

A soteriological reading of Matthew 22:34-40 and its missiological implications

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Soteriology is one of the major themes of the Gospel of Matthew. Terms and concepts that are conventionally associated with the notion of salvation in the OT and in the literature of Second Temple Judaism are heavily employed by Matthew: σωθῆναι δικαιοσύνη, τηρεῖν τὰς ἐντολάς, εἰσερχεσθαι εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν, etc.¹ In this paper I will investigate how the so-called great commandment pericope in the Gospel of Matthew fits in the larger picture of Matthew's notion of how one ultimately receives salvation and reflect upon its implications on the meaning of Christian soteriology in the 21st century. According to Petri Loumanen, there is no scholarly consensus about the exact meaning of salvation in the Gospel of Matthew. Salvation may mean admission to the kingdom of heaven, forgiveness of sins and a new covenant, Jesus' turning to sinners, or understanding granted to Jesus' followers.² In this paper, I will focus on the concept of entering the kingdom of heaven as the most critical aspect of salvation, even though it is not identical with salvation in the Gospel of Matthew.

1. Exegetical observations

The great commandment pericope exists as part of the Triple Tradition in the synoptic corpus (Mark 12:28-34, Matt 22:34-40, & Luke 10:25-28). It is one of the few cases, in

¹ Neither σωτηρία nor σωτήρ appears in the Gospel of Matthew, but the verb σῶζειν is frequently used by Matthew (1:21, 8:25, 9:21, 22, 10:22, 14:30, 36, 16:25, 19:25, 24:13, 22, 27:40, 42, 49). Some of them refer to an immediate rescue from a specific form of calamity, while others refer to eschatological salvation.

² Petri Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven: A Study on the Structure of Matthew's View of Salvation* (WUNT 2. Reihe, Bd. 2/101; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 37-38.

which Markan original is longer than its synoptic parallels in Matt and Luke. There are also other “minor agreements” between Matt and Luke against Mark in this passage such as the identification of the questioner as νομικός (Matt 22:35 & Luke 10:25),³ his addressing Jesus as διδάσκαλε (Matt 22:36 & Luke 10:25), and the absence of the first part of the *Shema* from Jesus’ answer. For this reason, it has been suggested that there is a Q variant for this Markan periscope.⁴ It is not an implausible suggestion. However, because of the speculative nature of the Mark-and-Q hypothesis itself,⁵ I will not deal with that issue in this paper but instead focus on the Matthean redaction on his Markan source based on the Two Source hypothesis.⁶

In Bultmann’s taxonomy, the passage belongs to the category of controversy and scholastic dialogues under the *apophthegmata*.⁷ Bultmann further notices that Mark 12:28-34 was originally a pure scholastic dialogue but Matthew and Luke changed it into a controversy dialogue by deleting the Markan conclusion and by imputing to the questioner the motive of tempting Jesus.⁸ In the Matthean context, the motif of

³ As the square brackets in Nestle-Aland, *NTG*, 27th, indicate, the textual status of this word in Matt 22:35 is debatable. On the one hand, the external evidence weighs in favor of the presence of this word. But, on the other hand, since this word is not found in the Markan original and it is not used at all elsewhere in Matt, it is not implausible that a later copyist inserted it from Luke 10:25. See Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament: A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament* (London & New York: United Bible Society, 1975), 59.

⁴ See, for example, Arland J. Hultgren, “The Double Commandment of Love in MT 22:34-40: Its Sources and Compositions” *CBQ* 36 (1974), 373-78; Reginald H. Fuller, “The Double Commandment of Love: A Test Case for the Criteria of Authenticity” in *Essays on the Love Commandment* (ed. L. Schottroff et al.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 41-56; Jan Lambrecht, “The Great Commandment Pericope and Q,” in *The Gospel Behind the Gospels: Current Studies on Q* (ed. R. A. Piper; Leiden, New York & Köln: E. J. Brill, 1995), 73-96.

⁵ Cf. E. P. Sanders and Margaret Davies, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 79.

⁶ The abbreviation by Matt and Luke in this Triple Tradition can be explained as an attempt at stylistic improvement by removing redundancy in the latter half of the Markan pericope without necessarily postulating a Mark-and-Q overlap hypothesis. See, for example, Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (Greenwood: Attic Press, 1971), 160. Here Dibelius says Matthew received the Markan version of the Greatest Commandment and transformed it into a more impressive form of *chraie* by dropping the concluding dialogue between Jesus and the scribe.

⁷ Rudolf Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 22.

⁸ Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 51.

controversy is heightened because of the location of this pericope in the section of Jesus' debates with the Pharisees, the chief priests, the elders, and the Sadducees (Matt 21:23-22:26).⁹ But on the other hand, precisely because the questioner recedes from the scene after posing the question, the passage virtually becomes a monologue of Jesus that is not challenged by his interlocutor with a counter point.

