (8:20). He dispels the pink mists of emotional impulse with the cool air of the realities of discipleship, with the chill fact that communion with Him means a career of self-expending ministry which reduces man to a level of comfort below that of bird and beast. But He who rejects so promising a candidate as the schooled and skillful scribe coolly calls the tax collector from his place of business. He binds to Himself in discipleship the man whom not only scribe and Pharisee but also all pious and self-respecting Jews kept at an antiseptic distance (9:9). When the tax collector gave a dinner, his guests were limited to his class and kind, men whom the judgment of the synagogue had marked

as "sinners" and segregated from the faithful (9:10, 11). Jesus reserves the initiative for Himself. The question concerning the way to eternal life may come from the rich young man; the summons to discipleship comes from Jesus (19:16-21).

One is reminded of the calling of the Old Testament prophets, whose successors the disciples of Jesus were to be (5:12). They were men to whom "the Word of the Lord came" without their volition and often against their volition. We hear of men like Moses and Jeremiah, who went into the prophetic office reluctantly and only after a struggle. They were too young, they said, or they were stammerers; or they simply ran away like Jonah. To none of the prophets did the call come in response to self-preparation or mood making. In the last analysis the Word that came to them simply overrode them and left them with no alternative but to obey. Amos the prophet once said that men no more choose to be prophets than they choose to be afraid when the lion roars:

The lion has roared;
who will not fear?
The Lord God has spoken;
who can but prophesy?

(Am. 3:8)

And the calling of Paul to discipleship and apostolate, a calling so different in other ways from that of the first disciples that Paul calls himself an untimely birth (1 Cor. 15:8), is in this respect absolutely parallel to that of the men who were in Christ before him. The initiative was not his; he was to the last the blasphemer, persecutor, and insulter of Christ and His church. He speaks repeatedly of the *grace* of God which called him. Indeed it was his calling which, historically, defined the

grace of God for him and made that word a peculiarly Pauline word (Gal. 1:15-17; 1 Cor. 15:7-10; 1 Tim. 1:12-16; Eph. 3:2-8). The absolute initiative of God in establishing communion with man, that spontaneous free love of God which does not find but creates its lovable object, as Luther puts it, that bare intervention of a graciously superior and regnant will—this grace of God had been unforgettably spelled out for him in his call; he saw in his own call the classic prototype of all God's gracious calling.

This mark of the sovereignly divine initiative was stamped upon the existence of the disciples from the first. They were not impelled to a decision by any of the human devices for bringing on a decision; they were not played upon emotionally or psychologically and snapped up in a moment of high enthusiasm or in a mood of desperation. They were simply called. Their call had about it the high sobriety of a deliberate divine act, and it set them free for a waking, conscious response. The words of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel could stand as caption over every story of the calling of disciples: "You did not choose Me, but I chose you" (John 15:16).

No Stress on the Quality of the Person Called

The call is Jesus' sovereign act. And so there is no emphasis whatever, in Matthew's account, on the qualifications of the persons called. There are no likely candidates for discipleship. All that we learn of the first four who were called is that they were fishermen; and even that is no picturesque detail but is recorded to enable the reader to appreciate the metaphor with which Jesus described their future task:

"I will make you fishers of men" (4:19). The list of the 12 apostles indicates that they were an oddly assorted lot of men, ranging, as regards religious convictions, from the tax collector, who had decided to take the cash of this world and let the credit of Israel's promise go, to the Zealot, who was willing to stake his life on the strength of God's promise to Israel, however blindly and mistakenly he did it (10:2-4). But the disciples are never really characterized very fully in the Gospels. Beyond a few obvious and dramatic traits, such as the volatility of Peter, we know next to nothing about them as personalities. People who write character sketches of disciples and apostles are to be admired for their enterprise; they do not have much to work with. The one thing that is certain about them all becomes clear from Jesus' reply to Peter when Peter asked, "How often shall I forgive?" In the parable of the unforgiving servant Jesus is treating Peter's case as normal and is making plain what the call meant for the disciple. This, Jesus says, is what happens when the kingdom of heaven reaches a man in the call—this establishes the rule of forgiveness between brother and brother. The normal, usual, characteristic thing about the called disciple is that he is like a forgiven debtor. The call has reached him in a situation of desperation and has meant release and restoration of a man whose whole existence was a lost and forfeited existence, an existence under inexorable judgment (18: 21-35). That is the characteristic of the called disciple at his calling. It is no wonder that the word "call" came to be so loaded a term in the New Testament proclamation of the Christ. Paul speaks

of *called* saints, and the New Testament knows no other kind.

The Call Demands Obedience and Renunciation

Calling is really a divine act. God called Abraham; He called Israel—"Out of Egypt I called my son" (Hos. 11:1); God called Moses; God called the prophets. In calling men in this same decisive and exclusive sense Jesus is exercising a divine function and prerogative. And so His call, like the call of God, is an imperious confiscation, a laying of claim to man. The four who were first called were expected to obey, and they did obey, and that "immediately" and implicitly. "They followed Him." The word "follow" here begins to get the rich connotation of complete committal and unstinted devotion which it has in the New Testament (cf. Rev. 14:1-5). This obedience involved renunciation; the four left their boats, their nets, their fathers and their fathers' house. Matthew left his tax office as a matter of course (9:9), when Jesus called him. To the candidate for discipleship who wanted to go home and first bury his father Jesus made clear the rigor of the renunciation which he demanded by replying, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead" (8:22). The disciple in coming to Jesus was leaving the world of the dead and entering upon life; and nothing was allowed to impede him in that movement. He was not permitted to do even that which filial piety claimed of him, a piety rooted in the Fourth Commandment and strongly felt in Judaism. There was denied him even that which was permitted for the common priest. He who was more than the Temple claimed of His own the singleness of devotion

which the Law demanded only of the High Priest: "He shall not go in to any dead body nor defile himself, even for his father or his mother . . . for the consecration of the anointing oil of his God is upon him. I am the LORD" (Lev. 21: 11, 12). The disciple's devotion to Him who called was to be like that of the Nazirite, who was so completely separated and consecrated to God that he did not go near a dead body all the days of his separation, "neither for his father, nor for his mother, nor for brother or sister . . . because his separation to God is upon his head" (Num. 6:7).

