

Beyond an Inheritance

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Could it be that the original integrity of Jesus' message about the Kingdom of Heaven was later compromised by the presence of other expectations of a messianic-eschatological character that circulated promiscuously in early Christian communities?

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From the early centuries of the Christian era to our day, expositors of the Gospels have wrestled with the temporal dimension of Jesus' teachings on the Kingdom of Heaven. Will the Kingdom of Heaven appear one day in the future when the Son of Man suddenly comes? Or, has it been germinating like a seed with much potential for growth? Perhaps as C. H. Dodd suggested, it should be described as both realized and eschatological: germinal in reference to the past (and present), but explosive in regard to its coming manifestation.^[1]

The lack of clarity emanates from the Gospels themselves. A single Synoptic evangelist can speak of the Kingdom of Heaven as both a present reality and an approaching event. For example, compare Luke 11:20 with 19:11.^[2] The Synoptic Gospels also contain parallel passages where the Kingdom of Heaven is aligned with eternal life in parallel verses. For example, compare Matt. 5:29-30 and 18:8-9 with Mark 9:47. In the case of John's Gospel, its author introduced innovations laden with theological implications. Unlike the other Gospel writers, he depicted Jesus as repeatedly referring to himself in the first person and speaking of eternal life as opposed to referring to himself with oblique references and speaking about the Kingdom of Heaven.^[3] The uneven data have bedeviled expositors throughout the centuries, and in an effort to reconcile these differences, most relied on the future tense for describing the Kingdom of Heaven and associated it with the Son of Man's coming or even treated the Kingdom of Heaven as interchangeable with eternal life.^[4]

Although Realized Eschatology may be attractive for harmonizing what the Gospels say about the Kingdom of Heaven, I prefer looking elsewhere for a way to make sense of the unevenness. Morton Smith, a former Professor of history at Columbia University, made an observation about promiscuous (and often contradictory) eschatological expectations that mixed and mingled in ancient Jewish and Christian communities:

Now all this variety in the matter of messianic expectations is merely one detail...of the

even greater variety of eschatological expectations current in the two centuries before and after the time of Jesus... But the point to be noted is that these contradictory theories evidently flourished side by side in the early rabbinic and Christian and Qumran communities which copied the texts and repeated the sayings. What is more, quite contradictory theories are often preserved side by side in the same document.^[5]

Could it be that the original integrity of Jesus' message about the Kingdom of Heaven was later compromised by the presence of other expectations of a messianic-eschatological character that circulated promiscuously in early Christian communities? If so, could the compilers and editors of the Synoptic Tradition have laced Jesus' teachings with elements or themes based on these other expectations? Professor Brad Young of Oral Roberts University probably envisioned a similar scenario when he speculated that two separate teachings of Jesus are now intertwined: "The one, the coming of the Son of Man, was an eschatological event to be realized in the future. The other, the Kingdom of Heaven, was an active dynamic force in the present, connected with Jesus' ministry and the work of his followers."^[6]

In The Last Judgment story (Matt. 25:31-46), the Son of Man comes to separate the nations (i.e., the Gentiles) according to their deeds.^[7] Those whom he deems righteous will inherit a kingdom that was prepared at the creation of the world. The context indicates that inheriting this kingdom is the same as inheriting eternal life. Differing from synoptic verses that deal with the Kingdom of Heaven, Matt. 25:34 neither uses the verb "to enter" nor has the noun "kingdom" in construct or coupled with a noun like "heaven" or "God" or a possessive like "his" or "your." This usage of the noun "kingdom" in the absolute state has an authentic ring in this verse. The entire narrative centers on an eschatological event, and the noun "kingdom" reminds readers of the book of Daniel. The Last Judgement story centers on one of Jesus' separate and distinct teachings that Professor Young mentioned.

How should the Kingdom of Heaven, the other distinct teaching that Professor Young identified, be described?^[8] Should it be pushed into the future and joined with the events of The Last Judgment because several Synoptic verses imply its imminent appearance or pair it with eternal life? Or, as Smith observed for late Second Temple literature in general, and as Young suggested for the Synoptic Tradition in particular, could expressions of "contradictory theories" have been "preserved side by side" in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke? And could "two distinct teachings of Jesus" have lost their distinctiveness in the protracted and very human process of compiling, writing, and editing the Synoptic Gospels?

