

In his commentary on Hosea, H. W. Wolff proposed that the divine marriage metaphor is the central metaphor of the entire OT. In Hebrew prophetic books, the metaphor reflected the covenantal relationship between Yahweh and his people. No other metaphor reached as deeply into the heart of this relationship or better described the tragedy of a broken relationship between Yahweh and his people. No other metaphor expressed more fully the abundance of God's grace shown in the promise of covenant restoration and renewal in the eschaton. In this volume, Polish Reformed academic Sebastian Smolarz demonstrates that the divine marriage metaphor is also one of the leading NT metaphors used to describe God's restored covenant relationship with his people, especially in the Book of Revelation.

Smolarz argues for continuity between OT and NT concepts and theologies in general, and for continuity between the Apocalypse and OT material in particular, showing that the Apocalypse has much in common with other parts of the NT. In doing so, he focuses on some Gospel parables and reads them against their OT background. He also examines instances of the divine marriage metaphor in Paul's theological reflections.

The focus of Smolarz' volume is a covenantal reading of the Apocalypse. He argues that the metaphor helps to establish the Apocalypse's *Sitz im Leben*, which he relates to the main conflict between the faithful and the unfaithful within the people of God in the first century CE. His work establishes that the Apocalypse contains not only explicit instances, but also implicit references and many echoes of this covenantal metaphor.

"In this important work Dr. Smolarz provides a thorough, insightful, and compelling presentation of the divine marriage imagery as it appears in both the Old and New Testaments. He shows that the metaphor arose in the prophets as they reflected on the covenant at Sinai and that it informs all of biblical eschatology. Though he covers many portions of Scripture, his lengthy analyses of Hosea and Revelation are especially significant. Smolarz' work not only opens to us a better understanding of biblical eschatology in general, but of Revelation in particular. I am thankful for his work; it has enormously impacted my own research on Revelation."

—KENNETH L. GENTRY, JR.  
author of *Before Jerusalem Fell*

"Sebastian Smolarz has brought to our attention a much neglected theme, whose absence from the church's thinking and understanding has led to its impoverishment. In his fine, extensive, and detailed study, he interacts with the writings of the Old Testament, the intertestamental period, and the New Testament. Important and helpful insights are presented, especially when applied to the book of Revelation."

—TOM HOLLAND  
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## Preface

**T**HIS BOOK IS AN adaptation of my PhD dissertation submitted to University of Wales, Lampeter, U.K., in 2005.

The volume examines one of the central metaphors in the OT. It discusses the origins of the divine marriage metaphor in prophetic reflections on the Sinaitic covenant traditions and traces the biblical development of the metaphor. Consideration is given to the shift within the metaphor, from the marriage of Yahweh and Israel in the OT, to that of Christ and his church in the NT. Jesus, viewed as Yahweh's agent, is seen to fulfill the expectations of second temple Judaism regarding the restoration of divine marriage. This happens according to the general framework of the exodus motif, which provides a methodology for approaching the Hebrew Scriptures by NT authors.

The book proposes that the Gospels and some letters in the Pauline corpus consistently focus on the realized aspect of divine marriage restoration. The metaphor in those writings is often associated with other OT motifs, like those of "eschatological feast" and "remnant," and is thus concerned with eschatological salvation. It provides a basis for redefining Israel in the NT.

The metaphor of divine marriage seems to be central in Revelation. Its proper covenantal understanding is indispensable to explaining John's apocalyptic symbolism. The metaphor can inform the thrust of many passages in the Apocalypse and help to explain the historical setting of Revelation in the first century CE. It sheds light on the book's main conflict (caused by unfaithful Jews) and ultimately reveals judgment on this spiritual promiscuity. However, it also points to the joy of messianic salvation established thereafter. The metaphor also informs the ultimate hope of new creation (Rev 21–22).

The book in general attempts to encourage readers of the Christian Bible to consider more carefully the metaphor of divine marriage while discussing biblical covenant, ecclesiology, and eschatology.

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I received enormous help from scholars, many friends and people, while I was doing my research in Wales. It would be impossible to list them all here. I am particularly indebted to Dr. Thomas S. Holland (Wales Evangelical School of Theology) and Prof. D. P. Davies (University of Wales, Lampeter) for providing valuable directions for this work. Special thanks should go to Blythwood Care and John Laski Trust Fund for their financial support of the project. I am also grateful to those who proof-read my dissertation and encouraged pursuing this study: especially Dr. Philip S. Ross, Rev. Alex Collins, Oli and Nicola Roth, and Alastair Roberts.

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I would particularly like to express my gratitude to Dr. Thomas S. Holland, Dr. Kenneth L. Gentry Jr., and Rev. Marek Kmiec for prompting me to have this work published.

In the light of the evidence advanced by the scholars mentioned above the hypothesis that Christianity adopted Hellenistic ideas has to be seriously challenged.<sup>74</sup> Consequently, a student of NT writings should seriously consider the possibility of OT influence upon the formation of NT concepts and theologies, before paying attention to other possibilities.

### THE APOCALYPSE AND THE SEMITIC MIND

It is generally agreed that the author of Revelation makes frequent use of material from the OT.<sup>75</sup> Whatever the history of interpretation of the Apocalypse is, the recent trend among scholars has been "to investigate the book in the light of its historical setting, in the light of OT symbolism and apocalyptic writings, and in the atmosphere of NT truth."<sup>76</sup> This is certainly due to recognition of the fact that the author of the book was a Jewish-minded person, someone who identifies himself as a prophet (Rev 1:1-3, 10-19; 4:1-2; 17:1-3; 21:9-10; 22:6-7). Beasley-Murray has observed a scholarly consensus recognizing a Semitic mind behind this writing.<sup>77</sup> He says,

The Revelation is the product of a mind soaked in the Old Testament—the allusions to the Old Testament text are too numerous to be indicated by the modern method of using heavy type for Old Testament quotations in the Greek text, and the Seer is so much at home in Jewish apocalyptic literature that he finds it natural to express his theological convictions in this mode of writing.<sup>78</sup>

Kümmel similarly concludes that the author of Revelation was a Jewish-Christian prophet.<sup>79</sup>

74. Of the same opinion is Marshall, "Assessment of Recent Developments," 5.

75. Trudinger, "Old Testament," 82.

76. H. Hailey, in the Foreword to Jenkins, *Old Testament in Revelation*, 9.

77. *Revelation*, 35.

78. *Ibid.*, 37.

79. *New Testament*, 472.



rites.<sup>161</sup> For her own part, Israel, Yahweh's spouse, was not like a goddess of Canaan a passive element in cultus, but she was expected to respond with her love to the love she received from her husband.

### THE DIVINE MARRIAGE METAPHOR IN THE PRE-EXILIC AND EXILIC PROPHETS

Other prophets, following Hosea, also used the metaphor of divine marriage to describe the relationship of Yahweh and his people applying it to their own contexts. The clearest examples of this use occur in the prophecies of Jeremiah, Second Isaiah<sup>162</sup> and Ezekiel. We shall, therefore, briefly examine those occurrences; however, due to the length limitations of this volume, not in same detail as in considering Hosea. For the same reason we will also leave aside questions of textual criticism and base our discussion on the Masoretic Text.

#### *Divine Marriage in Jeremiah*

The first part of the book of Jeremiah (2—25:14) speaks about the guilt and iniquities of Judah, and warns of the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE.<sup>163</sup> Jeremiah employs the metaphor of divine marriage on several occasions, mainly in chapters 2 and 3. It is thought that he depends heavily upon Hosea in using the metaphor.<sup>164</sup> For him Jerusalem, as representative of the people of Judah, is Yahweh's wife, and never representative of the land as in Hosea.<sup>165</sup> He introduces the metaphor in 2:2 and uses it to describe the infidelity of God's people. The happy bridal days of Israel's youth during the wilderness period (vv. 2–3), Jeremiah contrasts

161. Ibid.

162. And perhaps the Third Isaiah. We will, however, not discuss the authorship of the Book of Isaiah because the scope of this volume does not allow us to do so. Instead, we attribute chapters 40–66 to Second Isaiah in order to distinguish them from chapters 1–39 which come from the hand of First Isaiah, the pre-exilic prophet. First Isaiah refers to Jerusalem as a woman (see 1:21; 3:26), but he does not introduce the marriage metaphor as such. See Stienstra, *YHWH Is the Husband*, 162.

163. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 113.

164. See e.g., Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 81–85. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 119.

165. Stienstra, *YHWH Is the Husband*, 162. An individual case of regarding Israel as husband and Yahweh as wife in 2:13 has been proposed by DeRoche, "Two Evils," 369–72. We would, however, suggest that this view is unlikely in the context and that it would need further evaluation by OT experts.

All this happens to her for the greatness of her iniquity and the lewdness of her harlotry (vv. 22, 27).

But Jeremiah offers also eschatological hope of salvation and the restoration of Judah in terms of the marriage metaphor (31:3-5). Yahweh will not only forgive her iniquities, but totally rehabilitate her so that she will again be like a virgin (cf. Hos 2).<sup>175</sup>

### *Divine Marriage in Second Isaiah*

Chapters 40-66 of Isaiah describe the situation of Israel during and after the exile. Isa 50:1 introduces a few characters who play their particular roles in the divine marriage drama: the mother is Zion, representative of the corporate people of Judah, her children are individual Judeans, and her husband is Yahweh, the father of the children.<sup>176</sup> In this passage Yahweh disputes with his children about the charge made by Zion in 49:14.<sup>177</sup> Jerusalem must have charged Yahweh that he has somehow arbitrarily abandoned his people. They regarded their captivity as Yahweh's fault. In response Yahweh, the husband, proves to his children that Jerusalem's own transgression caused the exile.<sup>178</sup> Two rhetorical questions are asked by Yahweh to prove that he did not divorce his wife arbitrarily (although a husband in that patriarchal society could perhaps do that; cf. Deut 24:1-4 and chapter 2 above), nor did he arbitrarily sell his children. Zion has been divorced and her children sold only because of the people's sin. They are in exile only because of their own fault and transgressions.