Unlike the free standing νομικός in Luke 10:25, the νομικός in Matt 22:35¹⁰ functions as a representative of the Pharisees (εἷς ἐξ αὐτῶν) in this passage.¹¹ The term as a substantive may refer to anyone who is an expert in matters pertaining to laws or customs (eg. Titus 3:13),¹² but in Jewish literature, such as the Gospel of Matthew,¹³ it most likely refers to a scholar who has an expertise knowledge in the study of the Torah.¹⁴ So, the designation of the questioner as νομικός puts a particular frame of reference to the whole passage as a matter of Torah hermeneutics.¹⁵ This association with the Torah is immediately made even more manifest by the Matthean redactional addition

⁹ The scribes (γραμματεῖς), one of whom is identified as the interlocutor of Jesus in Mark 12:28-34, appear in Matt 21:15 and they reappear in Matt 23 together with the Pharisees as the main target of Jesus' harsh criticism, but they are not mentioned in the debate section proper (Matt 21:23-22:26).

¹⁰ This word, νομικός, if it is authentic, is a ἄπαξ λεγόμενον in the Gospel of Matthew.

¹¹ Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 67.

¹² The precise meaning of νομικός in Titus 3:13 cannot be ascertained.

¹³ Anthony J. Saldarini, "The Gospel of Matthew and Jewish-Christian Conflict" in *Social History of the Matthean Community* (ed. David L. Balch; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 38-61. Following Saldarini, I take the Matthean community as still belonging to Judaism as a deviant minority group within it.

¹⁴ BDAG, s.v. νομικός. It is noted here that in the NT, except Tit 3:13, this word always refers to an expert in the Mosaic Law.

¹⁵ Biger Gerhardsson, "The Hermeneutic Program in Matthew 22:37-40" in *Jews, Greeks and Christians: Religious Cultures in Late Antiquity* (ed. R. Hamerton-Kelly and R. Scroggs; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 129-50. "Matthew has not meant only that Jesus' answer is a skillful retort that silences an opponent. Jesus' answer in verses 37-40 is, in fact, a very carefully formulated *hermeneutic program*. What we are faced with in these verses is nothing less than the Matthean Church's principles for interpretation and application of the inherited holy scriptures." (p.134; italics in original) Also, in consideration of the comprehensive nature of the Torah hermeneutics in this passage, Gerhardsson calls it "a synthetic hermeneutic program." (p.136)

of the phrase ἐν τῷ νόμῳ in the question proper in verse 36.¹⁶ In other words, Matthew highlights the central theme of the passage explicitly and unambiguously as one about the interpretation of the Torah, which is only implicit in the Markan version. By doing so, Matthew puts this passage in line with other passages in his gospel that are also related with the Torah hermeneutics such as Matt 5:17-20, 7:12, 7:21-23, 23:23, etc.

The question proper, ποία ἐντολή μεγάλη ἐν τῷ νόμῳ, employs the interrogative pronoun ποῖος,¹⁷ which refers to class or kind. Therefore, this question is not asking which one particular commandment is great in the Torah,¹⁸ which would have been better expressed by τίς ἐντολή μεγάλη ἐν τῷ νόμῳ. Instead, it asks *what kind of* commandment (ποία ἐντολή) is great in the Torah.¹⁹ This means that the question in Matt 22:36 is at a higher level of abstraction than a question to pick one commandment among many.²⁰ The answer to this question, whether it is in the form of defining the nature of a great commandment or by way of citing concrete commandments, is expected to be representative for other such commandments as well.

¹⁶ John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (The New International Greek Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 910. Nolland says the insertion of the phrase ἐν τῷ νόμῳ brings the language more in line with standard rabbinic diction.

¹⁷ In this sentence, the interrogative pronoun ποία is used as an adjective, attributively qualifying the following noun ἐντολή. Then the best way to construe the syntax of this sentence will be to assume that there is a copula verb between ποία ἐντολή as the subject and μεγάλη as the predicate.

¹⁸ It is not necessary here to regard μεγάλη, which is in the positive degree, as having a superlative force because of Semitism. See Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21-28: A Commentary* (trans. J. E. Crouch; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 81n63.

¹⁹ The interrogative pronoun τίς (*qui*) asks *who, which or what*, whereas ποῖος (*qualis*) asks *what kind of*. See Smyth §340. See also Liddell & Scott, s.v. ποῖος. Cf. Dale C. Allison W.D. Davies with. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* Vol. 3 (The International Critical Commentary; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1997), 240. See also Richard T. France. *The Gospel of Matthew* (New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 844. Here France says that even though ποῖος basically asks “what kind of” rather than “which,” Jesus’ answer indicates that he took it as asking “which.”

²⁰ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Society, 1989) §92.36 defines ποῖος as a reference to one among several objects, events, or states. But this definition is based on Matt 22:36, which is cited there as an example, and it is not supported by other standard Greek lexica.