Significant theological questions swirl in the wake of this suggestion. For example, if entering the Kingdom of Heaven and inheriting eternal life are complementary, but distinct achievements within Jesus' theological paradigm, could a person inherit the one without entering the other? Or, asked differently, are the entry and inheritance requirements identical? As a preliminary exercise for addressing these questions, I will collect examples of synoptic parlance and place them in four groups according to synonymous and antithetical conceptual and temporal relationships.

Consider the following passages containing synonymous expressions that form one of the groups. As already noted above, the Son of Man will tell the righteous to "inherit the kingdom prepared...from the foundation of the world." According to The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), angels carried poor Lazarus to Abraham's bosom.

In the Lukan version of The Two Thieves, Jesus turned to one of them and said, “Today you will be with me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43).^[9] And, in Mark 10:17 and Luke 18:18, a rich man asked what he must do in order to inherit eternal life.^[10] Thus, the kingdom of Matt. 25:34, Abraham’s bosom, Paradise, and eternal life form a group of equivalents.^[11]

A second group of synonymous expressions has an antithetical conceptual—but *not* an antithetical temporal—relationship to the first. In The Last Judgment, the Son of Man will banish those on his left to eternal fire. According to The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, the callous man who neglected Lazarus found himself in Hades. In a saying about lustful looks included in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus made his point by recommending an unexpected solution for remaining free of sin and avoiding Gehenna.^[12] Eternal fire, Hades, and Gehenna apparently refer to one and the same parched place. They constitute the second distinct, conceptually cohesive group.

The Kingdom of Heaven and its theological equivalents form a third group. A common example belonging to this group is found in verses where Synoptic writers toggled between using the nouns “heaven” and “God.” Heaven is simply a Jewish circumlocution for God’s name. When referring to God, pious Jews prefer circumlocutions to avoid saying or writing his holy name. Thus, Matt. 19:23 uses the genitive phrase “to enter the Kingdom of *Heaven*,” but the parallel verses, Mark 10:23 and Luke 18:24, have “to enter the Kingdom of *God*.” Greek readers probably benefited from Luke’s more direct language.

Becoming a disciple is a less obvious, but significant equivalent to entering the Kingdom of Heaven. When Jesus invited a potential disciple to follow him, he gave that person an opportunity to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. This equation emerges clearly in the dialogue between Jesus and the rich young man, a story that spans two Synoptic passages: 1) The Rich Young Man, and 2) On Riches and the Rewards of Discipleship. Thus, according to synoptic parlance, accepting Jesus’ invitation to become a disciple and entering the Kingdom of Heaven (or Kingdom of God) are equivalent acts. Robert Lindsey noted the link between Jesus’ kingdom movement and his double imperative to leave and follow: “Jesus’ way appears to have been to find men, simple or profound, who would be willing to ‘leave all and follow him.’ He was to make out of them a Kingdom—a movement—which would...eventually burst the bonds of locality and nationality.”^[13]

Now, the challenge of identifying a concept with an antithetical conceptual—but *not* antithetical temporal—relationship to the Kingdom of Heaven remains. As unfamiliar as it may sound, entering the Kingdom of Heaven and being cast into eternal fire should be treated neither as occupying opposite ends of a conceptual spectrum nor as occupying the same end of the temporal spectrum.^[14] Note that, eternal fire and eternal life are conceptual opposites and are aligned temporally (Cf. Matt. 25:34, 41 with Matt. 25:46). Finding a concept that is anchored in the present and conceptually antithetical to the Kingdom of Heaven requires some searching and familiarity with rabbinic literature.