But in this Jesus is evangelist, not legislator. His claim is the personal claim of grace, not the external pressure of Law. This is seen clearly in the fact that he made no rule or pattern of renunciation. His claim overrode the claim of wife and family and home, but he founded no order of cloistered celibates. He asked that men be ready to cut off their right hands for His sake, but we hear nothing of an Order of Mutilated Martyrs. He asked that men renounce the sustaining comfort of the majority (7:13), but this does not mean that His followers become a sequestered sect. They go on a narrow way through the world into the Kingdom, but they do not leave the world.

By the same token the renunciation which Jesus demands does not degenerate into an ascetic exercise, into a sort of religious calisthenics on a par with the renunciations of self-centered religiosity. The renunciation which He claims is the renunciation of the man who "in his joy" sells all that he has in order to buy the one field which contains the unexampled treasure (13:44). This renunciation is

man's turning to the kingdom of heaven drawn nigh; it is man's turning to the royally working grace of God which fills the hungry with good things, a turning so complete that it turns a man's back upon everything else. The renunciation involved in the response to Jesus' creative call is therefore no leap into the dark with eyes closed and teeth clenched; it is a leap into the arms of the Father who clothes the lilies and feeds the birds.

In other words, the call of Jesus in asking renunciation and making men capable of it creates faith in the disciple; Jesus is creating the little ones who believe in Him (18:6). And this faith is from the beginning marked and molded as a faith which works through love. "I will make you fishers of men" (4:19). That still lies in the future, but the signature of ministry, universal ministry to "men" without qualification or restriction, is upon their discipleship from the beginning. The line begins here and runs clearly through all the record of Jesus' association with the disciples to reach the goal in Jesus' command to "make disciples of all nations" in Matthew's last chapter (28:19).

Jesus Calls to Himself Alone:

He Alone Is the Basis of His Claim

We can call this will created in the disciple nothing less than faith, faith in Jesus. For Jesus bases His claim to obedience, renunciation, and ministry on nothing but Himself. He calls to Himself, simply that: "Follow Me." Incredible as it may seem, the records are unanimous on this point. The disciples who left the record of their call never assigned to it any basis but that of the person of Him who called them. Their relationship to

Jesus was never a merely human master-disciple relationship. The record of their years with Jesus does not picture the gradual ripening of human relationship into a religious one; it is the record of the deepening and enriching of a relationship which was from the beginning religious and was based solely on the person of Jesus. That person dominated the call and all that followed upon the call.

The usual rabbi-disciple relationship had its basis in something which transcended both rabbi and disciple: the Torah. It was respect for the rabbi's knowledge of the Law, admiration for his skill in expounding the Law, and reverence for his devotion in fulfilling it that attracted the disciple to the rabbi and determined his relationship to his master. But in the case of Jesus there is not a syllable in the records which indicates that anything beside or beyond Jesus Himself, anything detachable from His person, anything possessible apart from Him, ever determined the relationship of His disciples to Him. This is confirmed by three traits in the New Testament witness to Jesus. For one thing, it is notable that Jesus never permits admiration of Himself as a teacher. The rich young man in Matthew (19:1,2) and both Nicodemus and the Jews in John (John 3:1 ff.; 7:14-17) receive curt and deprecatory replies when they express admiration for the Teacher. For another, the behavior of the disciples at the death of Jesus is eloquent testimony on this point; none of them takes comfort in the fact that the legacy of Jesus' teaching, at least, is left them. Having lost Jesus, they have lost all. And thirdly, the nature of the apostolic witness to Jesus is significant. The disciples preserved the record of Jesus' words and deeds, of course; but they do not appear in history as ex-

positors of Jesus' words; it is remarkable how rarely Jesus' words are cited in the apostolic writings. They are His witnesses, witnesses to His person and His history, His words and works in indissoluble unity. Jesus calls to Himself, His disciples were summoned to Him alone and to Him wholly. He gave Himself to them wholly, they believed Him wholly; and their words, under the afflatus of the Spirit whom He sent, transmitted Him wholly to the church.

Who Calls, Rabbi or Messiah?

The very baldness of the narrative in Matthew attests the fact that nothing less than the imperiously royal grace of God was in that call; the complete absence of every motivation except the call itself witnesses to that. The call of the disciple is the first item under the heading "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (4:17). And the narrative with which Matthew prefaces that programmatic utterance of Jesus answers the question, "Who calls, Rabbi or Messiah?" quite unambiguously. Matthew by his record of Jesus' beginnings in His first four chapters has expressed the same conviction that Paul expressed concerning his own call in the Epistle to the Galatians: "When He who had set me apart before I was born and had called me by His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son to me" (Gal. 1:15,16) — the conviction, namely, that it was the eternal counsels of God which brought His Son into the lives of Peter and Andrew, James and John, and Matthew, too, and transfigured those lives. Matthew defines the Caller, not by abstract disquisition but in characteristically Biblical fashion, by a recital of the deeds of God which led up to the call. By the genealogy of Jesus and the series of seven events, all of them fulfillments of Scrip-

ture, he interprets the calling of the four men by the Sea of Galilee as the first impetus of God's last motion toward the goal of all His gracious governance of history, the ingathering of a redeemed and glorified people of God.

He Who Calls, the Goal and Fulfillment of Israel's History: The Genealogy

The form which Matthew's recital first takes, that of a table of the ancestors of Jesus, is strange to us and repellent to modern taste (one modern translator has practically omitted it in his rendering of Matthew). Matthew wrote, of course, for a church in which the history of Israel was a vibrantly living tradition, a church for which the Old Testament was the very air it breathed. He wrote for men to whom Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were near neighbors. Writing for such men, he could hardly have found a more economical and more telling means of placing before his readers the indispensable background of the story he had to tell than the clipped recital of the genealogy (1:1-17). For Matthew is telling the story of Jesus the "Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham" (1:1). This Jesus is the goal and fulfillment of that history which began when God called Abraham to be the first of a chosen and separated people of God, the people through whom God's redemptive purpose for all mankind was to be realized (Gen. 18:18). Jesus is the fulfillment of the promise given to David (and kept alive and enriched by a succession of prophets) of a reign of God Incarnate, a reign by His Anointed King from the house of David, a reign destined to restore the paradisaical world which man's sin had marred (Is. 11:1-10).