Another instance of the marriage metaphor is found in 54:1-10. The passage concerns the childless wife: Zion, restored by God's kindness, and the future hope of salvation. The text moves from alienation towards restoration.<sup>179</sup> Once disgraced by her barrenness (as every barren woman in Israel lived in shame; cf., e.g., 1 Sam 2:1-10), the misery of the exile, which emptied the land of its population, the woman will have very many children (vv. 1-3). Scholars are not sure if the barrenness

175. See Stienstra, *YHWH Is the Husband*, 170.

176. Cf. North, *Isaiah 40-55*, 115. Also Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 224.

177. Oswalt, *Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, 317.

178. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 120. Cf. Stienstra, *YHWH Is the Husband*, 170-71.

179. See Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 150.

promote the views of existential philosophy common to Bultmann's school.

The more recent adherents of the method starting with Jülicher and moving through Dodd and Jeremias are the participants of the Jesus Seminar. With the conviction that the parables bring one closely to the authentic voice of Jesus,<sup>39</sup> the Jesus Seminar scholars attempt critically to determine the original sayings of Jesus by moving backwards through the layers of primarily oral tradition, from the beliefs of the primitive church back to Jesus' original utterances.<sup>40</sup> The scholars work on the assumption that both the Synoptics and the Gospel of Thomas are the sources to be used in this task.<sup>41</sup> They assume that the original parable did not contain a conclusion, but teased the hearer with its possible application.<sup>42</sup> It had a plot structure which involved a reversal of roles and never used more words than necessary.<sup>43</sup> The plots themselves were uncomplicated and employed sets of not more than two or three characters.<sup>44</sup>

The Jesus Seminar classified as parables thirty-three of the sayings ascribed to Jesus, some of them occurring exclusively in the Gospel of Thomas.<sup>45</sup> However, they voted only five of the thirty-three to be, very likely, Jesus' original utterances.<sup>46</sup> It would seem that the Jesus Seminar

39. Following Jeremias in this. Funk et al., *Parables of Jesus*, 14.

40. Ibid. 5-6. The layers of the tradition are as follows: (1) Jesus talking about the kingdom of God; (2) Disciples talking about Jesus talking about the kingdom of God; (3) Community talking about Disciples talking about Jesus talking about the kingdom of God; (4) Community talking about itself talking about Disciples talking about Jesus talking about the kingdom of God (see p. 5).

41. Only the original versions of Q and the Gospel of Thomas, which went through the editorial process at least once, can be more reliable than the Synoptics themselves because these two are believed to be of earlier origin (50-60 CE) than Mark (shortly after 70 CE), Matthew and Luke (both composed between 70-90 CE, most probably c. 85 CE). See *ibid.*, 12-13. Q and *Gosp. Thom.* did not contain narrative material which points to less editorial activity than in the case of the canonical gospels. See *ibid.*, 10.

42. Ibid., 17-18.

43. Ibid., 17.

44. Ibid.

45. See *ibid.*, 21.

46. These are: "The Leaven" (Matt 13:13b; Luke 13:20b-21; Thom. 96:1); "The Good Samaritan" (Luke 10:30b-35; Luke 10:36-37); "The Dishonest Steward" (Luke 16:1-8a; Luke 16:8b-9); "The Vineyard Labourers" (Matt 20:1-15); and "The Mustard Seed" (Matt 13:31b-32; Mark 4:31-32; Luke 13:19; Thom 20:2). See *ibid.*, 26.

They used four colors during the voting: red, pink, grey, and black. They signified in turn: red, "Jesus undoubtedly said this or something like this"; pink, "Jesus probably said

guage of their earliest interpreters."<sup>119</sup> This statement of Crossan reminds us of the problem that modern criticism faces on its own assumption. It is unable to present to us an univocal conclusion on the original parables of Jesus. But our approach may point to the legitimacy of the view that the parables, or at least some of them, as we find them in the Synoptics, can be a reflection of Jesus' original utterances retained in their original *Sitz im Leben*. Therefore we propose to proceed by taking the parables, as they are accessible to us, in the gospels' contexts.<sup>120</sup> It seems that only in this way can we reconstruct their probable setting in the life of Jesus. And, of course, our proposal remains open to further verification as we progress in our interpretation.

## THE SYNOPTIC MARRIAGE PARABLES

### *Markan Pericope about Fasting*

We begin our investigation in Mark since most exegetes take this gospel to have been written prior to and been an influence on the other Synoptics. We want to focus particularly on 2:18–20 (cf. pars., Matt 9:14–17; Luke 5:33–35), where Jesus compares the present time to the time of joy during wedding festivities rather than a time of fasting.<sup>121</sup> The claim of scholars has often been that, whereas verses 18–19a refer to the original situation of Jesus, verses 19b–20 were composed by the post-Easter church in order to justify its later practice of fasting.<sup>122</sup> Scholars have also doubted whether at this early point Jesus could have referred to his own death. Further doubt was cast on the verses because the idea of Messiah being a bridegroom is foreign to both the OT and late Jewish literature.<sup>123</sup> Therefore the view of vv. 19b–20 being a later addition has been more favored. But at the same time scholars admit that at least part of the pericope at Mark 2:18–22 was pre-Markan and belonged to

119. Crossan, *In Parables*, xiii.

120. Similarly to Drury, *Parables*, 4.

121. Cf. Martin, *Mark*, 184. But the question demanding an answer is whether this passage indicates a meaning on a metaphorical level.

122. So, e.g., Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, 19, 92, 151. He argues also that v. 18a could be a later addition fashioned on v. 18b (p. 19). Similarly, Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 52 n. 13. Also Langkammer, 117. Cf. Martin, *Mark*, 185.

123. Cf. Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 52. Also his article "νύμφη νυμφίος," IV: 1101, 1103. Cf. Discussion in chapter 4 above.



This additionally dispels doubt that Jesus could refer to his own death at this early stage of his ministry. Both contextual evidence and the OT background of Mark 2:19–20 make a point that Jesus could have been conscious of his approaching death, although his companions did not see this clearly.

It is also noteworthy that the immediate context of Isa 53 is Isa 54:1–10 with its use of the divine marriage metaphor. There, a once miserable wife sent into exile receives an eschatological hope of glory when Zion is restored by her husband Yahweh (cf. chapter 3 on this). The one who was barren rejoices in having many children (Isa 54:2–3). She returns from exile (v. 6) back to the marital union with her compassionate husband and God (v. 7). Therefore, if Isa 53 was really in the mind of the author of Mark 2:19–20 one should not be surprised by the fact that he could easily combine the themes of the joy of bridegroom's companions and the sorrow caused by the bridegroom being taken away. Then also, the lack of any reference to the bride in Mark 2:19–20 does not create unnecessary suspicion. Having in mind the wider context of deuterio-Isaianic prophecy, the bride is the restored Zion/Jerusalem (Isa 54:1–10). And it seems that because of the lack of mention of any bride, Jesus, according to the Markan account, can still remain unrecognized by many. In fact, our entire argument does not necessarily imply that people had recognized Jesus' identity at the point he called himself the bridegroom. The question of their ability to associate Jesus' words with Isaiah's prophecy remains a matter of supposition because of the lack of explicit evidence.<sup>148</sup> Nevertheless, Isaiah's context gives a possible

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- A (2:1–12) The healing of the paralytic (healing of the resurrection type).
  - B (2:13–17) The eating with tax-collectors and sinners (concerns eating).
  - C (2:18–22) The question concerning fasting.
  - B' (2:23–28) The plucking of grain on the Sabbath (again concerns eating).
  - A' (3:1–6) The healing of the man with a withered hand (another resurrection type healing).

All the sections are thematically linked with each other (ibid., 142–47). Dewey recognizes also that the author of this literary structure may have used earlier collections of traditions to construct the whole section. Although some disagree with Dewey's proposal of literary structure, they still see the connection between 2:18–22 with the preceding and following on the basis of thematic unity, i.e., the issue of eating. See, e.g., Guelich, *Mark 1*—8:26, 83–84. But almost all agree that Matt 2:18–20 and 2:21–22 are based on pre-Markan tradition. See p. 108.

148. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 129, remarks that Jesus was enigmatic but it would be very unlikely that his disciples completely misunderstood him. Jesus' ideas corresponded with first-century Judaism.

restores the fortunes of Israel. The time is fulfilled and the exile is over; the bridegroom is at hand.<sup>157</sup> Mark 2:21–22 fits well in this context because it speaks metaphorically of the eschatological time of salvation.<sup>158</sup>

Another thing worth noticing here is that our interpretation of Mark 2:19–20 fits in the broader context of Mark's narrative. He begins his gospel by combining quotations from Exodus, Malachi and the passage in deutero-Isaiah that begins the announcement about God redeeming Israel from exile by a new exodus (Mark 1:2–3; cf. Exod 23:30 and Mal 3:1; Isa 40:3).<sup>159</sup> This may suggest that Mark has put the content of his narrative into the framework of second exodus motif. On this view John the Baptist is the messenger who prepares the way for the Lord's coming to deliver his oppressed people as during the Exodus from Egypt. And although most characters throughout the gospels are puzzled by Jesus' identity (maybe except the demons, cf. 1:24; 3:11; 5:7), the possible echoes of the OT may well indicate who Jesus really is. If somebody properly interprets Jesus' words and actions, it is assumed, he can recognize in him an agent of God's salvation.<sup>160</sup> Furthermore, if the second exodus is the framework in which Jesus' actions need to be interpreted, then we would suggest there is a connection between our passage and Mark 2:15–17. The idea of feasting instead of fasting in Mark 2:19–20 may actually recall the common theme of messianic banquet in second temple Judaism.<sup>161</sup> And the preceding passage describes Jesus dining at Levi's house, which may symbolize the messianic banquet.<sup>162</sup> In fact, the synoptic gospels present a number of instances of Jesus having meals with people which can be regarded as a foretaste of the messianic ban-

157. Wright, *JVG*, 434.

158. Cf. Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 118–19. Jeremias notices that the old age is compared to an old garment so that the "New Age" cannot be patched to the old. And wine is a symbol of salvation which begins through judgment the "New Age" (e.g., Joel 3:13). See also Guelich, *Mark 1–8*:26, 115, 107–8.