As a start, consider first Luke 18:30. Its parallel structure implies a temporal contrast: Jesus promised much more “in this time” and eternal life “in the age to come” to those who had left family and home for the Kingdom of God. When reading this verse, a student who knows early rabbinic literature thinks of the contrasting Hebrew idioms *haolam hazeh* (lit. “this world”) and *haolam haba* (lit. “the world to come”).^[15] In Jesus’ saying, the Kingdom of God is associated with “this time,” whereas eternal life has been paired with the “age to come.” The parts of the parallelism form a synthetic-like structure: present

sacrifice plus present reward are juxtaposed with eternal life as the greater future reward.^[16] The structure of the parallelism suggests that the Kingdom of God is anchored in the present. From a temporal perspective, it has been contrasted with the futurity of eternal life. Thus, just as eternal life and Gehenna (eternal fire) are conceptual opposites—and both are associated with the future—we must look for an antonymous concept that is anchored in the present to pair with the Kingdom of Heaven.

In m. Avot 3:5, Rabbi Nehunya described those who accept the yoke of Torah as emancipated from two other yokes, one of which is the yoke of mundane matters (Heb. *derech erez*).^[17] As Hanock Albeck, a former Professor of Talmud at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, explained, this yoke refers to the burden of financially supporting oneself.^[18] In other words, a person pursuing a Torah-centric life is presumed to be relieved of the hardships associated with obtaining life's material necessities.^[19]

In the Sermon on the Mount, in the passage On Anxiety (Matt. 6:25-34), Jesus' rhetorical imperatives to consider the birds and flowers suggest that he probably would have placed the Kingdom of Heaven and the complete reliance upon God's provision associated with it at the same end of the conceptual spectrum. And at the opposite end, he probably would have put hardships associated with meeting physical needs and filling responsibilities that family places on a person. The rabbis referred to these burdens collectively as the yoke of mundane matters (i.e., *derech erez*).

Take a moment to mull over the following logical analogy: ENTERING THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN : YOKE OF *DERECH ERETZ* :: INHERITING ETERNAL LIFE : GEHENNA. The structure of this analogy suggests that those who enter the Kingdom of Heaven are relieved of the yoke of mundane matters, while those who inherit eternal life are far removed from Gehenna (i.e., Hades). The first part of the analogy joins two concepts rooted in the present, whereas the second part combines two associated with the future. As useful as this logical analogy may be, one should not overload its carrying capacity by assuming that those who do *not* enter the kingdom automatically find themselves assigned to Gehenna. Conversely, all the inheritors of eternal life may *not* have previously entered the Kingdom of Heaven. And, of course, those who carried the yoke of *derech erez* are not automatically banished to Gehenna. Responsible, kind, gentle people bear the yoke of *derech erez*.

The above collection of passages presents a fragmented, untidy, and incomplete picture of the candidacy requirements for inheriting eternal life. The passage On Adultery and Divorce (Matt. 5:27-32) and The Rich Young Man (Matt. 19:17) suggest that those who govern their lives according to the spirit of the Decalogue may inherit eternal life.^[20] The Last Judgment and The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus indicate that those who act mercifully toward shunned, destitute people will inherit the same.^[21] Feeding the hungry, hydrating the thirsty, welcoming strangers, clothing the naked, and visiting those who are ill and in prison make a favorable impression on the Son of Man. On the other hand, those who neglect the poor in their midst run the risk of sharing the anonymous rich man's fate (i.e., banishment from Abraham's bosom). Ignoring the plight of impoverished, imprisoned, or suffering people will provoke the Son of Man. According to the Sermon on the Mount, murderers and adulterers run the risk of being thrown into Gehenna. Religious hypocrites should be added to this list as well.^[22]

In the Lukan version of The Lawyer's Question (Luke 10:25-28), an expert in Jewish law summed up the quintessential objective of the religious life: to love God with all of one's

heart, soul, and might (Deut. 6:5), and to love one's neighbor as oneself (Lev. 19:18). Jesus affirmed the lawyer's reply and then added, "Do this and you will live!" With these closing words, Jesus alluded to Lev. 18:5, a verse that has had a history of being understood in Jewish tradition as promising eternal life.^[23] Yet Jesus' call to discipleship had an urgent tone: Much work needed to be done, and few had stepped forward. Some desired to follow, but wanted time to say farewell or to bury a loved one. Jesus responded by offering no deferments (Luke 9:60, 62).