That history moved on sure and measured paths of providence. That is the meaning of the symmetry of numbers in the genealogy, the 3×14 generations. It moves from Abraham to the splendor of David's reign, from that high point to the deportation of God's people to Babylon, and thence to a man no one had ever heard of, Joseph, whose sole distinction is, again, that he is the husband of an equally obscure Mary. Even so much is enough to reveal that the ways of God in history have been strange and wondrous ways, that the God of Israel and Israel's Savior is a God "who hides Himself" (Is. 45:15). His sovereign lordship of history is no transparently obvious fact; it is not documented in a rectilinear development of forces present in history toward a predictable goal. His people does not produce the Christ as the triumphant climax to a brilliant history. His people is made to pass through the fires of national humiliation and through divine judgment upon its sins; the house of David is reduced to insignificance and obscurity; the royal tree of Jesse is cut down to a stump before the promise made to David is fulfilled. When the sin of Israel has made the coming of the mighty Anointed King impossible, then the Christ comes, solely as God's gift; purely as God's gracious intervention, not as Israel's contribution to the weal of mankind.

What is plain from the very structure of Israel's history, as the genealogy schematically presents it, is underscored by the presence of the four women in the genealogy—Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and the wife of Uriah (1:3, 5, 6). The presence of women is in itself singular enough; they were rarely included in Jewish genealogies.

But more striking still is the kind of woman here included. These are not the renowned four of Judaism, the celebrated mothers of the race, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Leah. Here are four, but four of quite another kind. Three of them certainly, perhaps all of them, are not even born Israelites. They came by curious ways into the people of God and into the Messianic line. And they are anything but paragons of virtue. Incest, harlotry, and adultery mark the careers of three of them. They appear, moreover, at key points in Israel's history: Tamar beside Judah, the head of the tribe of the promise; Rahab at the entry into the Promised Land; Ruth in the history of the house of the anointed King; and the wife of Uriah (Matthew very pointedly calls her that) beside King David as the mother of Solomon. They are firmly enmeshed in the history of God's chosen people, and their presence speaks eloquently of the fact that this history is not the story of man's glory but of God's grace. It proclaims the fact that this grace is wholly independent of the potentialities of man. The God of Israel, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, is the God who "chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing the things that are" (1 Cor. 1:28). When Israel's kingdom has fallen under God's judgment, then God's royal reign can arise.

*The First Fulfillment of Prophecy:
Emmanuel (1:18-25)*

The Jesus who calls is thus firmly anchored in the history of His people; but it is history conceived of as the dress wherein the sovereign Creator God clothes Himself in order to reveal Himself. Every step of Jesus' way, even the first, is there-

fore marked as being under the guidance and governance of God. His coming is the creative act of God whereby He fulfills His promises—in history, to be sure, but by a more than historical intervention in the course of history. Jesus is the Son of David, born to Joseph, the son of Jacob; but He is therefore no less the Son of God, in whom God gave to Joseph and to mankind what mankind cannot give itself, what history cannot produce. His birth signifies the fulfillment of the promise given through the prophet Isaiah. It signifies "Emmanuel, God with us" (Is. 7:14; Matt. 1:23). And God comes to be with man not when a religious genius or a series of religious geniuses give man a clearer and nobler conception of God but when God acts, acts in inexplicable mercy to unite Himself with men. Jesus therefore enters history as the son of a mother who is "with child of the Holy Spirit" (1:18). "Spirit" marks the living, dynamic presence of God, His creative interposition in history, here as of old in the story of creation, as in prophecy, as in the divine inspiration of the strong deliverers of Israel. So it is that God Himself gives the Child its significant name, Jesus, "for He will save the people from their sins" (1:21). In Him the faithful God of the covenant, the Lord (whose name is a component of the Hebrew name which we use in its Hellenized form, Jesus) is present to deliver His people, and this deliverance is the radical deliverance from sin. Jesus' name is the crystallization of the psalmist's words:

O Israel, hope in the Lord!
For with the Lord there is steadfast love,
and with Him is plenteous redemption.
And He will redeem Israel
from all his iniquities (Ps. 130:7, 8).

The strictly divine character of this intervention in history is marked, further, by the fact that it cuts athwart the normal thinking of man, even of pious man. Joseph, the son of David, just man though he be, has no eyes for the working of God. His objections must be overcome; the son of David must be compelled to accept the gift God gives to David's house (1:19-25). God's ways surprise man and humble him. The disciples who recorded this act of Joseph did so in the consciousness that they, too, had been graciously overpowered. They had not left their trades and their homes at the stirring of their nobler impulses but by the intervening will of God.

The Second Fulfillment:

Born in Bethlehem (2:1-12)

Jesus is Messiah, Son of David; as such He is destined to be born in David's city, Bethlehem. This, too, comes to pass (2:1-12), and the fulfillment of prophecy is attested in a strangely contradictory way. Israel's alien Idumean king, Herod the Great, is prompted by the inquiry of Gentile stargazers and his own fears of a threatening Messianic movement to elicit the prophecy from the scribes, the stewards of God's Word to Israel. It is they who, perfunctorily enough, become the spokesmen of God to proclaim His fulfillment of His promise:

And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of
Judah;

for from you shall come a ruler
who will govern My people Israel

(2:6; Micah 5:2).

Only Gentiles sought out the King of Israel, and they were by no means the splendid and colorful train that Christian tradition and sacred art have since made

of them. They were not kings, according to the record of Matthew, for all the richness of their gifts. And the King they came to was king only to the eyes of faith. The line of David lived on in utter obscurity, and the King was indeed a shoot from the stump of Jesse (Is. 11:1). And yet, and just in this way, God was carrying out His purposes, carrying them out in such a way that the history of the Messiah's infancy became prophetic for the whole history of His mission. The story of the Magi is both the fulfillment of prophecy and itself a prophecy. Israel remains indifferent to her King and rejects Him; the good news of His reign goes to the Gentiles.