159. Matera, "Key to Mark's Gospel," 293. Cf. Watts, *New Exodus in Mark*, 56–91. Watts believes that Mark picks up the idea of new exodus already present in Isa 40–55. Israel had failed to obey God's promises of deliverance from exile through Cyrus and therefore a new eschatological exodus was needed at the eschaton. See Watts, "Consolation or Confrontation," 31–59.

160. *Ibid.*, 296–97.

161. Wright, *JVG*, 532. Cf. Marshall, *Luke*, 222.

162. So, e.g., Lane, *Mark*, 106–7, 113.

quet (e.g., Luke 14:1–23).<sup>163</sup> Thus it is possible that the aim of the author of the controversy narratives in Mark was to connect the themes of messianic banquet at 2:15–17 and divine marriage at 2:19–20 linking in this way two OT motifs loaded with eschatological significance.<sup>164</sup> And as we have already indicated, the narratives could have been gathered together in this way in the collections of early testimonies, though they originate with Jesus himself.

In conclusion, we want to suggest that there exists a way of viewing Mark 2:18–20 as an early instance of marriage metaphor in the NT with the view that it was reshaped according to the framework of second temple Judaism's eschatological expectation. In this case, Jesus acting on God's behalf as his agent takes upon himself the role of the bridegroom of Isaiah's prophecy and indicates that the promised restoration for the repudiated Zion has come. She can finally return from exile. The bridegroom's companions should rejoice in the time of his presence with him which will, however, be interrupted by his violent removal. Thus the picture seems to be that the wedding is in progress, but the element of strangeness has marked the image. There will be a moment of mourning for the loss of the bridegroom.

### *Matthean Parable of the Wedding Banquet*

The parable in Matt 22:1–14 has been the subject of discussion no less than the Markan pericope examined above. Because of the space-limits of this volume, we will discuss only the main points in the debate in the following sections as well as in the footnotes.

Part of the problem, it seems, emerges from comparing Matt 22:1–14 with a similar parable in Luke 14:16–24. A story with a similar theme occurs also in the Gospel of Thomas logion 64. All three parables are alike with regard to the refusal of the invitation to a banquet by the invited guests and their replacement by the next best.<sup>165</sup> However, because of different interpolations in the Matthean version which make it somewhat unnatural, scholars usually conclude that the Lukan account is closer to the original words of Jesus.<sup>166</sup> Nevertheless, it can be argued that parts of

163. Keesmaat, "Strange Neighbours," 274. Cf. Bailey, *Peasant Eyes*, 88.

164. Pace Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, 62. Cf. Lane, *Mark*, 113.

165. Cf. Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 63. Also Manson, *Teaching of Jesus*, 84.

166. Linnemann, *Parables of Jesus*, 7–8, 93, 94 n.k. She believes Matt 22:1–14 is a re-shaping of the Great Supper parable as found in Luke 14:15–24. This becomes obvious

Matthew's parable come from the early source Q.<sup>167</sup> Matthew, it has been claimed, allegorized an earlier parable of a banquet in order to answer the question of why Israel rejected the preaching of the apostles, while the Gentiles received it.<sup>168</sup> Thus the Parable of Wedding Banquet was made to meet the situation of the post-70 CE church.

It also seems fair to take the Matthean parable as independent of Luke's (or the one Luke used to construct his own). Although there are some similarities between the two, there is a possibility that the wedding banquet story of Matthew was told by Jesus on a different occasion.<sup>169</sup> In fact, at a number of points Matthew's version reveals even more similarities to his previous parable of the Wicked Tenants in the Vineyard (21:33–41; cf. 22:2,4 and 21:36; 22:6 and 21:35–36) and the evangelist's teaching in general (e.g., 22:1 cf. 18:23; 22:13 cf. 8:12), than to the Lukan account.<sup>170</sup> Matt 22:1–14, with its main focus on the judgment on Jewish leaders, continues the theme of judgment in Matthew's two previous parables (21:28–31; 21:33–41).<sup>171</sup> Although Luke's parable reveals also a note of judgment on the Jewish leaders,<sup>172</sup> it has its own focal points

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when verses 6–7 and 10–14 are removed from the Matthean passage. Manson, *Teaching of Jesus*, 84, even went as far as to state that the Matthean intrusions make nonsense of the parable (e.g., the feast was ready in v. 4 and it is still ready in v. 8 after the servants have been murdered and an army has been mobilized and sent against the murderers of the king's servants). The Jesus Seminar scholars gave Luke 14:16b–23 color code pink (although 14:24 is black), whereas Matt 22:2–13 was classified as grey. See Funk et al., *Parables of Jesus*, 42–43, 74–75.

167. Martens, "Parables of Judgment," 155, 162–63.

168. Linnemann, *Parables of Jesus*, 93–96. Cf. Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, 175, 195. Also Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 69. Luke 14:15–24 could also well be concerned with similar matter.

169. Blomberg, *Parables*, 237. France, *Matthew*, 311–12. Cf. Wenham, *Synoptic Problem*, 73. Wenham observes that there are not enough similar words in the accounts of Matthew and Luke to assume the same source behind the parables. Pace Fitzmyer, *Luke X–XXIV*, 1052.

170. Cf. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 627–28. Cf. also Drury, *Parables*, 97. Drury claims that "without having read the vineyard parable the marriage feast is not intelligible." Jones, *Matthean Parables*, 403. Also Manson, *Teaching of Jesus*, 86, who says that Jesus liked to duplicate sayings. So "it would not be at all surprising that the parable of the Vineyard should have a companion piece, conveying the same lesson in a different form."

171. Cf. Martens, "Parables of Judgment," 152. Martens observes that Matthew's three parables of judgment in 21:28–22:14 immediately follow three narratives that speak of judgment on the temple and Jewish leaders and nation in 21:12–27.

172. The original guests, by their own choice, shut themselves off from fellowship

on the acceptance of religious and social outcasts (Luke 14:21, 23).<sup>173</sup> The Gospel of Thomas 64 seems to have more in common with Luke 14:15–24, although its ending (sending a servant to the streets) is closer to Matthew.<sup>174</sup> However, the conclusion of logion 64 points more to the author's concern with the material in a negative sense (here it is 'buyers and merchants' who "will not enter the places of [Jesus'] Father"<sup>175</sup>). Therefore, it seems better to take Matthew's parable on its own terms and within its own context. Regardless of its similarities to other versions, it makes and emphasizes its own points, and because only Matthew's version speaks of a wedding, it seems appropriate to leave other versions aside and to deal only with the account of this evangelist. Besides, even if Matthew's parable seems to be unrealistic at times (esp. v. 7), we have already learnt that surrealism is one of the characteristics of Jesus' parables. Therefore the apparent distraction of thought flow in verse 7 cannot stand as an argument against the authenticity of the parable.

If we allow Matthew's story to be independent of Luke's version in all its parabolic strangeness, verses 11–14 do not seem to create an additional problem.<sup>176</sup> They rather naturally extend verses 1–10 explaining that even the admittance of both 'good and bad' to the feast (v. 10) needs to have a further qualification.<sup>177</sup> We shall discuss this further in one of

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with the host. See Bailey, *Peasant Eyes*, e.g., 112. Cf. Marshall, *Luke*, 586. Cf. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 227.

173. Bailey, *Peasant Eyes*, 100, and France, *Matthew*, 311. However, Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 118, observes that the "highways and hedges" in Luke 14:23 and the "streets" in Matt 22:9–10 could possibly refer to Gentile lands.

174. Fitzmyer, *Luke X–XXIV*, 1051. Moule, *Birth*, 112, remarks that logion 64 "invites guesses as to its different setting and purpose and theological outlook."

175. See the whole of logion 64 in Elliott, *Apocryphal Christian Literature*, 143. France, *Matthew*, 312, suggests that the Gospel of Thomas 64 could have preserved at this point Jesus' original teaching that it is impossible to serve both God and mammon (cf. Matt 6:24).

176. Contra Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, 175; and Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 65. See Manson, *Teaching of Jesus*, 35. It does not matter that someone taken from a street cannot wear a wedding garment. A parable should surprise. Pace Linnemann, *Parables of Jesus*, 94 n.k. Cf. Via, *The Parables*, 129. It is often believed that vv. 11–13 make a completely different point from the preceding verses. V. 14 is often taken as another addition that fits neither the Wedding Feast nor the Wedding Garment parables. See Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 628.