Jesus' answer in the Matthean version contains the following elements:

1. Citation of Deut 6:5 as the first commandment (v.37)
2. Editorial remarks (v.38-v.39a)
 - a. Interpretive comment on the commandment just cited above (v.38)
 - b. Interpretive comment on the commandment to be cited below (v.39a)
3. Citation of Lev 19:18 as the second commandment (v.39b)
4. Concluding editorial remark: hermeneutical principle (v.40)

A synoptic comparison clearly shows that all the interpretive remarks in Matt 22:38, 39a & 40 are heavily redactional and reflect the distinctive features of the Torah hermeneutics articulated in a series of sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, whereas the citations of two commandments in Matt 22:37 & 39b are rather closely following the Markan version except for a few minor discrepancies.²¹

The concept of loving God is actually conspicuously missing from the Gospel of Matthew and from the synoptic gospels in general, for that matter.²² One may argue that it is assumed as a presupposition in Jewish or early Christian literature, just like a monotheistic belief may not necessarily be mentioned but taken for granted. Such an assumption may or may not be warranted. Considering, however, that the call to love

²¹ The MS Hebrew text of Deut 6:5 has the following three: לֵבָב and פִּי and מֵאָז whereas the LXX has καρδία, ψυχή and δύναμις, which is a direct translation of each of the Hebrew nouns in the MS. Mark 12:30 has καρδία, ψυχή, διάνοια and ἰσχύς. Luke repeats the Markan elements with the order of the last two reversed. Matthew preserves the first three faculties of Mark in the same order deleting the last. This deletion of ἰσχύς by Matthew seems to be an attempt on his part to conform to the number of the faculties mentioned in the Hebrew or LXX. The change from the Markan ἐξ, which is apparently taken from the LXX, to ἐν by Matthew does not make a significant difference in meaning.

²² Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 911. He says Luke 11:42 is the only exception, but he takes this passage as ultimately dependent upon the Lukan version of the greatest commandment. He then provides in a footnote the following list of passages implying that they are only minor and indirect references to a similar concept: Matt 6:24, Mark 7:6, Luke 7:42, 47.

God is both explicitly and frequently given in the OT,²³ it is remarkable that it is found only in the great commandment passage in the synoptic corpus.

The Hebrew verb אָהַב has a wide semantic range.²⁴ In the immediate context within the *Shema*, the commandment to love God (וְאָהַבְתָּ אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ) in Deut 6:5 has a rather specific point of reference in the subject of the subsequent sentence in Deut 6:6: מִדְּבָרֵי הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי מְצַוְּךָ הַיּוֹם (these words that I will be commanding to you today). This leads to an exegetical observation that the imperative force of the whole sentence of Deut 6:6 *to keep the words of God* in their heart serves as a commentary to the unqualified commandment to love God in Deut 6:5. In other words, to love God in the *Shema* primarily denotes knowing and observing the words (דְּבָרַיִם) of God. Then, it is not far fetched to assume that the citation of Deut 6:5 would bring echoes of this idea, especially to a Jewish Christian audience like the Matthean community. This is particularly significant for the interpretation of the Matthean version of the great commandment, because in the Gospel of Matthew the Torah and the Prophets as the words of God are still binding and have salvific efficacy (Matt 5:17-20).²⁵

By naming Deut 6:5 as the “great and first commandment” (μεγάλη καὶ πρώτη ἐντολή) in Matt 22:38, Jesus has answered the Torah expert’s question and the pericope could have ended here. So, mentioning another commandment as “second” (δευτέρα) both in Mark 12:31/Matt 22:39 seems to go beyond the scope of the original question of

²³ Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 911n110 lists 10 occurrences of the call to love God in Deuteronomy alone.

²⁴ Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, 82.

²⁵ A concrete example of τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ as a reference to commandments of God is found in Matt 15:6. N.B. Some ancient manuscripts have τὴν ἐντολήν or τὸν νόμον in stead of τὸν λόγον. This may indicate the synonymity among these words in this particular context. Notice also that τὴν ἐντολήν τοῦ θεοῦ in Matt 15:3 is cited in the following verse with the introductory remark, ὁ γὰρ θεὸς εἶπεν.

the interlocutor, and the rationale for doing so is not provided, at least, in the original Markan version.²⁶ In that regard, Matthew's redactional change on the Markan sentence δευτέρα αὕτη (Mark 12:31) is highly significant: Matthew inserts one word ὁμοία to provide his own interpretation to the relation between the two. Generally, the adjective ὅμοιος refers to qualitative equivalence, whereas ἴσος is used for quantitative equality. As such, ὅμοιος could also mean "equal in rank/importance"²⁷ The word is used by Plato to refer to ontological sameness.²⁸ In the Gospel of Matthew this word is frequently used in the introductory formula to kingdom parables of Jesus: ὁμοία ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν (Matt 13:31, 33, 44, 45, 47 & 20:1). In other words, Matthew uses this word for making an analogy between what is divine and what is human in order to intimate the true meaning of God's βασιλεία in metaphorical terms. Even though the precise meaning of ὁμοία in the kingdom parables may be different from that of the same word in the great commandment pericope, it is safe to assume that a similar semantic dynamic will be operative in both cases. The result is that the first commandment is now interpreted in light of the second in the Matthean version of the great commandment passage. In a parabolic language of metaphor rather than simile, one might even say that the second *is* the first. One loves God by loving one's neighbor.²⁹

²⁶ In the Lukan version, Lev 19:18 is not cited in full. In stead, καὶ τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτὸν is attached to the cited text of Deut 6:5 as if it is the second half of one commandment.