The Third Fulfillment:

The Son Called Out of Egypt (2:13-15)

"Out of Egypt have I called My son" (2:15; Hos. 11:1). God's governing hand is manifest in the history of the Messianic Child. The Gentiles who sought out the King born to be the Light of the nations, God led safely home again. He has thwarted the purposes of the earthly king who sought to use them and the revelation given to them to secure himself in his kingship. God will not be so exploited. God removed the Child to Egypt when His life was threatened by the suspicious king. Once Israel had gone down to Egypt, in a history determined by the guilt of the patriarchs, and had to all seeming been buried there, lost to the mission in the world which God's promise had assigned to her. God's comprehensive governance of history had used that guilt and that history for His own gracious ends, and He had in His love recalled His "first-born" from the land of Egypt (Hos. 11:1). So now the guilt of God's people had banished

to Egypt Him who was the Compendium of the people of God, the inclusive Representative of Israel, *the* Descendant of Abraham. The overruling providence of God used that history, too, to reveal God's Son as the One in whom His will and intention to have a people in communion with Himself was to be finally and fully realized. The words on the calling love of God which Hosea had spoken as a reproach to an ingrate and apostate people are on the pages of the evangelist a bright promise and benediction for all who come to sonship by the Son, for the true Israel of God (cf. Gal. 6:16).

*The Fourth Fulfillment:
Rachel Weeping (2:16-18)*

The history of Israel had been a history for lamentation, and tears fell now. When Israel went into captivity and Rachel's descendants were marshaled at Ramah for the long and hopeless trek to Babylon (Jer. 40:1), the prophet Jeremiah heard the mother of the race weeping from her grave:

A voice is heard in Ramah,
lamentation and bitter weeping.
Rachel is weeping for her children
(Jer. 31:15).

Rachel wept then; Matthew heard her weep again (2:18) now at the climax of that long and somber history of guilt and judgment which is the history of Israel. She weeps now when she sees how once again the purposes of God collide with the sinful rebellion of man and God's saving intent, pregnant with peace, becomes the occasion of the inconsolable sorrow of the mothers of Bethlehem whose children Herod slew.

But those words of sorrow from Jere-

miah would have for Matthew's readers an overtone of hope. These readers would remember how the word of the Lord continued:

Keep your voice from weeping
and your eyes from tears. . . .
There is hope for your future
(Jer. 31:16, 17).

They would remember the pathos of the Lord's yearning for his "darling child" Ephraim, even in His wrath. They would recall the bright promise for the days to come when the Lord would make a new and better covenant with a people whom He Himself had renewed by forgiving their iniquity and remembering their sins no more (Jer. 31:20, 31-34), and Israel's history would no longer be a history for tears.

*The Fifth Fulfillment:
Called a Nazarene (2:19-23)*

Rachel weeps, and the cessation of her tears is not yet. The Messiah lives on in the obscurity of little Galilean Nazareth, and the fulfillment of the hope which shall put an end to all weeping, the coming of the new covenant, seems as remote as ever. But Matthew sees in this, too, the fulfillment of prophecy. The obscurity of the Messiah is under the governance of God. Which Old Testament prophecy is meant remains obscure for us. Some link of thought which Matthew could assume for his first readers has apparently been lost to us. But the main point is certain: for the faith of Matthew it was no accident that Jesus was called "Nazarene" (2:19-23).

*The Sixth Fulfillment:
The Voice in the Wilderness (3:1-12)*

But at last the obscurity is ended, and the silence is broken. A voice is heard crying in the wilderness, again in fulfill-

ment of prophecy. For of John the Baptist it is said: "This is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said,

The voice of one crying in the wilderness:
Prepare the way of the Lord,
make His paths straight (3:3; Is. 40:3).

Many titles are applied to John in the New Testament: prophet and more than a prophet, messenger, Elijah, baptist, witness. But none describes him better than the word from Isaiah, the voice. For John lives and dies solely intent upon the task given him to do. The man John is expended in his office; the crier is consumed in his cry.

*John's Proclamation:
The Kingdom at Hand*

That cry stirred all Israel, and well it might. For John spoke of the drawing near of the kingdom of heaven. This meant, since for John's contemporaries and countrymen "heaven" was one of a number of reverential periphrases for the name of God, that the reign of God was near at hand. He spoke of the near advent of God the King. "Kingdom of heaven" stirred a thousand memories in every pious Jew and roused a mighty hope. John did not explain to his contemporaries what the "kingdom of heaven" was or tell them that there was a "kingdom of heaven." No good Jew needed to be told what the kingdom of heaven was. His Old Testament told him that on every page; it meant: "Thy God reigneth!"

When John's contemporaries heard "kingdom of heaven," they would recall the God of creation and the Lord of history as the Old Testament proclaimed Him. Psalm 29, for example, celebrates Him as the Lord of all, whose voice shakes and

shatters the world in the glory of its might, a might which is to those who believe in Him the signature of His Godhead, so that in God's temple all cry out, "Glory!" (Ps. 29:9). The awed obeisance of the psalm culminates in the declaration and acknowledgment of God's kingship:

The Lord sits enthroned over the flood;
The Lord sits enthroned as King forever
(Ps. 29:10).

The word here used for flood is the word which the Old Testament reserves for *the* Flood, the Deluge of Genesis 7, and the parallelism of the Hebrew poetry signifies: God's glory and God's kingship remain untouched by even the mightiest catastrophes on earth. As He sat exalted over the Flood when mankind perished and the world seemed lost, so He now sits exalted above the forces of chaos and shall so sit forever. He is King without restriction or limitation, independent of space and time. And this is not a piece of theology to be abstractly considered; this is the content of man's faith and is in the texture of their prayers, as the conclusion of the psalm shows:

May the Lord give strength to His people!
May the Lord bless His people with peace!
(Ps. 29:11).