177. Hultgren, *Parables*, 346–47. On this view also v. 14 is a conclusion to both vv. 1–10 and 11–13. See also Wright, *JVG*, 287 n. 168.

the following sections. Therefore we propose to focus on Matt 22:1–14 as a coherent unit that resembles the words of Jesus.<sup>178</sup>

The majority of scholars agree on the basic meaning of the successive characters and events occurring in the parable of the Wedding Feast, which addresses Jewish leaders (cf. Matt 21:23; 45).<sup>179</sup> The king stands for God, the son is Jesus, the king's servants are God's messengers,<sup>180</sup> the original invitees are Israelites.<sup>181</sup> The readiness of the wedding banquet

178. Most commentators agree here that at least the main core of the parable comes from Jesus. Cf. Hultgren, *Parables*, 348 n.41. Via argues, contrary to the Jesus Seminar adherents, that both Matt 22:1–10 and Matt 22:11–13 come from earlier tradition (129). He also argues strongly that Matt 22:11–13 is consistent with Jesus' teaching. A similar point about the pre-Matthean origin of 22:1–14 is made by Jones, *Matthean Parables*, 400–410. In the light of our earlier discussion on the parables' nature in general, we see no good reason for dismissing parts of the parable as not being Jesus' original words.

179. Martens, "Parables of Judgment," 153–54, explains that Matthew introduces the chief priests and elders in 21:23 as being leaders 'of the people.' They are representative of the whole nation; therefore the whole nation is under the judgment. Cf. also Swartley, "Banquet People," 181–82.

180. Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 68–69, believes that the first group of servants (v. 3) signifies the prophets, the second (v. 4) refers to the apostles and missionaries sent to Israel, and the third group (v. 8–10) refers to the Gentile mission. However, Martens ("Parables of Judgment," 163) takes the first two groups of servants as referring to the NT apostles and Christian missionaries sent to invite Israel to the royal messianic banquet. Their mission ended with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. The third group of servants refers to the post-destruction apostles and Christian missionaries who go this time to the Gentiles (διεξέδους τῶν ὁδῶν, v. 9). See *ibid.*, 165. It seems, however, that Martens's conclusion is based more on comparing Matthew to Luke's version and his focus on the Gentile mission than on the Matthean context. Comparing Matt 22:1–14 with Matt 21:33–41, it could be concluded that the first two groups of servants refer to OT prophets, whereas the third group stands for the mission of the early church to all nations straight after Jesus' resurrection. So Gundry, *Matthew*, 434, 437. Two groups of servants sent with the king's invitation can be confusing, but it is likely that in the ancient Semitic culture there were two invitations to a banquet: one at the beginning expressing the host's intention of preparing a feast and the second, at the hour of the banquet, announcing that everything was ready. In this case there could be a longer interval of time between the two invitations. Cf. Bailey, *Peasant Eyes*, 94–95. Yet the fact is that in the Matthean parable the invitees refuse the invitation even at the first call. May it not be that the king's servants refers simply to God's messengers of any kind, whether prophets or apostles regardless of the time when they actually addressed Israelites with God's invitation? After all, it seems that the messengers are not as important in the story as the characteristics and the acts of those who have been invited and the king's response to those acts. See also Hultgren, *Parables*, 344. Blomberg, *Matthew*, 327, suggests also that at Matt 13:39 the messengers are the angels so that we cannot be sure who the messengers are. But can Matt 23:34 be of any relevance to this discussion?

181. Blomberg, *Matthew*, 326–27, and Drury, *Parables*, 98. But Swartley, "Banquet People," 179 n. 1, believes that 'the guests' refers to God's covenant people in general.



resembles the Kingdom of God having drawn near.<sup>182</sup> Rejecting God's invitation and killing his servants results in a punitive expedition against the murderers, and destruction of their city (Matt 22:6-7). Although the destruction is viewed by some commentators as referring to the historical event of destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman army in 70 CE,<sup>183</sup> it could be merely a note about the judgment coming on the Jewish leaders.<sup>184</sup> The important factor supporting the latter approach is that it was just the temple and not the whole city of Jerusalem that was destroyed by the Roman army in 70 CE.<sup>185</sup> The significant thing for us, however, is that Matthew's banquet is γάμος, a wedding banquet. Those who link Matt 22:1-10 (11-14) with Luke 14:15-24 immediately conclude that the banquet in both instances refers to the OT idea of the eschatological messianic banquet as found, for example, in Isa 25:6-7.<sup>186</sup> But whereas the 'great banquet' of Luke 15:16 may be echoing the OT motif of eschatological banquet, it is more difficult to see the same in the case of the Matthean wedding banquet. The OT itself does not seem to anticipate a future wedding banquet at the eschaton when Yahweh would fulfill his promises. Thus Matt 22:1-14 taken on its own terms seems to create additional difficulty in terms of the significance of the γάμος.

We would like to suggest, however, that as in Mark 2:18-20, the author of Matthew's Parable of Wedding Feast combines two OT motifs: that of the eschatological banquet with the divine marriage metaphor.

182. Dodd, *Parables of the Kingdom*, 121; Hultgren, *Parables*, 344. Cf. Blomberg, *Matthew*, 327.

183. E.g., Linnemann, *Parables of Jesus*, 95-96, 164 n. 17, and Martens, "Parables of Judgment," 154, 163-64. On this view, it is easy to see why exegetes prefer a post-70 CE construction of Matt 22:1-14. Then, they can claim that verse 7 looks to the destruction of the city *ex eventu*.

184. Gundry, *Matthew*, 436-37, believes that destroying the city echoes Isa 5:24-25, just as Isa 5:1-7 undergirds the Parable of the Tenants in Vineyard. Therefore it is not necessary to view the destruction as Matthew's retrospection on Jerusalem in 70 CE. Matt 22:7 is rather a dramatic figure of judgment "drawn from Isaiah's prediction of a past destruction of Jerusalem, a judgment consisting in God's rejection of the Jewish leaders resident in that city," (437). Although, it is still possible that after 70 CE the parable in Matt 22:1-14 was viewed as allusion to the historical event of Jerusalem's destruction, the destruction of the city may simply mean that God is judging not only Jewish leaders, but their whole nation for their faults. Cf. Schrenk, "ἐκλεκτός" IV: 186.

185. Blomberg, *Matthew*, 327-28, 328 n. 88. Cf. France, *Matthew*, 312. This interpretation then remains consistent with Jesus' prediction of destruction of the Temple in Matt 24:2, not of the whole city.

186. Swartley, "Banquet People," 187, and Hultgren, *Parables*, 344.

As such, this is not unique in the gospel of Matthew. The two concepts have previously been linked at 9:14–15,<sup>187</sup> granted our explanation of the Controversy over Fasting is relevant. It is a fact often overlooked by NT scholars that deuter-Isaiah also develops the motif of an eschatological banquet at 55:1–2 and 65:11ff.<sup>188</sup> We have already observed in discussing Mark 2:18–20 that subsequent chapters of deuter-Isaianic prophecy could be the source of early testimonies and also a part of the broad redemptive-historical perspective on which both Jesus and the NT writers operated.<sup>189</sup> In this case it does not seem strange that the wedding feast could stand side by side with the idea of an eschatological banquet. This would resemble two different plots of the same Isaianic utterance of chapters 54 (which employs the divine marriage metaphor in vv. 1–10) and 55 (which refers to the banquet in vv. 1–2). We cannot be sure that these chapters were certainly in the background of the material in Matt 22:1–14, but this proposal fits the wider Matthean context and appears to be consistent with our methodology.

The point of Matthew's parable would therefore be that Israelites who were initially invited to the wedding feast, i.e., God's kingdom in the eschatological age of salvation (cf. Matt 8:11),<sup>190</sup> are met by the king's anger instead (cf. 21:41). This followed their refusal to accept his invitation and their murder of his messengers. It is worth noting that this idea of rejection was not foreign to deuter-Isaianic prophecy. Chapter 65, for instance, speaks of Yahweh revealing himself to those who "did not seek him" (v. 1) and punishing those who were his but forsook him (vv. 11–12). Then, only the faithful servants of Yahweh would eat his meal (v. 13–16). Although we cannot press this point too far, it suggests at least that for somebody steeped in OT prophecy, a note on God judging his people and their leaders would be by no means strange. Jewish leaders will not partake of God's meal, because they have ignored the invitation to his eschatological meal which is ready (Matt 22:4–6), so they have proved themselves unworthy (v. 8; cf. 3:8; 10:10–11, 13, 37–38).<sup>191</sup>

187. Cf. also Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 629.

188. But see Swartley, "Banquet People," 187.

189. Cf. chapter 1. We have indicated there that, according to Dodd, the testimonies came especially from Isaiah, besides Jeremiah and the minor prophets as well as the Psalms.

190. Cf., e.g., Hultgren, *Parables*, 344.

191. Cf. Swartley, "Banquet People," 181. Cf. also Jones, *Matthean Parables*, 404–5. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 630, observes that vv. 4, 8–9 give a hint of realized eschatology.

conclusion. If destroying the city refers not to Jerusalem in 70 CE, but to God's judgment on the Jewish leaders in general, then verses 11–13 may also refer to this general judgment on Jewish leaders who do not produce good fruit, and do not possess the works of righteousness (cf. Matt 3:7–10, some of them try to enter the kingdom for fear of the coming judgment; Matt 21:34, 43; 25:26). It could be said that, like the Pharisees and Sadducees in chapter 3, the “bad” Jews come to the wedding feast, entering the kingdom (through baptism?), because they are threatened by the coming judgment. They want to enter it, however, on their own terms (Matt 11:12 cf. Luke 16:16), and there is lack of righteousness in their lives. Throwing them into “outer darkness” does not have to symbolize the final judgment in the future but can refer generally to exclusion from the Kingdom of Heaven (cf. 8:12).<sup>203</sup> Then, like the destruction of the city, it could find its historical counterpart and asseveration in the events of 70 CE.