²⁷ LSJ & BDAG, s.v. ὅμοιος. Also, EDNT Vol.2, p.511 specifically cites Matt 22:39 as an example for ὅμοιος meaning "*be of equal value/equal rank.*"

²⁸ For example, see Plato, *Phaedr.* 271A.

²⁹ Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, 83n78 cites *T.Benj.* 3.5, in which the two commandments are identified as one and the same.

At the formal level, the juxtaposition of Lev 19:18 with Deut 6:5 is done on the rabbinic hermeneutical principle of *שְׁנֵי גְזֵרֹת שֶׁבְּאֵימֶן* through the shared verb *תְּבַרְכֵם/ἀγαπήσεις*.³⁰ It is to be noted that in the Hebrew OT the consecutive form *תְּבַרְכֵם* appears only in the commandments to love God (Deut 6:5, 11:1) and to love neighbor (Lev 19:18, 34).³¹ Then, the juxtaposition of these two commandments is only natural and it is not surprising that such a link is also found in other Jewish texts.³² According to this principle of *שְׁנֵי גְזֵרֹת שֶׁבְּאֵימֶן*, two laws can be linked together through verbal congruities, and in such a case, one law may be used to interpret the other. This legitimizes Matthew's redactional attempt at identifying the two commandments as one, by putting it in the larger context of rabbinic hermeneutics. Whatever the ultimate source was for the Markan version of the great commandment passage, the organizing principle of the juxtaposition of the two commandments would have been *שְׁנֵי גְזֵרֹת שֶׁבְּאֵימֶן*. In the Markan version, only the link between the two is established according to this principle, while Matthew completes the hermeneutical process of this rabbinic principle and makes the identification of the two commandments explicit at the textual level.

The concluding remark (Matt 22:40) is also highly redactional. Mark's statement, *μείζων τούτων ἄλλη ἐντολὴ οὐκ ἔστιν*, does not really add any new meaning to the cited commandments and it is virtually redundant. Matthew deletes it and provides a new

³⁰ Raymond F. Collins, "Matthew's ENTOΛAI: Toward an Understanding of the Commandments in the First Gospel," in *The Four Gospels Vol.2.* (ed. F. Van Segbroeck et al; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 1325-48. See p.1342.

³¹ Gerhardsson, "The Hermeneutic Program in Matthew 22:37-40" 138. See also France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 846n20, "In the Hebrew OT this particular jussive form, *w'ahabta*, occurs only in these two texts and in the derivative texts Deut 11:1 and Lev 19:34."

³² Collins, "Matthew's ENTOΛAI" 1342n79 lists *T.Issac* 5,2; 7,5 and *T.Dan* 5,3 as examples of the juxtaposition of the two commandments with a caution that there is a possibility for Christian interpolation here.

conclusion: ἐν ταύταις ταῖς δυσὶν ἐντολαῖς ὅλος ὁ νόμος κρέμαται καὶ οἱ προφῆται. This statement certainly gives the two cited commandments a special status vis-à-vis the rest of the scriptures, even though the precise meaning of this status is not made explicit in this pericope and therefore can only be deduced from its intratextual references.

The Greek word κρεμάννυμι is used by only three writers of the NT: twice by Matthew (Matt 18:6, 22:40), four times by Luke (Luke 23:39, Acts 5:30, 10:39, 28:4), and once by Paul (Gal 3:13). In the LXX this word is regularly used as a translation of הֲלִיף/אֲלִיף.³³ This word הֲלִיף/אֲלִיף (hang) is mostly used in its literal sense in the Hebrew OT, but it is attested to have been used figuratively to express the concept of one set of commandments, rules or regulations being dependent upon another during the Tannaitic period. T. Donaldson cites *b. Ber.* 63a as the closest parallel to the Matthean usage in this regard:

What is the smallest portion of scripture from which all essential regulations of the Torah hang? “In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will direct your paths” (Prov. 3:6).³⁴

In his TDNT article, G. Bertam says the Greek word κρεμάννυμι/κρεμάω has the same semantic range with that of the Hebrew הֲלִיף/אֲלִיף.³⁵ In other words, its figurative usage can connote dependence of one upon the other.³⁶ Bertam also cites Plut. *Cons. ad Apoll.*, 28 (II, 116c) as a material parallel to Matt 22:40: τὸ γινῶθι σαυτὸν καὶ τὸ μηδὲν ἄγαν. ἐκ

³³ Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 912.

³⁴ Terrence L. Donaldson, “The Law That Hangs (Matthew 22:40): Rabbinic Formulation and Matthean Social World” *CBQ* 57 (1995) 689-709. Also, *m. Hag.* 1:8. *t. Hag.* 1:9, *t. Erub.* 8:23 are listed by Donaldson as examples of the same figurative use of the term.

³⁵ G. Bertam, “κρεμάννυμι (κρεμάω), κρέμαμαι, ἐκκρέμαμαι” *TDNT* 3:915-21.

³⁶ BDAG s.v. κρεμάννυμι

τούτων γὰρ ἤρτηται τὰ λοιπὰ πάντα.³⁷ In this passage, Plutarch singles out two of the Delphic maxims, γνῶθι σαυτὸν and μηδὲν ἄγαν, and declares that on these two tenets all the rest hang. These parallel passages provide us with an interpretive framework, within which possible meanings of Matthew's redactional conclusion can be intimated.