He, the God of undisputed power and tremendous majesty, is the Source of strength and the sure Ground of hope for His people. The people of God therefore hail Him who is King above all gods as the Rock of their salvation and come into His presence with thanksgiving (Ps. 95:1-3). And the prophet comforts and reassures the people of God with these words:

The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst;
You shall fear evil no more (Zeph. 3:15).
It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands

of this King (Zeph. 3:5), but the power which makes His wrath and judgment inescapable also makes His love the pledge of sure salvation. "He will renew you in His love" (Zeph. 3:17).

The God revealed in the Old Testament is primarily King of Israel; but God's kingship over Israel does not make Him King only of Israel. He remains Lord of all creation. "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein" (Ps. 24:1); and He is Lord of all history. "The Most High rules the kingdoms of men" (Dan. 4:25). The mightiest kings on earth do His service; the king of Assyria is His judgmental razor (Is. 7:20), the rod of His anger, the staff of His fury (Is. 10:5). God is the First and the Last; He shall have the last word in history, as He had the first word in Creation.

The Kingdom comes, according to the proclamation of John the Baptist, in the person of a Mightier One who follows John upon the stage of history and is in the midst of the people of Palestine (3:11, 12). This, too, has its roots in the Old Testament, in the relationship between the kingship of God and that of the human kings of Israel there depicted. God's sole kingship over Israel excluded any thought of a human king apart from God the King; it made impossible the thought of a human king whose kingship should in any way call into question or obscure the sovereignty of God the King. When the men of Israel asked their deliverer Gideon to rule over them and establish a dynasty, Gideon replied, with a genuinely religious kingdom conviction: "I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; the Lord will rule over you" (Judg. 8:23).

And when the elders of Israel asked Samuel to appoint for them a king to govern them "like all the nations" (1 Sam. 8:5), there lived in that request an apostasy from the Israelite faith in God the King. They wanted not an unseen Lord of hosts but a visible and substantial king to go before them and to fight their battles (1 Sam. 8:19, 20). The Lord Himself branded this request as rebellion against Himself: "They have rejected Me from being King over them" (1 Sam. 8:7). But God's counsels had ordained kings for Israel from the beginning, as His promises to Abraham and His blessing upon Jacob show (Gen. 17:6; 35:11). And the grace of God overruled the sin of His people here, too, in their apostasy. The king whom they have chosen is still the king whom the Lord has set over them (1 Sam. 12:13). This theocratic impress set upon Israel's royalty at its beginning remained the characteristic token of kingship in Israel, however much the sins of king and people might again and again contradict and obscure it. The throne of David remains in Israel's faith what the chronicler called it, "the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel" (1 Chron. 28:5), and the kingship of the descendants of David remains the "kingdom of the Lord in the hands of the sons of David" (2 Chron. 13:8). The rule and dominion of the anointed King whom God has set upon the throne remains God's rule. The reign of God has made a visible beginning on earth. His kingship is no longer merely a reign over the history of men and nations; it is in the midst of the history of men and nations; it has, in a sense, become incarnate.

"The kingdom of the Lord in the hand of the sons of David" (2 Chron. 13:8),

a kingship limited to a corner of the world and marred and thwarted by the tragic failure of his anointed kings, is not and cannot be the ultimate kingship of God in human history. The Davidic kingship is but a preliminary and partial incarnation of it, a standard set up upon the field of history marking God's claim to the whole field. It points beyond itself to a greater and complete realization. And Israel's prophets continue to point Israel beyond the judgment of God upon Israel's failure and apostasy to the ultimate and universal establishment of His reign over all nations in all the earth forever. One or two utterances may serve as representative of the voices of many:

It shall come to pass in the latter days
that the mountain of the house of the Lord
shall be established as the highest of the
mountains

and shall be raised up above the hills;

and peoples shall flow to it,

and many nations shall come and say:

"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the
Lord,

to the house of the God of Jacob,

that He may teach us His ways

and we may walk in His paths."

For out of Zion shall go forth the Law

and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

He shall judge between many peoples,

and shall decide for strong nations afar off;

and they shall beat their swords into plow-
shares,

and their spears into pruning hooks;

nation shall not lift up sword against nation,

neither shall they learn war any more;

but they shall sit every man under his vine

and under his fig tree,

and none shall make them afraid;

for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has
spoken. . . .

In that day, says the Lord,

I will assemble the lame

and gather those who have been driven away,
and those whom I have afflicted;

and the lame I will make the remnant;

and those who were cast off, a strong nation;

and the LORD will reign over them in

Mount Zion

from this time forth and forevermore

(Micah 4:1-4, 6, 7).

God shall be King! Through judgment and redemptive restoration His reign shall be universally established and universally acknowledged. "The Lord will become King over all the earth; on that day the Lord will be One"—all competing claims will have been forever silenced—"and His name one"—His name alone, His revelation of Himself in judgment and mercy, will claim all men's faith and will shape all men's worship (Zech. 14:9). All that the church has since learned to pray for in the first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer will be realized. His name will be hallowed, His will done, and thereby His kingdom shall come.

In all this God's Yea to His anointed King on earth is not withdrawn; the promise made to David is not annulled. The Lord will yet make David a house, set up his seed after him, and establish his kingdom and throne forever (2 Sam. 7:11, 12, 16). The hope of David, founded on the covenant "ordered in all things and secure" which God had made with him, shall not be put to shame. David shall yet see the righteous Ruler rising out of his house "like the morning light, like the sun shining forth upon a cloudless morning, like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth" (2 Sam. 23:3-5). The prophet Micah, who speaks of the universal reign of God "in the latter days," goes on to link that universal reign with the com-

ing of "the former dominion" (that is, the Davidic kingship) to Zion:

And you, O tower of the flock,
hill of the daughter of Zion,
to you shall it come,
the former dominion shall come,
the kingdom of the daughter of
Jerusalem (Micah 4:8).