The parable finishes with a general remark in v. 14, “many are invited, but few are chosen,” that fits both verses 1–10 and 11–13.<sup>204</sup> The sentence can simply mean that a large number of people have been invited to the feast (both the “bad and good”), but not all of them will qualify at God's judgment.<sup>205</sup> However, the phrase *οἱ ἅγιοι δὲ ἐκλεκτοί* has long troubled exegetes, who have made different proposals concerning its meaning.<sup>206</sup> But we believe that the following suggestion can contribute to the understanding of this puzzling statement. If the author of the parable did have in mind both the metaphor of divine marriage and the texts relating to the eschatological banquet in deutero-Isaiah, another

203. On this approach Jeremias's note of the parable being an outline of the plan of redemption fails (cf. *Parables of Jesus*, 69).

204. E.g., France, *Matthew*, 313–14, Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 632, and Hultgren, *Parables*, 348. But, negatively, Via, *The Parables*, 129.

205. This is to say that within the church there are people who in the end will not qualify at the last judgment. But this view can be challenged. See below.

206. France, *Matthew*, 314, remarks that the word “chosen” by itself points to the fact that somebody's fate does depend on somebody else. Hultgren, *Parables*, 348, points out that the word “chosen” implies that “one's status can never be taken for granted.” Only those who remain after the final judgment can be called the “chosen.” Blomberg, *Matthew*, 329–30, Gundry, *Matthew*, 440–41, and Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 632, all seem to struggle with giving an exact meaning to the phrase. Instead each of them attempts to explain his own view of God's election. Hagner mentions also that in 24:22, 24, 31 the word *ἐκλεκτοί* becomes shorthand for Christ's disciples (see p. 632). But again this conclusion does not bear a direct significance to the understanding of 22:14.

22:1–14. But as such it does justice to the wider context of Matthean parable and also explains the sources behind it, i.e., mainly Isaiah, while at the same time supporting unity of the whole passage. The approach also proposes that there is a way of looking at the Parable of the Wedding Banquet as resembling Jesus' earlier teaching.

Thus, as far as the marriage metaphor is concerned, the eschatological marriage feast seems to have begun, but a number of Jews do not enter it and fall under God's judgment because of their disobedience. Others, who try to enter the wedding unqualified, perhaps by their own methods, are excluded. But the faithful remnant of the King enjoys his long-promised salvation expressed in the wedding banquet symbolism.

### *Matthean Parable of the Ten Maidens*

Matt 25:1–13 is another instance of a parable employing the wedding motif. The parable is unparalleled in the other Synoptics, although many scholars recognize that its first part resembles Luke 12:35–38 and that verses 10–12 have similarities with Luke 13:25–27.<sup>210</sup> In Mark a theme related to this parable of Matthew occurs in 13:33–37. Regardless of the similarities of the two passages, "Matthew appears to be dependent on his own special source for the parable."<sup>211</sup> Therefore, one of our aims in this part of our study will be to suggest a possible background for this parable. Besides this, our main focus will be not on the interrelationship between different synoptic parables, but on the plot in Matt 25:1–13.<sup>212</sup>

an invitation (on the assumption that they are also the Jews). However, a proposal can be made that at the beginning the parable refers to those who were strongly convinced of their right to participate in the Kingdom of God. They thought they would be saved, while at the same time rejecting God's way (=invitation). They were convinced of this being at the same time unworthy in God's eyes. The other group, 'the bad,' had a sense of God's coming judgment so they tried to join the community of the invited celebrating the eschatological salvation in their own ways. But they were not faithful and therefore not chosen; their clothes were improper.

210. Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, 118, stresses that the material gathered in Luke 12:35–38 is secondary and came late after the primitive church started to recognize the delay of the parousia. Therefore Matt 25:1–13 is also late. Cf. Linnemann, *Parables of Jesus*, 126–27, and Jones, *Matthean Parables*, 443.

211. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 727.

212. Marshall, *Luke*, 536, denies Luke 12:35–36 has any reference to the messianic banquet because this account follows the parousia. But for an opposite opinion see Green, *Luke*, 501. See below on the issue of reading such passages in the context of Jesus' alleged teaching on his own parousia.

give a possible solution to the problem of interpreting Matt 25:1-13 in its context, as indicated earlier.

We have already noted that scholars have interpreted Matt 25:1-13 in the context of chapter 24. While agreeing on the approach, we must set aside the conclusions because of our different view of Jesus' eschatology. It also seems right not to dismiss the content of chapter 23 while interpreting our passage. We take the point of Jeremias<sup>238</sup> that τότε in verse 1 of the Parable of the Ten Virgins refers back to 24:44 and 24:50 with their mention of the parousia of the son of man. Likewise, verse 13 of the parable repeats the command to be watchful while waiting for the imminent parousia.<sup>239</sup>

The kingdom of heaven in the parable is compared to the situation of ten young women,<sup>240</sup> who awaited the arrival of the bridegroom.<sup>241</sup> The number ten does not have any further significance, since it is just "a favourite round number to describe a fair-sized group of people."<sup>242</sup> The identification of the maidens themselves, however, seems more complicated.<sup>243</sup> Although almost all commentators have had no difficulty in viewing them as disciples of Jesus on the basis of the Matthean context (cf. 9:15; 24), it seems that the background for their identity goes beyond Matthew to the OT. Chavasse<sup>244</sup> has claimed that the virgins (παρθένοι) echo Ps 44:14LXX (=45:15 Eng. tr.), which speaks of girls (παρθένοι)

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and *Its Eschatology*, edited by W. D. Davies and D. Daube, 261-80. Cambridge: 1956; and Gaston, L. *No Stone on Another*, 483-87. Leiden: 1970. References given by France, *Jesus and the Old Testament*, 229-30.

238. *Parables of Jesus*, 51.

239. Cf. *ibid.* But pace Jeremias on the point that v. 13 misses the original meaning of the parable.

240. The basic meaning of παρθένος is "young woman who just reached maturity," therefore "virgin." But there is no special emphasis on virginity per se. See Delling, "παρθένος," V: 826-37.

241. Cf. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 728. The kingdom is compared to a wedding, not the virgins, and what they did in this context. Cf. Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 174

242. Linnemann, *Parables of Jesus*, 124. She adds that "the precise proportion of one to one is not important to the story: the numbers are brought in only to express graphically the division into two groups" (125). Pace Ford, "Foolish Scholars," 115-16, who thinks that 10 refers to the circles of study as at Qumran.

243. Unless one automatically reads υἱοὶ τοῦ νυμφῶνος of Mark 2:19//Matt 9:15 into παρθένοι of Matt 25:1. Of course, some scholars have still denied any allegorical significance regarding the maidens. Cf. Delling, "παρθένος," V: 834.

244. *Bride of Christ*, 56.

attending the bride. It is possible that Ps 45 has messianic overtones and that the bride is the Messiah's bride,<sup>245</sup> but this still does not solve the problem of the identification of the maidens. Certainly, the emphasis in the Psalm is on the king and later on the princess, but by no means on her companions. On the other hand, the word *παρθένος* with its cognates was used in the LXX on a number of occasions to designate Israel (e.g., Isa 37:22; Jer 18:13; 31:4=38:4LXX; 31:21=38:21LXX; Lam 2:13). The nation was addressed and known as virgin Israel. It is also interesting that Isa 62:5a uses the word in a simile of Yahweh marrying the virgin Zion: "As a young man marries a virgin (*παρθένος*), so shall your builder<sup>246</sup> marry you." We have already noted that Isa 62 and other parts of Isaiah and Jeremiah could have been included in early testimonies originating with Jesus and used by the writers of the NT (cf. chapter 1 above). In addition, it is worthwhile observing that the word *παρθένος* was earlier used by Matt at 1:23, while quoting Isa 7:14. This for exegetes puzzling verse in Isaiah uses the word *παρθένος* in the LXX to describe a maiden giving birth to Immanuel, which signifies Yahweh's salvation. Although usually central to the debate on the virgin-birth of Jesus, Isa 7:14 can alternatively be read metaphorically, in which case *παρθένος* can be viewed corporately as the daughter Zion (cf. 1:8; 10:32; 16:1; 22:4).<sup>247</sup> The examples of the corporate use of *παρθένος* to describe the people of Israel have been discussed above. Therefore, the case is not peculiar unless other readings are preferred *à priori*. Simultaneously, Immanuel is also a corporate figure referring to the remnant, Isaiah and his followers in the nearest context (8:11–18).<sup>248</sup> Thus the meaning of Matt 1:23 is also

245. E.g., Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 340–41. Cf. Delitzsch, *Psalms*, II: 72–90. The strong argument is that this Psalm could not have been included in the canon unless it had been understood messianically. Later, the letter to the Heb 1:8 transfers Ps 45:6–7 into the Christ hymn linking it with the Messiah-figure. See Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 457. Chavasse, *Bride of Christ*, 57, insists that the parable comes after Jesus has ridden into Jerusalem as the King of Ps 45, to claim his bride. But then he must distinguish between the bride and her attendants concluding, with no support, that they refer to the Gentiles.

246. On the rendering of the word בַּיִת see chapter 3 on Isa 62:5a.

247. All the linguistic tensions in the verse as well as in its context point to a metaphorical rendering. So Webb, "Zion in Transformation," 82. See also Rice, "Immanuel Prophecy," 222–25. See also p. 226 n. 6 & 7 for further references.

