

Introduction

The Gospel of Matthew – Between its Old Testament Roots and its Eschatological Perspectives

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The Gospel as the good news of eternal joy is a “divine reading,” an exceptional unrepeatable nature of this event, the Gospel expresses not self-sufficiency but gift-giving, sharing, and communion. The words of the Gospels are thus intimately tied to the twin notions of revelation and incarnation. The Gospel of Matthew begins precisely with the theme of the incarnation of the Word – the Advent of Immanuel – which could be seen as a “summary” of Matthew’s entire message. The apostolic mission described in the Gospel is the beginning of our inscription into the Trinitarian paradigm. When we speak of revelation, we refer to what God accomplishes to make Himself known – eternal and unchanging discoveries. Thus, the main point is to return to the heart of the matter: the events recounted in the Gospels are expressions of divine revelation embodied in words, illuminated by the Holy Spirit. It is not the multitude of textual variants that will grant you access to the authentic meaning of the good news, but the acquisition of the Holy Spirit. The Gospel is a joyous announcement of victory over sin and death, opening the gates of Paradise to humankind. The narratives, teachings, parables, and prophecies recorded in the four Gospels allow the divine pedagogy to shine through. God patiently stoops down to lift fallen humanity, remedying our failure and healing our nature by uniting it to

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His divinity in the incarnation of the Son. This revelation of Trinitarian love explodes all previously held notions about the relationship between God and man. The incarnation is a singular, unrepeatable event – not merely unique but utterly unlike anything else in human history. The enactment of divine providence in the advent of Christ cannot be replicated or recycled but blows open history and human experience to new dimensions.

The revelation of the Immanuel elucidates the purpose behind all creation, culminating with the cross and resurrection. The four Evangelists assemble layers of eyewitness testimony, prophecies, and inspired accounts – all illuminated by the Holy Spirit – to reveal God-made flesh walking among us, laying down His life for His friends out of measureless compassion. It is not manuscript variants that should distract us but the core message shining through. The good news of great joy for all people is that God with us has conquered death, and through baptism, we die and rise with Him to new life. The Gospel is an ongoing invitation to share in and proclaim this revelation incarnated in Jesus and transmitted across space and time by the Holy Spirit who animates Christ's Body, the Church.

The notion of incarnation is also tied to the revelation of the divine commandments as lessons for living to unite ourselves with Jesus Christ¹. Those who keep the commandments love the Savior and remain in His love, just as He loved the Father and remained in the divine love (Jn 14:15, 21; 15:10). And according to Mark the Ascetic², those who fulfil the commandments have the Lawgiver Himself dwelling within them. This reality led us to see the so-called "Sermon on the Mount" (Mt 5-7) as an act of assuming the Law, like the Sinai event, the renewal of the covenant in Canaan, or the enthronement of an Israelite king³ – even though we generally receive Matthew's antitheses as a possible hermeneutical guide or practical guide to embodying the commandments. The Sermon on the Mount represents a new covenant between God and His people, with Jesus as the mediator of this new covenant – bringing the Law to its fullness through His teaching, just as He said He came not to abolish but to fulfil the Law and Prophets (Mt 5:17). His blessing of those who follow His commands (Mt 5:3-12) resembles God's blessings for obedience at Sinai and in the land of Canaan (Dt 28)⁴.

¹ R. S. McConnell, *Law and Prophecy in Matthew's Gospel: The Authority and Use of the Old Testament in the Gospel of St. Matthew* (Basel: Friedrich Reinhardt Kornmissionsverlag, 1969), 97.

² Marcu Ascetel, "Despre legea duhovnicească," [On the spiritual law] in *Filocalia* [Philokalia], vol. 1, trans. by Dumitru Stăniloae (Sibiu: Institutul de Arte Grafice „Dacia Traiană” S.A., 1947), 247.

³ Ian Cairns, *Word and Presence. A Commentary on the Book of Deuteronomy*, in *International Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: WM.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992), 165-7.

⁴ William Loader, *Jesus' Attitude Towards the Law: A Study of the Gospels* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 165.

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Yet here, Jesus speaks with an authority surpassing that of Moses – the authority of the Son of David who has come to assume the throne of an everlasting Kingdom.