The promised reign of God will be a reign incarnate, enmeshed in history, tied directly to the world of men and events. A persistent strain of prophecy keeps alive the hope of the coming King, under various figures and in a prodigal variety of imagery. But one motif unites all the figures and is common to all the imagery, whether the coming One is explicitly linked with the kingdom of God or not. God will in the latter days establish His reign, and that in and through One whom He raises up in history for a mission and a ministry in history. Whether He be called David, or Immanuel, or Child (with wondrous titles which reveal the benediction of His reign — "Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace"), or "shoot from the stump of Jesse" (that is, offspring of the judged and ruined house of David), or Ruler from little Bethlehem Ephrathah who shall be great to the ends of the earth, or righteous Branch raised up for David (whose name spells salvation: "The Lord is our Righteousness"), or David, the Shepherd of the gathered flock of God, or the meek King who speaks peace to the nations, or Son of man, or Servant of the Lord — always the hope that God's ultimate reign will be established and that God's new and better order will prevail is linked with the person and the work of the One who is to come in history.

The various and resplendent colors in

which the reign of the Coming One are pictured have this in common also: They all point up the fact that the kingdom which God is to establish in and through the Coming One breaks the limits of the merely historical. It transcends anything which men might expect from the normal course of historical development. The kingdom of God is not the development of forces latent in mankind and mankind's history. It comes by way of a radical break with the merely historical, by a direct intervention of God in history, an irruption of the divinely more than historical into the world of history. What the prophetic vision implied, Israel's own history spelled out unmistakably. The Captivity and the piteously fragmentary character of the Restoration wiped out every hope of any merely political, mundane restoration of the Davidic kingdom. Men's ears were therefore attuned by their history to prophecies, such as Daniel 2, which made plain that the kingdom would come solely by a sovereign act of God. The dream of the king as interpreted by Daniel sets the imposing colossus of the world empires over against the kingdom of God. The mighty figure of gold and silver and bronze and iron and clay is struck by a stone and is broken to pieces and becomes like the chaff of the summer threshing floor. And the wind carries it away, so that no trace of it remains, while the stone becomes a great mountain and fills the whole earth (Dan. 2:31-45).

It is "a stone cut out by no human hand" (Dan. 2:34) which puts an end to all human greatness and all human dominion and thus clears the way for the coming of the sole and unclouded reign of God. God, who in this age acts through the

agency of men, who executes His wrath with the Assyrian as His rod (Is. 10:5) and employs a Cyrus as shepherd to His people (Is. 44:28), will in the last days establish His reign by an act of His own hand. There shall come into the world that which is not of this world (John 18:36), something which no longer fits into the framework and the categories of normal human history. There shall be an act "by no human hand," beyond human capacities and beyond human grasp. The kingdom to come is absolutely transcendent, not a development from below but an intervention from above. And as such it shall be universal in its workings. The stone becomes a mountain which fills the whole earth. God shall reign supreme and alone.

That stone is, compared with the colossus of the world's powers, not an impressive entity. It is only a stone; not a single adjective of splendor graces it. When God Himself acts, He acts by contraries. He chooses the things which are base, despised, the things which are nothing in this world, in order to confound the things that are. He chose the least of all people to be the bearers of His promise and the vehicles of His regnant grace. And the history of that people culminates in insignificance. A Child is born in a stable, a sower goes out to sow, and the seed grows silently — and that is the beginning of the kingdom of God, the beginning and the guarantee of the new world of God. The kingdom of God is in its beginnings in history like the Servant of God; it has no form or comeliness to commend it.

In proclaiming the kingdom of heaven John was attaching to a thought which was for his contemporaries a living one. Men of Israel in John's time spoke of "taking

the yoke of the Kingdom," that is, of acknowledging God as their King, their sole Lord and God. A convert to Judaism was said "to take upon himself the yoke of the Kingdom" at his conversion; that is, he accepted and confessed the divine King of Israel as his King. Even the recitation of the Judaic creed, the *Shema*: "Hear, O Israel; the Lord, our God, is one Lord" (Deut. 6:4), was called "taking upon oneself the yoke of the Kingdom." And men of John's day prayed that the Kingdom might become manifest — the fact that men could still either "take the yoke of the Kingdom" or "cast it from them" was evidence enough that it had not yet been manifested; for once it appeared, all men would have to acknowledge the King. For the Jews of John's day the thought of the Kingdom was a personal thought and a religious one, a thought not so much encrusted with ideas of national prerogative and materialistic desires as the thought of the Messiah. In the thought of the Kingdom their more purely religious hope found its expression.

But "thought" is too pale a term for all that lay in the word "kingdom of heaven." When John spoke of the kingdom of heaven, he evoked living and dynamic echoes in the hearts of his countrymen. They would think, in terms of the Old Testament, of God as the Creator of the universe and its King, the Lord of all history, the God who was peculiarly the King of His chosen people, the God whose royal reign had found a preliminary, partial, and predictive incarnation in the reign of the Davidic kings, the God whose ultimate and triumphant self-assertion prophet after prophet had foretold. They would think of Him as laying bare His holy and

puissant arm for the last time in history, to lead all history to its conclusion and goal, to triumph forever in judgment over all the powers of evil, and to lead His own safely home for a life of unbroken communion with Himself.

The Coming of the Mightier One: Wrath

John was renewing the voice of prophecy when he spoke of the Kingdom. But he spoke of it as "at hand," at hand, moreover, in the person of a Mightier One who was to follow him on earth, in history. Both in his announcement of the near advent of the Kingdom and in his witness to the Mightier One John's first act was to shatter Judaic complacency by the proclamation of the wrath of God. He was a latter-day Amos, who had to do once more for his generation what Amos had done for his. The popular hope of Amos' contemporaries looked to the arrival of the Day of the Lord, the day when He would assert His kingship and reign, as to the day when Israel would surely triumph over all her enemies and see them destroyed. To that hope, which surrounded the Day of the Lord with fevered dreams of national triumph and splendor, to the security of heart which felt itself immune from a wrath of God which would destroy Israel's enemies, Amos opposed a violent and inescapable no! He would allow no hope to stand which evaded repentance and linked God's action with an all too human lust for power. Amos led men to the presence of the living God, whose redemption comes by way of judgment:

Woe to you who desire the Day of the Lord!
Why would you have the Day of the Lord?
It is darkness and not light;
as if a man fled from a lion
and a bear met him;

or went into the house and leaned
with his hand against the wall,
and a serpent bit him.