248. Rice, "Immanuel Prophecy," 222. Rice explains that "In the default of the king [Ahaz] and the nation at large Isaiah and his followers become the remnant. Whereas YHWH is no longer with Ahaz and Judah or 'this people,' it is precisely the point of the sign given to Ahaz that he is with Isaiah and those who have said 'Amen' to his ministry.



corporate: the virgin is Israel and the child is the new faithful remnant, a movement within Israel started by Jesus.<sup>249</sup> Thus Matthew himself could have created a good basis for understanding the significance of παρθένος in his Gospel. And, having in mind the metaphor of divine marriage in the OT, one need not be surprised that a metaphorical figure can refer to a nation as a collection of all its individuals. Also, if Isaiah and Jeremiah were behind the sources of testimonies originating with Jesus and used by the authors compiling the stories about him, then it is possible that the word παρθένος already had strong connotations for a Jewish mind and immediately recalled to it Israel as a maiden. Therefore, it is likely that Jesus himself employed this widely recognized title for Israel in his teaching, and that the author of Matthew later mirrored this teaching with its characteristic symbolism. Taking all this into account, we suggest that the ten maidens in Matt 25:1–13 refer neither to the bridegroom's nor to the bride's attendants, but stand together as the παρθένος, people of Israel. After all, it is the bride who is important to the bridegroom and vice versa. However, for the parable's authorial purpose the maidens had been divided in two groups: the foolish ones and the wise ones, making her plural παρθένοι.<sup>250</sup> This immediately solves the problem of who the bride is in the parable: she is Israel, but this Israel needs to have a further qualification, because there are two different groups within God's

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They are the only ones in Israel on this occasion who can say, 'God is with us.' Ahaz and Judah have even forfeited their right to the land of Judah; it has become Immanuel's land (8:8b). Isaiah and his disciples live amidst, but apart from their fellowmen as a visible and tangible reminder to the king and the nation of their failure and as a witness to the power that comes through repentance and faith (8:16–18). The 'disciples' in 8:16 and the 'children' in 8:18 are synonymous; collectively they are Immanuel." I have changed slightly the format of Rice's Scripture reference and quotation marks. Cf. Webb, "Zion in Transformation," 82.

249. Rice, "Immanuel Prophecy," 226.

250. Manson, *Sayings of Jesus*, 243, suggested earlier that the place of the bride was taken by the maidens, but he came to this conclusion only after reading the rest of the NT into the parable. He explains further (244) that the bride, who is only conjectured, stands for Israel, whereas the ten virgins stand for the Gentile converts. The wise are those who conform to the Jewish-Christian standard of Law (lamps and oil stand for the Law). But this seems to undermine his earlier conclusion. And then one is left with the impression that the Gentile converts are not coming in as a part of the new Israel, but as attendants only. How then do the attendants become the bride later in the early church's thought? Moreover, we cannot see why the issue of Gentiles should at this point replace the focus on Israel. Nevertheless, Manson's case shows that our proposal may be a step forward in solving a few exegetical difficulties, as well as those pointed out by Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 174–75.

wise maidens, experience God's salvation, the blessings of his renewed covenant. Although introduced earlier by Jesus' ministry, this salvation is established amidst the events of 70 CE when the main obstacle in the way of God's kingdom had been destroyed.

### JOHN THE BAPTIST'S TESTIMONY TO JESUS IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL

John 3:27–30 records the final testimony to Jesus by John the Baptizer. The immediate context concerns the issue raised by John's disciples about Jesus' baptizing apparently as John's rival.<sup>266</sup> In part, the issue dealt with the fact that Jesus was drawing greater crowds than John (v. 26).<sup>267</sup> This might have caused jealousy among the disciples of John.<sup>268</sup> The Baptizer's response to them is once again to set Jesus' superiority over against his own position (vv. 29–30; cf. 1:26–27). As he himself expressed it, Jesus "must become greater," and he "must become less" (3:30).<sup>269</sup> He had already testified in a similar way to the Pharisees that he is not the Messiah (1:25; cf. 1:28), but someone far inferior to him (1:27). Here, in the passage under consideration, he compares himself to the φίλος τοῦ νυμφίου, a special friend of the bridegroom. Most of the commentators

266. Although the gospel right from the beginning (1:6–8) intends to show that John is Jesus' witness, not a rival. Cf. Moody Smith, *Gospel of John*, 23.

267. Cf. Schnackenburg, *John*, I: 414.

268. They seem not to have understood earlier. However, their exact motives are not clear. See *ibid.* Cf. Smalley, *John*, 99.

269. But see Lee, *Fourth Gospel*, 58–60. She claims that vv. 29–30 are not concerned with John's personal humility. They rather focus on the superiority of the new religion represented by Jesus (which is symbolized by his Spirit baptism) over the old one, represented by John (symbolized by his water baptism). This approach enables her to explain why John 3:22–30 was placed directly after the Nicodemus episode: John the Baptist is ready to make the transition from the old to the new and therefore is opposed to Nicodemus who is not able to do so. Thus verses 28–30 imply also the proper answer expected from Nicodemus. But it should not be forgotten that John the Baptist as a historical person is the forerunner of Jesus announcing the coming of God's kingdom. Thus the two characters are not opposed to each other as representatives of two religions, but rather working towards the same end, introducing the kingdom of God. In this view, John is the forerunner of Jesus, the one sent ahead of the Messiah (cf. 1:23). Therefore it would be difficult to see John with his baptism as symbolizing "the ending of the old era" rather than beginning a new one, as Jesus' older colleague. Nevertheless Jesus' baptism, which is linked with the one in the Holy Spirit, expresses the idea of its superiority over John the Baptist's one. Cf. Dodd, *Fourth Gospel*, 310–11; and Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 197. In the narrative sequence there is a change of scene in 3:22.

agree that John compares himself to the best man in relation to Jesus, the bridegroom. As such, he can by no means lay any claim to the bride so, in fact, John is saying he is the last who could compete with the bridegroom (cf. chapter 2 on best-man).<sup>270</sup> Thus the majority of exegetes have recognized in John 3:29 a short parable.<sup>271</sup> However, some have denied any allegory about Jesus and his bride in the verse.<sup>272</sup> This immediately helps them to solve the problem of identifying the bride in the sentence, ὁ ἔχων τὴν νύμφην νυμφίος ἐστίν (3:29a). But others have suggested that the metaphor of Jesus being the bridegroom of his bride, the messianic community, was intended on the lips of John the Baptist.<sup>273</sup> Then, some conclude, this may be the first historical instance of the use of the metaphor of Jesus being the bridegroom of his community, the bride.<sup>274</sup> Such a remark, however, raises the question of the relation of the fourth gospel to the Synoptics as well as of the gospel's use of early traditions. We shall mention the issues very briefly as the space-limits of this work do not allow us to discuss them more comprehensively.

In general, NT scholarship has long agreed that the fourth is the latest of the canonical gospels. Although it shows certain similarities to the Synoptics, it also shows differences from them.<sup>275</sup> There have been attempts to make John the evangelist dependent on at least one of them,<sup>276</sup> but with no great support among contemporary NT critics. It is rather proposed that John had access to a tradition similar and/or parallel to that behind the Synoptics.<sup>277</sup> Thus the tendency has been to view the fourth gospel as a development of tradition-material similar to that used by the Synoptists.<sup>278</sup> It is believed that the gospel at many points shows

270. Cf. van Selms, "Best Man," 74; also Carson, *John*, 212.

271. E.g., Barrett, *John*, 185; Schnackenburg, *John*, I: 416, who strongly rejects any claim that it could be similar to the ἱερός γάμος of "pagan Hellenism." See *ibid.*, I: 417.

272. So, e.g., Beasley-Murray, *John*, 53; Schnackenburg, *John*, 416.

273. So Barrett, *John*, 184, Carson, *John*, 211, Carmichael, "Marriage and the Samaritan Woman," 333.

274. So Batey, *Nuptial Imagery*, 48 n.2, 50, arguing that it is very likely that John 3:22-30 preserves a pre-canonical tradition.

275. See Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 23-33, for a fairly detailed list of problems concerning the inter-gospels relationship. Cf. Lindars, *John*, 9; Smalley, *John*, 13-40.

276. Barrett, *John*, 108, claims that John certainly knew Mark. Also Robinson, *Redating*, 254.

277. Lindars, *John*, 13-14, and Smalley, *John*, 38, 40.

278. See Dunn, "John and the Synoptics," 304-5. See also Lindars, *John*, 28.

the marks of later theological reflection, some of which emerged from issues significant for the contemporary church. Therefore the tradition has been shaped to fit that particular *Sitz im Leben*. Some have even proposed that the gospel was composed in three different stages by different authors and that this helps in classifying different parts with their theological ideas.<sup>279</sup> However, this remains largely a matter of speculation.

Parallel to the discussion on John's relation to the Synoptics, there have been a growing number of arguments for John's dependence on Jewish rather than on Hellenistic thought.<sup>280</sup> This shift in emphasis was partly due to comparative study of the gospel and the documents discovered at Qumran.<sup>281</sup> Thus in recent years practically nobody denies John's dependence on the OT, if not directly, then through the sources accessible to him.

As a result of the two debates mentioned above, the fourth gospel has been recognized as another, supplementary, source of reconstructing the history of the gospel as well as of Jesus' life.<sup>282</sup> But, more recently, there has been a tendency to disregard earlier attempts to reconstruct the historical events in the gospel.<sup>283</sup> Consequently literary critics focus instead on the stylistic unity of the gospel interpreting it on its own terms. However, even among them there has been an honest recognition of the limitations of their methodology, apart from form criticism, and therefore also of the history of traditions.<sup>284</sup> Hence, one cannot easily dismiss questions of the historical in studying the gospels.