The antitheses of Matthew 5 unpack the deeper meaning behind selected prohibitions of the Decalogue, moving from outer obedience to internal transformation by the power of grace. For instance, anger damages relationships like murder; lustful intent corrupts like adultery. Avoiding the swelling pride of oath-taking pleases God more than legalistic casuistry. Non-retaliation breaks cycles of violence by absorbing disorder into order – refusing to multiply evil for evil by the transforming reckoning of love. This getting to the root of sin and virtue in the human heart – cleaving to the love of God and neighbour – represents the true following of Jesus. He assumes the seat of judgment over the Law itself – not contradicting but radicalising⁵ it, commanding us to be perfect as our Heavenly Father by conformity to the mind and heart of Christ. Thus, the Sermon inaugurates a new exodus – liberation from slavery to sin into the glorious freedom of the children of God. The divine pedagogy accompanies us through the purifying wilderness, up the holy mountain, into the transcendent cloud of unknowing – where faith grasps Truth through the veil of words and symbols. Contemplation of the Lawgiver transforms law into grace and grace into glory. We die and rise in baptism into this paschal mystery of incarnation where our life becomes hidden with Christ in God. United to His passion, we walk the way of the cross through death to resurrection. His life becomes our life when we lose ourselves in love for God and others. This follows the path Jesus lays down in the Sermon on the Mount.

An issue of interest is the zone of Matthean antitheses, constructed according to the pattern “You have heard that it was said to those of old... But I say to you...” (Mt 5). Notably, some international scholarship voices a particular definition regarding the Gospel of Matthew, considering that it can also be received as a manual introducing the interpretation of the prophets. This perspective represents a principle or even a sum of hermeneutical principles governing an exegetical act. Thus, we can say the Old Testament scriptural text, taken and used in the New Testament, is used or developed in an area of predictability, to show how what was announced in the past is fulfilled or accomplished at that moment. In this way, the exact term or phrase is rendered which gives the possibility to understand what the meaning and content of the act of fulfilment is. For instance, when Jesus says, “You shall not murder, but I

⁵ See details in: Élian Cuvillier, “Torah observance and radicalization in the first Gospel: Matthew and first-century Judaism: a contribution to the debate,” *New Testament studies* 55.2 (2009): 144-159.

say to you not to be angry with your brother” or “You shall not commit adultery, but I say to you not to lust,” He radicalizes the commandments by exposing the inner roots of outward sins in the human heart. The prohibition against oaths has intensified into a general prohibition against any swearing since we cannot make one hair white or black. What emerges is a pattern of deepening, expanding, and universalizing the Law’s commandments by focusing on the inner dispositions and intentions that bear good or bad fruit in actions. Jesus even dares to command perfection as our Heavenly Father is perfect, setting the bar impossibly high. Fulfilment translates the letter into spirit.

This new Lawgiver and Messiah came not to annul but complete the Law and the Prophets, revealing their inner unity and network of meaning centred on love for God and neighbour. Jesus lives out the perfect obedience humanity owes to the divine Pedagogue. Through His teaching with authority, Jesus forms a community of disciples who can interpret and apply the prophetic legacy capably with wisdom. The antitheses offer a master class in prophetic exegesis – In showing how Scripture bears ever timely fruits of renewal through discerning its spiritual senses and judging human acts accordingly.

We can say that Matthew presents a handbook for prophetic interpretation and messianic expectation against the horizon of eschatological hopes. By quoting a phrase of the Law and juxtaposing His contrary or intensified directive, Jesus pulls back the veil on the prophecies to showcase their deeper fulfilment in Himself. What had been merely suggested, hoped for, or partially manifested in the past now comes to light fully. Christ emerges as the key that unlocks all obscurity and nooks of potential meaning in the Hebrew Bible. Through intertextual references, His presence illuminates formerly hidden dimensions of the prophecies. Divine pedagogy gradually gives way to divine humanity. Figures and types melt into the substance of Incarnate Truth. This exegetical routine models how to interpret all Scripture about Jesus, through whom prophecy achieves its ultimate end and meaning.