Is not the Day of the Lord darkness, and
not light,
and gloom with no brightness in it?

(Amos 5:18-20)

John proclaimed again the mighty reality of the wrath of God which the Old Testament had proclaimed on many a page in images of fire and storm, of reeling cup and dripping winepress, that destructive visitation of God upon man's rebellion against his God, the annihilating reaction of God's injured love against His faithless sons and His adulterous spouse. That prophecy had pointed beyond all visitations of God's wrath in history to a final Day of Wrath when man's proud rebellion would be visited definitively on his head (Zeph. 1:14, 15). John renewed the voice of prophecy and proclaimed the wrath of God in exceptionless rigor on all, including the Pharisee and Sadducee who came to his Baptism and exulted for a season in his light (Matt. 3:7). He proclaimed it as wrath upon man as man, so that no descent from Abraham exempted a man from the divine verdict. John's proclamation marked man as a child of evil, the serpent's offspring, the inheritor and enactor of the satanic rebellion against God. And he proclaimed that wrath as an inevitable and imminent wrath. It is "the wrath to come" (3:10).

And as the Coming One, the Messianic Redeemer, had always, in Old Testament prophecy, loomed up against the dark background of judgment and had in His coming spelled judgment for all who opposed His gracious reign (Is. 11:4; Dan. 7:11-14; Is. 50:9-11), so John links the Mightier One with the execution of God's wrath

on man's rebellion. The Mightier One appears in order to baptize men with fire, to overwhelm them with God's judgment upon their sin (3:11). The great Winnower stands on His threshing floor, the winnowing fork in His hand, to clear His floor; and "the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire" (3:12). The wrath is inescapable, for the Mightier One is the Executor of divine wrath, and He is a divine Executor of divine wrath. John, whom Jesus was to call the greatest of woman born, is utterly dwarfed by Him. He cannot even carry His sandals (3:11); His fire is an unquenchable fire; the threshing floor, the scene of God's judgment, belongs to Him—He owns the world; and the winnowed grain, the purified and gathered people of God, is His too (3:12). The fullness of God dwells in Him.

The Coming of the Mightier One: Renewal

But he is not only a visitant of wrath. The name given to the Baptist at the angel's command signifies "the Lord is gracious," the promise implicit in that name is fulfilled in John's message. Grace is the burden of his message concerning the Mightier One; wrath is but the cast shadow of the divine grace which he proclaims. The coming of the Mightier One is not mere destruction; there shall be a gathered people of God, brought home at last to God's garners. For the Mightier One baptizes with the Spirit; John's hearers knew from the Old Testament what "Spirit" meant. It meant the vital, creative presence of God, that presence which moved in life-creating potency upon the face of the waters at the beginning (Gen. 1:2). It meant that vital presence of God which was to rest upon the Messiah at the end of days, too, to enable Him to establish

God's righteous order in the world of men and to recreate God's primal, paradisaical peace for all nations (Is. 11:1-10). The Spirit of God is the Spirit of heroism which inspired men to do great deeds for God for the deliverance of His people (e.g., John 6:34; 1 Sam. 16:13). It is the Spirit of prophecy which enables men to say, "Thus says the Lord" and to speak the very words of God (e.g., Micah 3:8). The Old Testament prophets had pictured the wondrous working of that Spirit in the last days in manifold ways. The in-breaking of the Spirit transforms creation (Is. 32:15); it makes dead people live (Is. 42:3, 4); it inwardly renews men for a spontaneously obedient life as the people of God (Ezek. 36:26, 27); it opens men's eyes for visions and looses their tongues for prophecy (Joel 2:28); it restores the broken communion between God and man (Zech. 12:10). What John had hinted at in the sentence "God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham" (3:9)—the assurance that the promise given to Abraham would not fail (however much Abraham's descendants might fail); that the same divine, creative word which wrought faith in Abraham and gave Abraham a son when all hoping for a son was past would go on to make redemptive history—that is told outright in the promise of a baptism with the Spirit (3:11).

John's Proclamation: Repent

John renewed the prophetic proclamation of the Kingdom and the prophetic prediction of the One to come with a new emphasis on the unity of the two predictions. The coming of the Kingdom and the advent of the Coming One are now seen to be one indivisible act of God. He renewed it also with a new immediacy

and urgency. It is the voice of the herald who ushers in what he proclaims. And so, since he takes the coming of the Kingdom with full religious seriousness, he renews also the prophetic call to repentance, for the coming of the King demands a people made ready to receive Him.

The Old Testament prophets conceived of sin as a personal and total aversion of man from his God and therefore conceived of repentance as a personal and total turning to God. They deprecated any merely ritual repentance ("Rend your hearts and not your garments," Joel 2:13) and demanded that man turn to God not merely ritually and formally but personally, turn to Him in obedience and trust, with a radical aversion from self and sin. The wicked man is to turn *from his ways* and live (Ezek. 33:11). The prophets knew, and more than once said, that this turning is not a possibility with man but rests with God. The clean heart is God's creation (Ps. 51:10). The penitents pray, "Restore us to Thyself, O Lord, that we may be restored" (Lam. 5:21); or "Bring me back that I may be restored, for thou art the Lord, my God" (Jer. 31:18). Elijah pleads with the Lord at Carmel: "Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people may know that Thou, O Lord, art God, and *that thou hast turned their hearts back*" (1 Kings 18:37).

John restored to the idea of repentance the Old Testament stringency and vigor which it had all too often lost in Judaism; for it had become, commonly, a legalistic distortion of that complete, personal, committed, resolute, divinely wrought return to God, the 180-degree turn from sin to God of which the prophets had spoken. John's call to repentance was universal.

He bade all men turn to the God who was turning to them. He demanded repentance not only of the prostitutes and tax collectors (21:31, 32) but also, and particularly, of the pious (3:7-10). As he proclaimed an exceptionless wrath on man as man, so he demanded a universal repentance of man as man.