The phrase, ὅλος ὁ νόμος καὶ οἱ προφῆται, harks back to similar references in 5:17 and 7:12. In the former, the Matthean Jesus says he came not to destroy but to fulfill the Torah and the Prophets. Then the remainder of the passage (5:18-20) lays out the principle of the permanently binding nature of the Torah and the Prophets, especially in terms of salvific efficacy. In the latter, the so-called golden rule is stated: Πάντα οὖν ὅσα ἐὰν θέλητε ἵνα ποιῶσιν ὑμῖν οἱ ἄνθρωποι, οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς ποιεῖτε αὐτοῖς, and then it is followed by an interpretive remark, οὗτος γὰρ ἐστὶν ὁ νόμος καὶ οἱ προφῆται. The Hillelian version of the golden rule in *b. Sabb.* 31a has a similar interpretive remark.³⁸

זו היא כל התורה כולה ואידך פירושה הוא: זיל גמור

(This is the whole Torah and the rest is its commentary. Go and learn.)

So, the two versions of the golden rule, one ascribed to Hillel and the other ascribed to Jesus, seem to identify the non-biblical commandment to treat others as one would treat oneself as representing the whole Torah. It is only reasonable to assume that these two previous occurrences of the phrase, ὁ νόμος καὶ οἱ προφῆται (5:17 & 7:12) have the same meaning. On that basis, Luz correctly says, "The subject is the will of God that is

³⁷ G. Bertam, *Op.Cit.* In this sentence, ἀρτάω should be taken as a synonym of κρεμάννυμι.

³⁸ By providing this parallel here, I am not making any claim that this saying goes back to the historical Hillel. This is as difficult an issue as the question whether Matt 7:12 goes back to the historical Jesus or not. Therefore, the relation, if there was any, between the two versions of the golden rule cannot be conjectured with any degree of certainty. For the caution on the ascription of this Talmudic saying to the historical Hillel, see Phillip S. Alexander, "Jesus and the Golden Rule", in *Hillel and Jesus: Comparative Studies of Two Major Religious Leaders*, (ed. J. H. Charlesworth and L. L. Johns; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 363-88.

proclaimed in both of them and fulfilled by obedience.”³⁹ Now the scope is expanded to include the double commandment of love. The entire Torah and the Prophets is salvifically binding (5:17-20) and it is fulfilled by obeying the will of God that is expressed, first and foremost, in the golden rule (7:12) and the double commandment of love (22:34-40) in the sense that these two laws in a similar manner represent the summary of the whole Torah and the Prophets.

2. Linear development of soteriology in Matthew

Having established the underlying connection among the three key passages that have to do with the Torah and the Prophets (5:17-20, 7:12 & 22:34-40) with regard to the question how it is to be fulfilled, I will now move on to two additional passages that are inherently linked to the ones mentioned above so that I may trace the line of development of the Matthean theme of salvation that is *based upon, not apart from*, the Torah.⁴⁰

Toward the end of the Sermon on the Mount there is a set of sayings of Jesus about what is going to happen on the day of judgment (Matt 7:21-23).⁴¹ In what seems to be a polemical language, the Matthean Jesus says, "Οὐ πᾶς ὁ λέγων μοι κύριε κύριε εἰσελεύσεται εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν" (Matt 7:21a).⁴² It sounds as if this saying is targeting a group of people in early Christianity, whether within the Matthean

³⁹ U. Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary* (trans. J. E. Crouch; Hermeneia: Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 366.

⁴⁰ Cf. Rom 3:21, Νυνὶ δὲ χωρὶς νόμου δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ πεφανέρωται μαρτυρουμένη ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῶν προφητῶν. By citing this passage, I do not mean to imply that Paul's soteriology is antinomian. This is a complicated issue and it goes beyond the scope of this paper.

⁴¹ The text simply says ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ, which is a typical expression for the final judgment day in Jewish apocalyptic literature. Also, the context tells us that it is a reference to the eschatological judgment day. See Dale C. Allison and W.D. Davies, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* Vol. 1 (The International Critical Commentary; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 714.

⁴² Matthew seems to have taken this verse from Q. Cf. Luke 6:46, in which Jesus just says, "Τί δέ με καλεῖτε κύριε κύριε, καὶ οὐ ποιεῖτε ἃ λέγω;" So it is most probably Matthew who converts it into an explicitly soteriological saying through his redaction.

community or without, who actually say that whoever calls Jesus κύριε will enter the kingdom of heaven, just like the earlier saying in Matt 5:17 seems to be a counter argument against the position that the Torah is no longer salvifically binding with the coming of Jesus. Calling Jesus κύριε κύριε most likely, if not necessarily, implies confessing Jesus as their Lord. The closest parallel to the position that the Matt 7:21a alludes to is Rom 13:19, in which Paul says, "πᾶς γὰρ ὃς ἂν ἐπικαλέσῃται τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου σωθήσεται." A very similar statement is also found in Rom 10:9-10: ἐὰν ὁμολογήσῃς ἐν τῷ στόματί σου κύριον Ἰησοῦν καὶ πιστεύσῃς ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου ὅτι ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ἤγειρεν ἐκ νεκρῶν, σωθήσῃ· καρδίᾳ γὰρ πιστεύεται εἰς δικαιοσύνην, στόματι δὲ ὁμολογεῖται εἰς σωτηρίαν.