To enter the Kingdom of Heaven meant participating in a new economy. Simon Peter and the two sons of Zebedee left personal property and their fishing business.^[24] Levi abandoned his lucrative profession, tax collecting.^[25] Once these men joined Jesus, they relied on God's provision for life's necessities. Jesus, therefore, taught them to pray: "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matt. 6:11).^[26] He also cautioned against making a hasty decision to follow.^[27] He compared the risk factor to marching against an army of 20,000 with one half that size. Perhaps while motioning in the direction of a man carrying a wooden beam en route to a cruel death, he spoke of the willingness that a disciple must have to bear his cross.

The Kingdom of Heaven was not easily entered.^[28] Doing so could be more difficult than squeezing a camel through the eye of a needle. Its entry requirements went beyond common interpretations of the Ten Commandments and the performance of charitable deeds. Admission required an irrational and unwavering commitment expressed through discipline, complete reliance on God's provision, and acceptance of risk.^[29] In essence, Deut. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18 served as its point of departure—not as a mark at which to aim.

The upright rich man walked away sad. Although he had been an observant Jew since adolescence, he could not sell all his possessions and disperse the proceeds to the poor in exchange for treasure in heaven and the opportunity to follow. John the Baptist endured hardship for the sake of his interpretation of the messianic task, and Herod eventually executed him for his preaching.^[30] The incomplete historical records of the Synoptic Tradition suggest that John pursued his agenda even to his last day, remaining detached from Jesus' kingdom movement. Consequently, Jesus remarked that the smallest in the Kingdom of Heaven was greater than John.^[31] John's messianic-eschatological expectations may have become so calcified that he could not embrace a new possibility. For very different reasons, these two men apparently declined to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. We have no record of them joining Jesus' band of disciples. Nevertheless, I expect that when the Son of Man comes and sits on his glorious throne, he will tell the rich man and John the Baptist: "Please, step to the right."

Addendum

To inherit eternal life is no small achievement: It requires a life well-lived. Kind and generous people as well as those who have endured chronic suffering are candidates for inheriting it. Consider, for example, the rich man and John the Baptist, whom we discussed above, and Lazarus who was whisked away by angels to Abraham's bosom (Luke 16:22). I think that most people can create their own list of contemporary candidates without difficulty.

Entering the Kingdom of Heaven requires more than kindness and generosity. Institutional

walls cannot contain its expansive, centrifugal character; a community's dogma cannot express the mysteries of God. I would not be surprised to learn that the Kingdom of Heaven can be entered from within faith traditions other than Judaism and Christianity.^[32]

Those who enter this kingdom participate in a capital-less economy underwritten by God. They have joined a movement with a transparent agenda—with a horizontal hierarchy—and with inverted values. Not many enter the Kingdom of Heaven because irrational and radical commitment and elevated tolerance of risk are necessary for doing so. Jesus' kingdom movement operates on a set of assumptions that most would dismiss as idealistic folly. To reply to such a reaction might be impossible, if it were not for people like Francesco Bernardone and Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu. Better known as Saint Francis and Mother Teresa, they left rare and beautiful imprints on human history.^[33]