And John demanded a repentance as radical as it was universal, as deep as it was wide. His appeal was more categorical even than that of the prophets, for it was made under the urgency of the last days, in the shadow of the coming final revelation of God. The wrath impends, the ax is laid to the root of the tree. All fruitless trees will be cut down inexorably and will be cast into the fire. Only if a man turns, really turns, can he become God's planting and bear God's fruit and be spared the judgment of God (3:10).

The Baptism of John

As God in the Old Testament confers what He demands, so in the New. He is still the turner of the hearts of men, the Creator of the clean heart that can receive Him. That is what the Baptism of John signifies. His Baptism bore a family resemblance to the ceremonial and cultic washings that his contemporaries practiced, and they were many. The Law prescribed ritual washings in great number, and the Judaic tradition had developed severe and detailed prescriptions for purification (15:1, 2; Mark 7:1-4). The Essenes outdid the Pharisees in their zeal for purification, and the obscure sect of the Hemerobaptists probably outdid the Essenes. Proselytes were admitted into the people of God not only by circumcision but also by a baptism to which Judaism

attached great significance. Yet for all the formal resemblance between John's Baptism and the washings of Judaism, especially the baptism of proselytes, there was one significant point in which it was markedly differentiated from them all. John's Baptism was not self-performed but required a baptizer. "Baptist" is applied to John, the son of Zechariah, by both the New Testament and Josephus, and only to him. The term seems to have been coined for him and to have remained peculiarly his. Here was a baptism whose content was given to it by the prophetic word and was performed by another, one endowed with prophetic authority. It was therefore, as Jesus said of it later, "from heaven" and not from men (21:25), not a self-chosen or legally prescribed act of man's piety but God's act upon man. In substance it therefore attached, not to the contemporary baptisms of the Pharisees or of the Essenes or to the baptism of proselytes but to such promises of God as those of Ezekiel and Zechariah: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you . . . and you shall be My people, and I will be your God" (Ezek. 36:25-28). "On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness" (Zech. 13:1). John could attach to them, for the words shaped the contemporary hope of Israel. The rabbis interpreted the words of Ezekiel to mean that God tells Israel: "In this world you are chastised for your sins and cleansed and again chastised, but in the future it is I who shall cleanse you from the world above."

John's Baptism was therefore not only a way in which man expressed his repentance, though it was that, too. Men "were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins" (3:5). But it was also, and primarily, God's giving of repentance, the judgment of God on sin, and the proffer of divine forgiveness in one. It was a sacrament of promise limited by its promissory character but effectual, because it was a divine promise, a promise "from heaven." Thus God Himself was by His prophet making ready a people prepared for Him.

It was in an air charged with the proclamation and the demand of John, an air still reverberating with the indicative and the imperative of this voice, that the disciples heard Jesus renew John's cry of the Kingdom at hand and his call to repentance. Some of them, at least, had been disciples of John. All of them had been reached by his voice, for it had stirred all Israel. And so the miracle of grace which brought the Kingdom home to them in the imperious "Follow Me" of the Mightier One was no blank miracle which blocked out history and blotted out personality; it worked in history and through personality. All that was highest and best in their people's hope and all that God had given His people in John, the last of the prophets, the heritage of Israel and the personal experience of the disciple, had worked together to prepare the disciples for this call.

The Seventh Fulfillment:

The Great Light (3:13—4:17)

Matthew does not indicate whether the disciples knew of the Baptism of Jesus at the hand of John, and there is no way of telling how fully they may have understood

its significance then if they did know of it. But the fact that the narrative of the Baptism and the temptation of Jesus (3:13 to 4:11) is placed just before the story of the calling of the disciples is not without significance for the story of the calling of the disciples; for it draws the contours of the Caller very clearly. What the Baptism revealed at the beginning of Jesus' Messianic ministry the disciples were to find confirmed a hundredfold in their long association with Jesus. That God Himself made Jesus the Bearer of the Spirit of God and marked Him out both as His anointed King and as His suffering and redeeming Servant (3:17; Ps. 2:7; Is. 42:1); that the divine good pleasure rested upon Him as the ministering and suffering Messiah—this Jesus' whole ministry spelled out for them. That ministry also made clear to them what Jesus on His part had done at His Baptism. He had united Himself with a mankind under the wrath and judgment of God, the mankind summoned to repentance by John. He had marked His solidarity with mankind in that act, and He had pointed also to the goal of that solidarity with men. He was baptized in order "to fulfill all righteousness" (3:15), in order that in Him the will of God might be fully and really done. The word concerning the "fulfilling of righteousness" was spoken against the background of John's proclamation of the wrath of God upon all men. That background gives "righteousness" its significance. It is that redeeming righteousness of God which Paul was to make the content of his Gospel as the power of God unto salvation.

Similarly the narrative of the temptation of Jesus (4:1-11) defines the Messianic Caller as the disciples were to come to know Him. In His company the disciples

came to know that pure will of His, which spoke a whole yea to God and therefore spoke a complete nay to Satan. They came to know Him as the Son of God, for whom sonship meant not privilege but obedience, an obedience which would not tempt God and conduct experiments of faith. They came to know Him as the Son of God who would not leap from the temple at satanic suggestion but could at God's command leap from greater heights than the temple pinnacle to greater depth than the courtyard floor. They came to know in His whole life that obedience which could give God a whole worship in all things and was therefore impervious to the satanic suggestion that there might be a second way to royalty and glory, besides the way of implicit submission to the will of God.

We have no way of reconstructing with any precision what was in the mind of Matthew at his calling or in the minds of the four men of Galilee when they were called. But the record of Matthew makes one thing clear: When they heard the words "Follow Me" they had no choice. Whatever degree of knowledge they had then attained, their wills were already claimed. Matthew could understand this event in Galilee only as a fulfillment of the promise given through Isaiah:

The people who sat in darkness
have seen a great Light,
and for those who sat in the region
and shadow of death
Light has dawned (4:16; Is. 9:3).

The disciples knew, or surely sensed, that in Jesus' "Follow Me" the great light of God's new creation, the light which brought the life of God to men, was falling across their paths, and they knew, too: "We must walk in this light or die."

St. Louis, Mo.

(To be concluded)