This is not evidence that Matthew knows and objects to this particular soteriological stance of Paul in Romans. However, it is not inconceivable that Paul may have said the same thing elsewhere and it may have engendered a certain soteriological position that makes confessing Jesus as Lord a necessary condition, or even a necessary *and* sufficient condition, in Pauline churches in the late first century CE, when the Gospel of Matthew was written. Besides, if the provenance of the Gospel of Matthew was somewhere in Syria, as the Matthean redaction in Matt 4:24 might suggest, it is quite likely that Matthew was aware of some key theological ideas in the Pauline churches in Antioch, Syria.⁴³ If that is the case, Matthew 7:21a may be a polemical statement on Matthew's part against what he perceived to be Pauline soteriology that is based on the

⁴³ For a discussion on the relation between the Antioch Church of Acts and Galatians and the Matthean Community and also with the church of the Ignatius of Antioch, see David C. Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 107, 162-63, & 258-262.

belief/confession that Jesus is the Lord.⁴⁴ Having thus rejected the idea of *salvation by faith/confession*, Matthew lays out his own version of theology of *salvation by doing* by reformulating a saying of Jesus that he found in Q:⁴⁵ (Only) the one who does the will of my father in heaven (ὁ ποιῶν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πατρὸς μου τοῦ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς) will enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt 7:21b).

Then follows a dire prediction that on the day of judgment there will be many (πολλοί)⁴⁶ who will claim that they prophesied, cast out demons, and worked miracles in Jesus' name but they will be excluded from the eschatological salvation because they practiced ἀνομία (Matt 7:23). It cannot be ascertained whether the word ἀνομία in this verse, which is typically translated as lawlessness,⁴⁷ has a direct reference to the Torah (νόμος) or not, because the immediate context does not provide enough hint in one way or another.⁴⁸ However, it is at least not implausible that the reader, especially in the context of the Sermon on the Mount, in which the Torah occupies such a central place, would associate this word ἀνομία with some kind of behavior that goes against the Torah (νόμος).⁴⁹ Then what is implied in this passage is the contrast between confessing Jesus

⁴⁴ Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1995), 188, points out that ever since Johannes Weiss it has repeatedly suggested by scholars that the word ἐλάχιστος may represent a wordplay on the name of the apostle Paul. Then Betz cites 1 Cor 15:9, in which Paul himself uses the same word ἐλάχιστος as a word play for his Latin name *Paulus* (L. small). In this line of interpretation, the whole passage (Matt 5:17-19) becomes an implicit critique of Paul as Matthew understood him. The footnote 188n150 also cites 1 Sam 9:21 (LXX) as an OT example of the same pun on the name of Saul.

⁴⁵ N.B. The Q parallel of Matthew in Luke 6:46 is not linked to the notion of entering the kingdom of God.

⁴⁶ Since they call Jesus κύριε and say they invoke the name of Jesus in reference to their lives, they must be followers of Jesus. But a more precise identity of these people cannot be known.

⁴⁷ The phrase οἱ ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν ἀνομίαν in Matt 7:23 is translated in various versions as follows: qui operamini iniquitatem (Vulgate), ye that work iniquity (KJV), you who practice lawlessness (NKJV, NASB), you workers of lawlessness (ESV), you evildoers (RSV, NRSV, NIV), you lawbreakers (NET)

⁴⁸ The word ἀνομία appears 4 times in Matthew (7:23, 13:41, 23:28, 24:12). All of them are directly or indirectly related with eschatological judgment. It is especially important that in Matt 24:12 the word ἀνομία is juxtaposed against ἀγάπη, as if the two are antonyms for each other.

⁴⁹ By this I do not mean that this word ἀνομία has a direct reference to an antinomian faction that Matthew is fighting against. The meaning of this word is too broad for such an interpretation. For an interpretation

as Lord and doing the will of God as it is expressed in the Torah as the condition for entering the kingdom of heaven.

Thus this pericope (Matt 7:21-23) corroborates with Matt 5:17-20 in that both advocate the position that the Torah is salvifically efficacious and binding. Also it refers back to 7:12 and forward to 22:34-40 in that both are presented as the hermeneutical principle of the Torah and the Prophets and as such it legitimately represents the quintessential will of God (7:21) that one has to do in order to enter the kingdom of heaven.⁵⁰

Then, all these passages lead up to the grand finale in the so-called parable of sheep and goats (Matt 25:31-46), which can be regarded as Matthew's own commentary to his earlier statements, especially, 7:21-23, and 22:34-40.⁵¹ This passage is unique to Matthew and it is difficult to determine whether it is Matthew's own composition or from an earlier source.⁵² This passage is located right at the end of the fifth and last great discourse (chs.24-25) and as such it constitutes the climax and conclusion of the eschatological sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew.⁵³ The parallel between Matt

that rejects an antinomian reference of this word, see James E. Davison, "Anomia and the Question of an Antinomian Polemic in Matthew" *JBL* 104 (1985), 617-35. However, Davison admits a possibility of an indirect connection to the Torah in this word: "Matthew's real target in this passage . . . is the problem, common to every age of the church --- and to the OT community of faith --- of laxity in the moral life of believers. Certainly Matthew employs *anomia* with respect to this laxness of behavior because of his strong concern for *nomos*." (pp.634-35, italics original)

⁵⁰ Luz, *Matthew 1-7* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 2007), 380, "Law is the OT will of God that Jesus has established by deed and word. That is, it is the valid OT law that reaches its peak in the love commandment."