Notes

- ^[1] I have written in “reference to the past” because of Dodd’s use of the adjectives “unprecedented” and “unrepeatable.” I have added “and present” in parentheses because of his phrase “now in actual process.” I find Dodd’s conclusion nearly as ambiguous as the synoptic data that he intended to clarify. See C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (rev. ed.; New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1961), 35.
- ^[2] The Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven are one and the same. See the paragraph below about the Kingdom of Heaven and its conceptual equivalents.
- ^[3] The “Kingdom of God” is mentioned two times in the Fourth Gospel. See John 3:3, 5. I have already written about this topic in a popular booklet called *The Kingdom of Heaven* (Tulsa: HaKeshar, 1998), 20-21. Regarding the Johannean portrayal of Jesus, Krister Stendahl commented: “In the synoptic tradition, however—of which the Sermon on the Mount is a part—Jesus does not speak about himself. He speaks about the kingdom. But in the Gospel of John every symbol, every image, that occurs about the kingdom is transposed into an image for Jesus. Jesus tells stories about the shepherd and the sheep. But in John, Jesus *is* the Good Shepherd. Jesus tells stories about the seed of the kingdom. But in John, Jesus *is* the seed” (*Meanings: The Bible as Document and as Guide* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 109.
- ^[4] The writer of Mark’s Gospel seems to have played an early role in equating the Kingdom of God with life (i.e., eternal life). Cf. Mark 9:43, 45 with v. 47. He apparently regarded eternal life and the Kingdom of God as interchangeable, and both of these as antithetical to Gehenna. (Cf. Matt. 5:29-30. These verses mention neither life [i.e., eternal life] nor the Kingdom of God. Cf. Matt. 18:8-9. These verses do not mention the Kingdom of God.) Some modern commentators have followed Mark’s lead. For example, George E. Ladd wrote, “The Age to Come and the Kingdom of God are sometimes interchangeable terms.... Resurrection life is therefore eternal life—the life of the Age to Come—the life of the Kingdom of God” (*A Theology of the New Testament* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 44.
- ^[5] Morton Smith, “What Is Implied by the Variety of Messianic Figures?” *JBL* 78 (1959): 69. I am indebted to Gary Alley for bringing this article to my attention.
- ^[6] Brad Young, *The Jewish Background to the Lord’s Prayer* (Austin: Center for Judaic-Christian Studies, 1984; repr., Tulsa: Gospel Research Foundation, 1999), 42, note

20. For further discussion about the possible fusion of the coming of the Son of Man motif with the Kingdom of Heaven, see the appendix of my *The Kingdom of Heaven*. Note, too, that the Synoptic Tradition also includes uneven data regarding another topic as well. Does eternal life begin once a person dies, or after the resurrection of the dead? Could this ambiguity also reflect competing views of editors who contributed to the Synoptic Tradition? A similar inconsistent approach to when eternal life begins may be found in rabbinic literature. See Max Kadushin, *The Rabbinic Mind* (3rd ed.; New York: Bloch Publishing, 1972), 363-364.

- [7] To identify synoptic passages, I have used Kurt Aland's pericope titles. See his "Index of the Gospel Parallels" in *Synopsis of the Four Gospels: Greek-English Edition of the Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum* (6th rev. ed.; Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1983), 341-355.
- [8] For the reader who is limited to English, the various ways in which the Hebrew word *malkhut* (lit. "kingdom") is used can be confusing. Like a phrase of jargon, "the Kingdom of Heaven" is repeatedly used in the Synoptic Gospels and rabbinic literature. To distinguish this specific use of "kingdom" from other occurrences, it typically appears in the construct form. The most common examples of it in the construct form are *malkhut shamaim* (lit. "the Kingdom of Heaven"), *malkhuto* (lit. "his kingdom"), and *malkhutkha* (lit. "your kingdom").
- [9] See David Flusser's remarks on Luke 23:39-43, *Jesus* (2nd corrected and augmented ed.; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1998), 171-172, note 78.
- [10] Only in Matthew's version is the rich man said to be "young."
- [11] See the preceding note and the second part of note 6.
- [12] According to ancient literary sources, those members of the body through which transgression is committed will be punished in Gehenna more severely than other parts of the body. See Saul Lieberman, *Texts and Studies* (New York: Ktav Publishing, 1974), 46-47.
- [13] Robert Lindsey, *Jesus Rabbi and Lord: The Hebrew Story of Jesus Behind Our Gospels* (Oak Creek, Wisc.: Cornerstone Publishing, 1990), 71-72.
- [14] Cf. above note 4.
- [15] The Hebrew word *olam* carries various nuances. See Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targum, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (New York: Jastrow Publishers, 1967), 1052.
- [16] "In the synthetic parallelism, which is not well named, the second stich advances the thought of the first, rather than repeating it." William Lasor, David Hubbard, and Fredrick Bush, *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 310.
- [17] Rabbi Nehunya's saying actually mentions three types of yokes: 1) Torah, 2) ruling authority (Heb. *malkhut*), and 3) mundane matters (Heb. *derek erez*). Jesus made good use of the concept *oal derech erez* (i.e., the yoke of mundane matters). See, for example, On Anxiety, On Serving Two Masters, and The Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:11). Nevertheless, this parlance of m. Avot 3:5 has no linguistic equivalent in the Synoptic Gospels. The same is true for *oal malkhut* (i.e., the yoke of ruling authority). Although this sister concept is not developed in the Synoptic tradition, it can be detected in two pericopes, On Retaliation (Matt. 6:41) and On Paying Tribute to Caesar (Matt. 22:15-22; and parallels). Regarding Matt. 6:41, Jesus probably had a Roman legionnaire in mind when he suggested going two miles