The problem for our study lies in the fact that, whereas the parables in the Synoptics have gained a general consensus of scholars concerning their resemblance to Jesus' original utterances, John's material raises more doubts about the date and origin of its particular traditions. So, although Batey claims that we probably have the earliest instance of the use of nuptial imagery in the NT at John 3:29, one still wonders if this is not a later reflection on the Baptist's testimony in the face of the later situation of the church and its already developed understanding of the Jesus event (vv. 31–36 suggest this conclusion). One could conclude that

279. Smalley, *John*, 119–20.

280. Davies, "Jewish Background," 43–64. Dunn, "John and the Synoptics," 304.

281. Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 5.

282. Cf. Moody Smith, *Gospel of John*, 20.

283. Cf., e.g., Hengel, "Wine Miracle at Cana," 90–93.

284. See esp. Stibbe, *John*, 11.

the statement, "The one who has the bride is the bridegroom," presupposes previous knowledge of the identities of the two.<sup>285</sup> Whatever later additions and interpretations of history there may be in the Synoptics, their parables present to us Jesus only subtly suggesting that he as the Messiah fulfils also the promises of Yahweh concerning his new eschatological marriage. His disciples do not appear to fully grasp this at that time. It seems that the Synoptics carry the reader over to the past when not all was so clear. But John the Baptizer's testimony in John 3:29 seems bold, as though he and others exactly know the identity of the bride and from this knowledge he proceeds to identify the bridegroom.

The other problem emerges from the difficulty of establishing a chronology in the fourth gospel. Because the exact sequence of the events cannot be established in the evangelist's account, one has difficulty in fitting the testimony into the Synoptics' chronology. One cannot be sure if it came, for instance, before or after Jesus' response to the fasting controversy. One cannot then assume that the Baptist's words about Jesus being the bridegroom are indeed the earliest use of the nuptial imagery in regard to Jesus. Still another difficulty, maybe less important, comes from the fourth evangelist's reference to the bride as νύμφη. Whenever Paul or the Synoptics mention the bride in nuptial metaphor, they use the word παρθένος. But the word νύμφη and its cognates are used metaphorically in the NT only in John 3:29 and three times in the Apocalypse (21:2, 9; 22:17). One can but ask if this supports the late origin of John 3:29?

On the other hand, the case for the pre-canonical origin of the tradition behind the Baptist's testimony can also be supported by powerful arguments. The common reason for this view is that the Baptist's humility in John's gospel may indicate the most primitive tradition. Once the riddle of his identity was resolved in later Christian thought, John the Baptist started to be highly estimated: he was Elijah (Matt 11:14; 17:10-13; Luke 1:17).<sup>286</sup> Thus the fourth gospel reports an early stage when the Baptist denied that he was an Elijah. However, one could still remark that since the Baptist had to reject being compared with Elijah, there was a tendency among people to recognize in him the promised prophet (1:21, 25). So the argument can be pushed in a different direction. Since

285. Or the metaphor of Jesus being the bridegroom of his bride in general. Barrett, *John*, 186, remarks that John 3:29 may well be dependent on the synoptic tradition as found in Mark 2:19-20 and parallels.

286. Smalley, *John*, 26.

people did recognize in the Baptist somebody of Elijah's stamp, while he is presented as somebody who avoids this sort of conclusion, one could ask whether this does not point to a late reworking of the tradition. An editor at any stage of the gospel's redaction may simply have changed the emphasis in order to set the identity of Jesus against that of the Baptist, possibly in the face of difficulties that arose concerning the exact relationship between the two, later in the first century.<sup>287</sup>

Another point worth considering here is that scholars support the claim that John the Baptist knew the Hebrew Scriptures.<sup>288</sup> Therefore he had at hand the material to develop the OT marriage metaphor alongside the messianic expectations of second temple Judaism. It could be argued that the Baptizer did recognize Jesus' identity as Messiah and therefore applied to him OT passages among which there were also those referring to the eschatological marriage. Even the use of the word *νύμφη* instead of *παρθένος* does not create particular problems, since the former also occurs in the Septuagint in connection with divine marriage (cf. Isa 61:10; 62:5; Jer 2:32). In fact, Isa 62:5LXX links the two terms in referring to the bride Israel. Thus, it is possible that the two words could have been used interchangeably to refer to Israel as Yahweh's bride. And as such they could have been available to John the Baptist.<sup>289</sup> While this argument cannot be taken on its own, with no regard to what was said above, going back to the OT background could solve the problem of the bride's identity in John 3:29. However, this does not help us in determining whether the Baptist's identification of Jesus as the bridegroom comes from pre-Easter sources. Therefore one cannot be really sure if this use of the nuptial imagery for Jesus as the bridegroom is the earliest one. We cannot also simultaneously state that the testimony of John the Baptist has any influence on our understanding of the marriage metaphor in the

287. Cf. the remark of Dunn, "John and the Synoptics," 305, who believes that, "for some reason John has developed the Baptist tradition to reduce the Baptist's role to that of witness to Christ, while enlarging that role itself." See also Beasley-Murray, *John*, lxxxix, who suggests that such an emphasis might have emerged primarily out of the conflict between disciples of John the Baptist and Christians (cf. Acts 19:1-7) and later perhaps out of Jewish polemic against Christians.

288. E.g., Barrett, *John*, 185-86. However, more evident is the use of the LXX in the fourth gospel in its completed form. *Ibid.*, 22.

289. We have already noticed that deutero-Isaiah could have been a source of early testimonies for NT writers. But this does not imply that they were as early as to be available to John the Baptist. However, if John knew the Hebrew Scriptures, second-Isaiah's imagery could have been available to him.



covenant of Sinai is being renewed. This suggests realized eschatology which Jesus brings to fulfillment as the agent of Yahweh, the Messiah.<sup>297</sup>

To sum up, we can conclude that although probably not dependent on the historical account of the Synoptics, John 3:22–30 reveals similar ideas to those found in them. It speaks also of Jesus as the bridegroom of his bride, at the same time redefining her identity (since the reunited Israel may be in view). It also gives hints of realized eschatology, as fulfilled by Jesus. Finally, it may also suggest that deutero-Isaiah was a source of early testimonies for NT authors. On the other hand, the proposal that John the Baptist's last testimony about Jesus in John 3:27–30 is the earliest historical use of the nuptial imagery in connection with Jesus, cannot be sustained in the face of the difficulties pointed out above. If the parables of Jesus are assumed to reflect Jesus' original words, John's gospel as such seems a later theological reflection on the traditions about Jesus. Nevertheless, whichever opinion on the dating of John the Baptist's testimony gains more favor among NT scholars, John 3:29 does not add to or change the primary conclusions derived from the use of the marriage metaphor in the canonical gospels. It is more probable that it was Jesus himself who first pointed out that he is the bridegroom.

### THE SHIFT IN THE DIVINE MARRIAGE METAPHOR

Before closing this chapter, we would like to discuss the problem raised already at the end of chapter 3, i.e., of the transition in the metaphor from Yahweh being the husband of Israel in the OT to Jesus being the bridegroom of his bride in the NT. Our study of Jewish literature from the intertestamental period did not help us in tracing such a development in the metaphor of divine marriage (see chapter 4 above). We have seen that the Messiah was never depicted as the bridegroom of a people prior to the NT. Therefore this issue needs further discussion now, in the light of our study of the gospels.

It has been a few decades since Batey<sup>298</sup> advanced his view on the shift in the metaphor. He believed that under the impact of apocalyptic thought in first century Judaism the prophetic marriage symbolism be-

297. Cf. Stibbe, *John*, e.g., 46, 61, who sees the gospel of John as emphasizing realized eschatology.

298. *Nuptial Imagery*, 10.

prophetic material, explaining it alongside messianic hopes as fulfilled in him.

Jesus used the marriage metaphor to claim implicitly that through him the long-awaited eschatological time of salvation had come. As God's agent he fulfilled for Yahweh the role of the bridegroom of Isaiah's prophecy. He brought in the covenant renewal together with its blessings. Israel is married to him, although during the wedding there is a time when the bridegroom is taken violently away from his bride, probably by his death. Therefore the companions of the bridegroom, the disciples of Jesus, have to bear witness to the fulfillment of the long-awaited marriage, the covenant renewal.

We have already mentioned that Jesus reshaped the basic worldview of second temple Judaism, although still doing so within its general framework. Consequently, he also redefined the figure of virgin Israel, though not in a completely arbitrary way. He stated that those who remain faithful to Yahweh and heed the words of his prophet and Messiah are included in the eschatological feast of salvation. Regardless of their national origin they constitute the wise bride of Israel. So, eschatological salvation is open to Jews and Gentiles alike. On the other hand, those who reject God's word through the prophet are left outside the joyous festivities. Some leaders of Israel, although claiming their right to participate in the eschatological wedding, bring God's judgment upon themselves because of their unbelief. They do not bear good fruit that pleases God; they reject his way. Thus historical Israel experiences her restoration in the Jesus-event, but it appears that not all who belong to the nation really constitute the saved, remarried virgin Zion. Only the remnant is the bride. As the Messiah enjoys the wedding with his prudent bride, the unfaithful are judged in their city which together with its corrupted political system constitute the main obstacle in the way of the Kingdom of God. But in judgment the king, Messiah, bridegroom is vindicated and his kingdom/salvation firmly established.