⁵¹ Even though this passage is often called the "parable" of the sheep and goats, there is no formal features that characterize parables in it. In its current form, it should be called a prophetic/apocalyptic saying of Jesus. See Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 123. About the inadequacy of calling this passage a parable, see also the following: C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), 63, Aland J. Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 4, Richard T. France, "On Being Ready (Matthew 25:1-46)" in *The Challenge of Jesus' Parables* (ed. Richard Longenecker; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 177-95.

⁵² For the different scholarly opinions for this issue, see Allison and Davies, *Matthew*, Vol.1, 417-18.

⁵³ Allison and Davies, *Matthew*, 416, calls it a "poetic and dramatic climax."

7:21-23 and this passage is clear. Both are a prediction about those who will enter the kingdom of heaven and those who will be denied entry on the last day of judgment. In both passages, the criterion for determining the eligibility for the entry into the kingdom of heaven seems to defy whatever conventional ideas that people had because there is the motif of surprise in their response to the verdict (7:22, 25:37-39, 44).

On the day of judgment, the son of man (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, v.31) comes as the eschatological judge and king (ὁ βασιλεὺς, v.34) in order to judge all the nations (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, v.32).⁵⁴ The king divides them into two groups. He addresses one group as “blessed” (εὐλογημένοι, v.34) and grants entry into the kingdom of heaven, while he addresses the other as “accursed” (κατηραμένοι, v.41) and sends them to the eternal fire (τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον, v.41). The former is also called the righteous (δίκαιοι, v.37) by the narrator, which is a term for those who observe all the commandments of the Torah (Deut 6:25).

The single criterion for this judgment is whether or not they served the least ones (ἐλάχιστοι, v.40 & v.45) when they were hungry, thirsty, strangers, naked, sick, or in prison (vss.35-36). In other words, act of love for other human beings determines one's salvific status at the eschatological judgment. What is important in this passage is that this concept of love as the ultimate criterion for salvation is not an arbitrary assertion by an ideologically driven theological maverick. Rather, it is a well-defined soteriology based on the particular hermeneutics of the Torah clearly articulated in a series of passages that are carefully arranged in a linear fashion throughout the Gospel of Matthew.

⁵⁴ There is a great diversity in scholarly opinion about who are meant by πάντα τὰ ἔθνη. A similar degree of diversity exists for the meaning of the ἐλάχιστοι in vss.40 & 45. For a comprehensive treatment of these issues, see Allison and Davies, *Matthew*, Vol.3. 422 & 428-29. For the patristic interpretations of the same, see Sherman W. Gray. *The Least of my Brothers: Matthew 25: 31-46: a History of Interpretation* (Dissertation Series; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 11-21.

To recapitulate, it begins with the principle of the binding nature of the Torah and the Prophets in terms of salvific efficacy (Matt 5:17-20). Then the entire Torah and the Prophets are summarized as one tenet of the golden rule (7:12) and also as the double commandment of love integrated as one (Matt 22:34-40). Concurrently, Matthew weaves this Torah hermeneutics into a rubric of soteriology by directly connecting it to the eschatological judgment in two passages: 7:21-23 and 25:31-46.

3. Larger implications in Christian soteriology

Identifying the love commandment as a summary, underlying principle, fulfillment, or even a hermeneutical key to the entire Torah (and the Prophets) is not unique to Matthew. As noted earlier, Hillel, according to *b. Sabb.* 31a, gives a version of the golden rule and says, “This is the whole Torah” (זהו היא כל התורה כולה). R. Akiba in *Sipre* on Lev 19:18 says, “This is a great principle in the Torah” (זהו כלל גדול בתורה). Within the NT, the same ethos is found in Rom 13:8-10, esp. v.10 (πλήρωμα νόμου ἢ ἀγάπη), Gal 5:14 (ὁ γὰρ πᾶς νόμος ἐν ἐνὶ λόγῳ πεπλήρωται, ἐν τῷ ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτόν) and James 2:8 (Εἰ μέντοι νόμον τελεῖτε βασιλικὸν κατὰ τὴν γραφήν· ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτόν, καλῶς ποιεῖτε).

What characterizes the Matthean use of this concept is his explicit application of this principle to soteriology. The ensuing soteriology is, first and foremost, rooted and grounded in the Torah as the definitive locus of the words of God: the one who *does* the will of God (ὁ ποιῶν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πατρὸς μου τοῦ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς, Matt 7:21b) enters the kingdom of heaven. This kind of soteriology of Matthew certainly seems to be at odds with the Pauline soteriology of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ in Rom 3:22

(also in Gal 2:16), which is described as *χωρὶς νόμου* (Rom 3:21), because Matthew's soteriology is based on the Torah and its condition is not believing but doing. In other words, it appears to go contrary to the great Reformation doctrine of salvation *sola fide*.