when forced to go only one. Apparently, in his approach to the yoke of ruling authority, Jesus viewed the demands of government as having little or no impact on the expansion of his kingdom movement. Caesar usually simply wanted money or labor, whereas God sought singular devotion from those who had entered the realm of his reign (i.e., the Kingdom of Heaven). Moreover, Jesus seems to have kept in focus, at all times, the fact that temporal power was exercised by people who, despite their vanities and vices, still carried the imprint of God's image and benefited from his sun and rain.

- [18] Hanock Albeck, *The Mishnah, Seder Nezikin* (Tel-Aviv: Dvir, 1988), 364. Note, too, Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahman's saying in Lev. Rab. 19:1 and its conceptual similarity to On Anxiety. Birds, specifically ravens, play a key role in both contexts. See Mordecai Margulies, ed. *Midrash Wayyikra Rabbah*, Part 1 (3rd ed.; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1993), 414.
- [19] I have benefited from Judah Goldin, especially in his rendering of *derech erez* as "mundane matters" (*The Living Talmud: The Wisdom of the Fathers and Its Classical Commentaries* (New York: Mentor Books, 1957), 124-125). Goldin translated the comments of several classical Jewish commentators on Avot 3:5. I will repeat three of those commentators' remarks on the phrase "yoke of mundane matters:" 1) "That is, livelihood worries. Heaven will provide for [the scholar]" (Machsor Vitry); 2) "[This] refers to the necessity of providing for temporal needs" (Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, better known as Maimonides); and 3) "[By this] is meant a person's preoccupation with the details of living, bodily needs like food and drink and clothing and a place to live and marrying and raising children and other such things" (Joseph ben Judah ibn Aknin). David Bivin, the founder and managing editor of *Jerusalem Perspective Online*, noted that Jesus and apparently Israel's sages and earliest rabbis did not refer to the Kingdom of Heaven as a yoke. Jesus also described the demands of discipleship in a manner similar to how the rabbis would speak later of a disciplined and simple life devoted to Torah. See Brad Young, *Jesus and His Jewish Parables* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1989; repr., Tulsa: Gospel Research Foundation, 1999), 227, note 30a.
- [20] I did not include The Lawyer's Question in this short list because, although Luke portrays the lawyer as testing Jesus with a question about eternal life, Matthew and Mark agree that Jesus was asked a question about the most important commandment.
- [21] In the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, Lazarus is described as being poor and full of sores. Within some Jewish circles in antiquity, Lazarus' chronic suffering would have been viewed as weighing in favor of his inheriting eternal life. According to b. Erub. 41b, people who suffer from poverty, diseases of the digestive tract, and the cruelties of the Roman government will be exempt from Gehenna. Cf. Isa. 57:15-16 and Ps. 34:18.
- [22] Cf. Matt. 7:22-23. The words "depart from me, you doers of injustice" are reminiscent of Matt. 25:41. According to Robert Lindsey, "In this latter saying [Matt. 7:22-23] it is clear Jesus is talking about the day of judgment. These two sayings [Matt. 7:21 and vs. 22-23] have apparently been put together by a late editor because he found each saying using the double "Lord, Lord" (*Jesus Rabbi and Lord*, 109). I will add that Dante Alighieri placed religious hypocrites rather close to Hell's center in his description of the underworld in *The Inferno*. See Canto XXIII.
- [23] Cf. *Sifra, Akharei Mot*, par. 8 on Lev 18:5.

[24] Luke 5:11.