Therefore, in the light of the evidence available to us, we conclude that it was Jesus himself who first used and applied the metaphor of divine marriage in the NT, but that he did so in terms of his contemporary Jewish beliefs based on the OT. The metaphor helped him to claim that it is he, the personified act of Yahweh, who brings restoration and covenant renewal. The bride is forgiven so that she can return from exile to union with her husband. Thus the "theology of fulfillment" has been initiated

## The Metaphor of Divine Marriage in the Epistles of Paul

### INTRODUCTION

IN THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER we explored the material of the four canonical gospels tracing developments in the titular metaphor of the present work. We have suggested that it was Jesus, Yahweh's anointed agent, who transformed the OT traditions of *hieros gamos* to elucidate his messianic eschatological mission. Jesus' refocusing of the traditions onto himself provided his followers, including NT authors, with a hermeneutical pattern for approaching the Hebrew Scriptures. He deliberately utilized the theology of eschatological fulfillment in the OT to interpret his ministry. As a result, his disciples looked at the sacred writings of Israel from the perspective given by their master and this no doubt included the divine marriage metaphor. Thus one could anticipate the same kind of approach in the Pauline letters.

We have acknowledged in chapter 1 the tendency among biblical scholars to juxtapose the themes of John's Revelation with those of the Synoptics and Paul. We have already explored the gospel material. The only remaining task, before turning to the main focus of this volume, is to examine the Pauline use of the divine marriage traditions. We want to examine a number of his texts in order eventually to assess the extent to which Paul's use of the metaphor informs its use in the book of Revelation. This is the task of the present chapter.

### THE SCOPE OF PRESENT CHAPTER

Our special focus on the letters of Paul in this chapter should by no means imply that there are no other biblical authors, outside the gospels

the case of Rom 7:1–4; 9:25–26; and Gal 4:26–27). In this way we have selected five passages that need to be re-examined in their contexts.

The sequence of our study will not follow the succession of letters in the Greek New Testament. Instead, we will accept majority scholarly opinion on the chronology of Paul's writings.<sup>5</sup> Thus we will discuss in turn: 2 Cor 11:1–6; Gal 4:21–5:1; Rom 7:1–6 and 9:25–29; leaving the Pastoral Eph 5:21–33 (of debatable authorship) until last. Where possible, questions of the interrelatedness of these texts will be considered.

## 2 CORINTHIANS 11:1–6

### *Present State of Study of 2 Corinthians 11:1–6*

2 Cor 11:2–3 refers explicitly to the marriage metaphor. Paul says in verse 2 that he has given the Corinthian church in marriage (ἡρμοσάμεν) to Christ. And his intention has been to present her to him as a pure bride (παρθένος ἀγνός). However, the Corinthians are now in danger of being led astray from their husband (v. 3).

Thus scholars have rightly concluded that 2 Cor 11:2–3 may be the earliest documentary use of the marriage metaphor in the NT.<sup>6</sup> They have, however, struggled with issues such as the dis-/unity of the letter and the vital question of the identity of Paul's opponents, especially in chapters 10–13. However, we will not discuss these debates in detail, as the space-limits of this work do not allow us to do so. We will, instead, signal the issues in dealing with the text itself.

5. See, e.g., Kümmel, *New Testament*, 247–387. It does not matter very much whether the chronology accepted by us is entirely correct. This is not essential to our studies. We only utilize such a succession as useful scaffolding for our work, since it can sometimes help in tracing the development of an author's thinking.

6. Cf. Batey, *Nuptial Imagery*, 12. Although Jesus was most probably the first to use the imagery concerning himself. See chapter 5 above. There have also been attempts to show that Paul used the divine marriage imagery in 1 Cor 6:12–20. The most prominent case has been made by Rosner, *1 Corinthians* 5–7, entire chapter 5. The argument supporting his thesis rests mainly on Paul's use of the κολλάω terminology as well as him quoting from Gen 2:24LXX in 1 Cor 6:16–17 (cf. pp. 130–34). He explains that the terminology used is associated with marriage. Even if one accepted 1 Cor 6:17 to be a variation on the marriage theme, it would still be difficult to see how this would inform the development of divine marriage metaphor of the OT. The text does not seem to go beyond the point that the believer has a unique ("spiritual") relationship with his Lord who does not tolerate sexual immorality.

of Israel, which looks for it in the Torah, fails.<sup>150</sup> The point is that God, according to his covenant plan, has established his own righteousness in Christ, the goal of the Torah,<sup>151</sup> which Israel was not able to fulfill. Their attempts to find righteousness their own way fail.<sup>152</sup> In the context, as explained above, it is only the remnant that chooses God's way of righteousness and they indeed obtain it through Christ (cf. 10:9–10, 12–13, 16).<sup>153</sup> Nevertheless, we have argued that Paul has used OT divine marriage traditions combined with the remnant theme in order to explain the eschatological salvation of Gentiles alongside the remnant of ethnic Israel. The remnant of Israel, together with people of different nations, enters God's new betrothal, the renewed covenant of his righteousness. In this way, those who were once regarded as not-God's-people, despite their ethnic origin, become his beloved wife.

## EPHESIANS 5:21–33

### Introduction

The last passage we will examine in this chapter is Eph 5:21–33 with its mention of the marriage between Christ and his church in verses 25b–27. The authorship of the epistle to the Ephesians has been a matter of dispute in critical scholarship over the past century or more.<sup>154</sup> However,

150. Cf. Sanders, *Jewish People*, 37, although not agreeing with his corollaries. See also Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 75–76, and Wright, "Theology of Paul," 56.

151. Τέλος points rather to the climax of the Law, in the sense of its fulfillment. As the Torah was a characteristic and boundary of God's covenant so now Christ is, encompassing the Law in himself. See Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 241–44. Cf. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 76. Thus τέλος cannot mean the end in the sense of abolition or termination. Pace Räisänen, "Difficulties with the Law," 306. Also Sanders, *Jewish People*, 37.

152. Cf. Munck, *Salvation of Mankind*, 42.

153. It is worth mentioning here that our explanation of Israel's re-definition may possibly help in solving the exegetical problem of the salvation of all Israel in Rom 11:26. It seems that 'all Israel' refers to the re-defined Israel, whereas in v. 25 it refers to the ethnic nation. God in time saves his Israel, of both Jews and Gentiles. And although only the remnant of the ethnic Israel is saved, in fact all Israel is saved, as it consists both of the Jewish remnant and of Gentiles. But believing Gentiles should not vaunt over Jews in their status. They are implanted into God's people and not the other way round. Cf. Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 249–51.

154. The traditional Pauline authorship has been challenged for several reasons. We will mention only those directly touching on our passage. (1) The letter has been recognized as focusing more on ecclesiology than on Christology, which is uncharacteristic

it seems that the letter can be taken, at least, as a continuation of Pauline thought.<sup>155</sup> Furthermore, there is still a considerable group of exegetes who do not see enough evidence for the rejection of Pauline authorship.<sup>156</sup> Therefore it seems justifiable to include the passage in this chapter. We propose to focus on its main points as regards the marriage metaphor.<sup>157</sup>

of Paul. It has therefore been concluded that Paul could not be the author of the epistle. But more recent scholarship has demonstrated that the widely recognized letters in the Pauline corpus are also ecclesiocentric (cf., above discussions esp. on Galatians and Romans). Furthermore, ecclesiology depends on Christology. Cf. Barth, *Ephesians*, 668. (2) The use of alleged traditions in Ephesians has also contributed to the questioning of Pauline authorship. As regards our passage, scholars have claimed that since the letter refers to the Haustafeln forms (cf. Col. 3:18—4:1), it cannot be Pauline. Paul would not have used such forms, since he was more realistically informed about the situation in the churches. Cf. Best, *Essays on Ephesians*, 193. However, some NT interpreters have seriously challenged the whole issue of the presence of a household table in the letter. It could well have been that the author of Ephesians was addressing a particular problem that churches in the Ephesus district were struggling with. Cf. Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, 43. (3) Another problem raised by scholars to the disadvantage of Pauline authorship is the letter's use of OT material. Perhaps one issue directly connected with our passage will suffice here. Some exegetes have concluded that the use of Gen 2:24 in Eph 5:31 cannot be Pauline, because it is inconsistent with other instances of its use by Paul (e.g., in 1 Cor 6:16). It is alleged that the author of Ephesians applies Gen 2:24 to Christ's spiritual union with the church. Cf. Lincoln, "OT in Ephesians," 48. But such a conclusion has already been challenged. It has been demonstrated that the use of Gen 2:24 in Eph 5:31 is concerned, more than anything else, with mutual love between husband and wife as in God's purpose of creation. See Farla, "New Testament Marriage Texts," 72–75. (4) Another reason sometimes given by scholars for dismissing Pauline authorship is the different view on marriage in the Pauline corpus from that in Ephesians. It has been claimed that Paul was in favor of the unmarried state, which could have led to the dissolving of marriages in his churches. The author of Ephesians tried to stabilize that situation. See Merz, "Wedded Wife," 131–47. However, such a claim regarding Paul lacks biblical support. It has been previously demonstrated by some scholars that Paul, on occasions (e.g., 1 Cor 7), defended the value of marriage. Cf. Farla, "New Testament Marriage Texts," 75–82.

155. Cf. Sanders, *Palestinian Judaism*, 431–32, and Whiteley, "Christology," 51, 55. It is rather doubtful that a form of Jewish Gnosticism could have influenced the letter. Thus pace Batey, "Jewish Gnosticism," 122. See Best, *One Body in Christ*, 172 n. 1.

156. See esp. Barth, *Ephesians* 1–3, 10–31. Cf. Beale, "Eschatological Conception," 36, Sanders, "Pauline Authorship," 9–20, Kostenberger, "Mystery of Christ and the Church," 80 n.2, Ortlund, *Whoredom*, 152 n. 38, and Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, 55. However, Martin, "in Search of a Life-Setting," 296–301, has proposed Luke as the author of the letter. But various parallels with the Pauline corpus seem more evident.

157. It is an impossible task to discuss the entire text in its depth within the limits of several hundred words. Others have written whole monographs on this particular passage, e.g., Sampley, *Ephesians* 5:21–33.