It is not clear whether the concept of *χάρις* is presupposed in Matthew's soteriology or not. Unlike Paul, who uses this noun in key soteriological passages such as Rom 3:24 and Gal 2:21 in his epistles, Matthew does not use it at all. In line with E. P. Sanders' hypothesis, one might say that, as a first century Jew, Matthew must have shared the fundamental ethos of covenantal nomism. At least that might have been the default position in Matthew. However, this is no evidence that it is the case. On the contrary, there is a strong emphasis in Matthew on the motif of denial of any guarantee for salvation. In that sense, Matthew may be closer to IV Ezra,⁵⁵ and, in a lesser degree, to Jubilees, than to the majority of Jewish literature in that the covenant or one's membership with the covenant community, or a Christian community for that matter, does not give guarantee for salvation in Matthew.⁵⁶ In fact, nothing provides guarantee for salvation in Matthew.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, since Matthew does not deal with the question of *χάρις* at the textual level, we should not make a presumption as to whether Matthew's soteriology has the dimension of *χάρις* or not.

Is Matthew's soteriology a "work righteousness" that would inevitably leads to "self-righteousness"? If theologically loaded, this is a difficult question to answer. Value judgment aside, however, one may say, at a descriptive level, that Matthew's soteriology

⁵⁵ E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1977), 409-18.

⁵⁶ Cf. K. Syreeni, *The Making of the Sermon on the Mount. A Procedural Analysis of Matthew's Redactional Activity* (AASF.DHL 44; Helsinki 1987), 211-12. Syreeni says that the Matthean form of covenantal nomism is "defective" because in the Gospel of Matthew righteousness and "getting-in" work against covenantal nomism. In that regard he argues that Matthew broke away from Jewish covenantal nomism.

⁵⁷ Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 379.

does border with the notion of righteousness/salvation that requires *doing* in a tangible sense of the word. On the other hand, it is clear that there is no place for self-righteousness in Matthew. In the final passage of the eschatological judgment, both groups of people are surprised at the respective verdicts, because the *doing* of the will of God, or the lack thereof, on their parts was done completely unbeknownst to them.

In short, Matthew's soteriology formulated through the four key passages dealt with in this paper (Matt 5:17-20, 7:12, 22:34-40, 25:31-46) may or may not presuppose *χάρις* as its foundation, but surely it is anchored on the Torah and therefore thoroughly Jewish. Doing the will of God as it is in the Torah is absolutely critical as a condition for salvation, but it is interpreted in such universal terms as loving other human beings and caring for them that anyone can fulfill it without even being conscious. This radically open scope of salvation is one of the characteristics of Matthew's soteriology. To qualify, Matthew's soteriology is thoroughly Christocentric, as it is clear from Matt 25:3-46 that Jesus is *the* sole eschatological judge who has the exclusive authority to pronounce the verdict to the entire humanity. At the same time, due to the particular Torah hermeneutics of Jesus, salvation is radically open to any human being who has done the will of God in the Torah by loving other human beings, irrespective of their confessional stance or religious affiliation. In that sense, this soteriology of Matthew can be encapsulated by the phrase *sola caritate*,⁵⁸ offering an alternative to *sola fide*, but not necessarily denying *sola gratia*.

⁵⁸ Cf. Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification* (3rd ed.; Cambridge University Press, 2005), 46. In the context of discussing Pauline soteriology, McGrath has the following to say: "Faith alone is merely assent to revealed truth, itself inadequate to justify. It is for this reason that it is unacceptable to summarise Augustine's doctrine of justification as *sola fide iustificamur* – if any such summary is acceptable, it is *sola caritate iustificamur*. For Augustine, it is love, rather than faith, which is the power which brings about the conversion of people." (italics original)

4. Concluding remark on missiological implications

Matthew has a strongly universalistic outlook in his concluding passage of the great commission (Matt 28:16-20). The mandate for the disciples who are being sent to all the nations (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη) is to baptize them and to teach them to keep all that Jesus commanded them (τηρεῖν πάντα ὅσα ἐνετειλάμην ὑμῖν, v.20). One assumes that a critical part of what Jesus commanded his disciples would surely contain the Torah hermeneutics and the ensuing soteriology that we have dealt with in this paper. The exact relation between the radically open soteriology and the universal mission mandate to make disciples of all the nations cannot perhaps be clarified with certitude at the textual level. They seem to be pulling in opposite directions. If the sole condition for entering the kingdom of heaven is love and therefore one's confessional status is a moot question, what is the point of making disciples of all nations and baptizing them in the name of the father and the son and the holy spirit (Matt 28:19)? But on the other hand, there might be a point where the two could be integrated and not regarded as mutually exclusive at a higher level of abstraction. A quest for such integration will be a topic that merits careful reflections from diverse perspectives including missiology, for which this paper could be a dialogue partner.