[25] Luke 5:28. Cf. Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10), the story about the chief tax collector. Zacchaeus gave half of his wealth to the poor. It is hard to know whether Zacchaeus was giving charity and restoring fourfold to anybody whom he may have defrauded even before he encountered Jesus. (This point of grammar needs to be pursued and clarified by a scholar with expertise in Hellenistic Greek.) If so, then Jesus' affirmation of Zacchaeus as a son of Abraham may have been a statement directed at fellow Jews watching the incident. (This possibility was raised in a discussion among Randall Buth, Chanah Safrai, David Bivin, and myself in Jerusalem, Israel.) Tax collectors were regarded as thieves, and Jewish collectors were seen as collaborating with the despised Roman government. (Zacchaeus' name indicates that he was a Jew.) At any rate, no mention is made of the Kingdom of Heaven in the pericope, nor did Jesus instruct Zacchaeus to follow him. Apparently, Zacchaeus continued to collect taxes for Caesar. I assume, however, that he provided material support for Jesus' band of disciples.

[26] Matt. 6:11. Cf. the Lukan parallel to this verse. Luke may have struggled with the implications of this line of the prayer. According to David Flusser, "Jesus drew even a more radical conclusion from the opinion that the present day contains its own blessing. He taught his disciples to pray: 'Give us *this* day our daily bread.' Even when one prays, one is to pray for the food of the present day only. Luke (11:3) did not understand Jesus' Hillelite paradoxical formulation and rendered the original wording as follows: 'Give us each day our daily bread'" ("Hillel and Jesus: Two Ways of Self-Awareness," in *Hillel and Jesus: Comparisons of Two Major Religious Leaders*, eds. James Charlesworth and Loren Johns [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997], 72). Note also Young, *The Jewish Background to the Lord's Prayer*, 24-27.

[27] Luke 14:25-33.

[28] Jesus' use of the verb "to enter" (probably Heb. *lavoh*, lit. "to come") may support my claim that joining Jesus' kingdom movement came at high personal cost. Jesus' use of the Kingdom of Heaven resembles, but was certainly not identical with, rabbinic usage of the phrase. The rabbis preferred coupling the phrase with the verb "to receive." They also spoke of seeing the Kingdom of Heaven. For example, see the prayer for the Friday Evening Service. At the start of each Sabbath, pious Jews recite that Israel "gladly received his kingdom" and that the people saw his kingdom at the Red Sea (*Prayer Book for Jews in the Armed Forces of the United States* (abr. And rev. ed.; New York: National Jewish Welfare Board, 1943), 23-24). (In the Synoptic Tradition, the verb "to receive" does not appear coupled with the Kingdom of Heaven. Regarding the verb "to see," note Matt. 11:4-5 and 13:17. The implied direct object of the verb "to see" is probably his kingdom [the Kingdom of Heaven], i.e., the palpable manifestations of God's redemptive activity, whereas the implied direct object of the verb "to hear" is probably the reports circulating about the miracles of healing.) The verb "to enter" (Heb. *lavoh*) was used by the writer of Ben Sira (the Hebrew original of Sirach), the Dead Sea Sect, and later by the rabbis in a way that carried *covenantal* connotations. "The phrase, 'entry into the covenant of Abraham our father,' used to this day for the ceremony of circumcision, is already found in the Damascus Document 12:11" (Israel Moses Ta-Shma, "Abraham," *EncJud* 2:116). Ben Sira 44:20 also speaks of Abraham entering into a covenant with God. The Dead Sea Sect used the verb "to enter" to speak about joining their community, which required coming into a covenant with God. For example, see 1QS 1:16. In CD 6:19 and 8:21, the members of the sect are

referred to as “those who have entered the new covenant.” When speaking of potential converts, the rabbis spoke in a similar manner. According to Saul Lieberman, “The word *bain* [lit. “coming, entering”] is a shortened technical term for coming to embrace a new faith (or new principles)” (*Greek in Jewish Palestine* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1994), 80. Those who joined the Dead Sea Sect were required to relinquish their wealth to the sect and to submit to its austere code of conduct. (Cf. Acts 2:44-45 and 4:32-37.) For linguistic reasons, note well 1 QS 5:7 where the Hebrew preposition following the verb “to enter” is not the usual letter *bet*, but the letter *lamed*. The Hebrew preposition *lamed* (lit. “to”) corresponds closely to the Greek preposition *eis*. Commenting on the verb “to enter” in the sectarian literature of the Dead Sea Sect and rabbinic literature, Lieberman already called attention to 1QS 5:7 (*Texts and Studies*, 203). The content of this footnote was drawn from a lecture that I gave in Redlands, CA on March 6, 1999 at an annual conference that the Centre for the Study of Biblical Research sponsored.

[29] Cf. Matt. 7:21. Jesus recognized that sometimes a gap exists between a person’s words and deeds, or that self-perception could be inflated. Saying “Lord, Lord” was easy, but genuine allegiance was another matter. Verse 21 is probably a floating saying of Jesus and should not be treated as being originally connected with vs. 20 and 22-23. According to Lindsey, “Occasionally he [the editor] placed together sayings (which appeared originally in quite different contexts) on the basis of some common word in the newly joined texts: one of these we saw in Matthew 7:21 where ‘Lord, Lord’ appears in a text dealing with people joining the Kingdom of God during Jesus’ ministry while next to this, in Matthew 7:22, 23 we find ‘Lord, Lord’ in a text dealing with the judgment at the end of the age” (*Jesus Rabbi and Lord*, 210). Cf. above note 22. Regarding the acceptance of risk, I am reminded of Bill Tomes, a Catholic layman who used to position himself in the crossfire of rival Chicago gangs during fights. See Ron Stodghill, “In the Line of Fire,” *Time* (20 April 1998), <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,138995,00.html> [accessed 21 April 2015] and National Public Radio’s interview of 28 February 2008 with John Pick and Alex Kotlowitz, <http://www.npr.org/player/v2/mediaPlayer.html?action=1&t=1&islist=false&id=87384288&m=87351288&live=1> [accessed 21 April 2015]. Journalist Grant Pick interviewed Bill Tomes for the *Chicago Reader* (31 May 1990), <http://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/brother-bill/Content?oid=875746> [accessed April 21, 2015].

[30] Cf. Flusser, *Jesus*, 258-75.

[31] Matt. 11:11.

[32] My comment on entering the Kingdom of Heaven from within other faith traditions will please some and anger others. When I attended Professor David Flusser’s classes on the Synoptic Gospels that he taught in his home, I heard him emphasize that Jesus directed people’s attention to their Father in heaven. Jesus encouraged them to seek and obey God’s will. For example, Professor Flusser wrote: “Jesus did not like the focus of a ‘personality cult.’ According to Mt 7:21 (cf. Lk 6:46), he said, ‘Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.’ Jesus opposed an empty ‘personality cult.’ He sought rather to call upon people to do the will of God” (“Hillel and Jesus: Two Ways of Self-Awareness,” in *Hillel and Jesus*, 101-102.) I think that the passages in the Book of Acts of uncircumcised males receiving the Holy Spirit are relevant in this context, too. They suggest a lateral

component and indiscriminate dynamic that are associated with the Kingdom of Heaven. Regarding two Muslims who may have entered the Kingdom of Heaven, see National Public Radio's online article and interview on Abdul Sattar Edhi and his wife Bilquis, who run the Edhi Foundation in Karachi (Julie McCarthy, "Pakistan Philanthropist Cares for Karachi's Forgotten," *Morning Edition* (28 July 2009), <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=111102319> [accessed 21 April 2015]. Mother Teresa's well-known saying influenced my thinking on this topic. "There is only one God and He is God to all; therefore it is important that everyone is seen as equal before God. I've always said we should help a Hindu become a better Hindu, a Muslim become a better Muslim, a Catholic become a better Catholic" (*A Simple Faith*, compiled by Lucinda Vardey (New York: Ballantine Books, 1995), 31.

^[33] I have noticed in books about Saint Francis and Mother Teresa that these two gravitated toward verses in the Synoptic Gospels. These verses tend to be the same verses that Robert Lindsey claimed were the least redacted and, therefore, the most authentic of the Synoptic Tradition. This observation requires further investigation to determine its validity.

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