From these considerations, the prophetic component and its use in the Gospel of Matthew aims to highlight the extremely generous theme of the unity of Revelation, the unity of Scripture, and the incorporation of all, regardless of the chronological stage of their existence, into what is called “the history of salvation.” This theological concept is understood as the structure of the history or histories through which humanity and creation move towards the establishment of the Kingdom of the Lord. This happens through understanding the prophetic landmarks and manifestations carried out in history through persons and the mystical Body of Jesus Christ, through the prophetic dimension and manifestation of the Church.

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The Evangelist Matthew connects many events in the life of Christ to direct fulfilment quotations from the prophets, especially Isaiah and the Psalms. The Hebrew Scriptures, therefore, cannot be rightly understood except about this crowning moment of history and revelation. At the same time, who Jesus is and what He accomplished only makes sense when comprehended against the rich background tapestry of salvation history found in what Christians call the Old Testament. Matthew also presents Jesus as the New Moses⁶ – One who delivers a new law from the mountain, feeds the multitudes in the wilderness, and reconstitutes the 12 Tribes in His appointment of the 12 apostles. Christ is also depicted as a New Solomon who is “greater than the temple” and “greater than Jonah.” He upends expectations by praising Gentiles like the magi and centurion while critiquing the Jewish leadership. God's favour extends to all who align themselves with Jesus and his Kingdom proclamation. The prophetic dream of an age to come where all nations stream to Zion is now dawning.

The risen Lord's final words commission the apostles to “make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:18-19) in fulfilment of the Abrahamic promise that through his seed all tribes would gain blessing. The Church emerges as a new Israel, the eschatological heir to the prophecies of old. All those who put their faith in Israel's Messiah and obey His teachings participate in the fulfilment of a prophetic trajectory finding its telos in Jesus. Through preaching this Gospel of the Kingdom, the prophecies continue to be actualized in new ways across ages and cultures whenever hearts bow to the Lordship of the glorified Son of Man. The Scriptures ultimately tell one story – that of humanity's fall and God's redemptive plan to divinize us once again through the paschal mystery of the God-Man. Jesus Christ emerges as the central figure holding this narrative arc together. The prophets point ahead to Him, and the apostolic witness interprets life considering His death and resurrection. This narrative incorporates all creation into its sweep through the proliferation of His mystical Body across time. The prophetic Spirit blows where it wills to incorporate ever more souls into Christ.

The interaction between the Old Testament background and the Gospel of Matthew has been the subject of much scholarly research⁷, as confirmed by the

⁶ Corneliu Sârbu, “Iisus Hristos ca supremul profet,” [Jesus Christ as the supreme prophet] *Mitropolia Banatului* 1-3 (1974): 19. See also Ioan Chirilă, „Moses and Jesus – on the Completion of Prophetism,” in Martin Tamcke, Constantin Preda, Marian Vild, Daniel Mihoc (eds.), *Scripture's interpretation is more than making science, Festschrift in Honor of Fr. Prof. Vasile Mihoc*, in *Studien zur Orientalischen Kirchengeschichte*, vol. 62 (Göttingen: Lit Verlag, 2020), 23-29.

⁷ Some examples: Andries van Aarde, “The First Testament in the Gospel of Matthew,” *HTS Theologiese Studies* 53.1-2 (1997): 126-145; Richard Hays, “The Gospel of Matthew: Reconfigured Torah,” *HTS Theologiese Studies* 61.1-2 (2005); James E. Patrick, “Matthew's Peshet Gospel Structured Around Ten Messianic Citations of Isaiah,” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 61.1 (2010): 43-81; Francois P. Viljoen, “The Torah in Matthew: Still valid, yet to be interpreted

substantial literature on this topic. Over time, sufficient arguments have been offered to support the idea that the Matthean text was conceived and edited for Jewish communities. One example in this regard is a text written by the prophet Hosea (11:1) which was used by the Evangelist to validate the fulfilment of a prophesied event, namely the return of the Child and His Mother from Egypt. Given the summarizing perspective that the Apostle Matthew utilizes, a much closer examination is warranted of how this text was received in the Gospel. Such an approach must first be grounded in a critical analysis of the passage in question – does Matthew quote from the book of the prophet Hosea or interpret the section concerning the call from Egypt? Most researchers believe the Hosea text is cited quite literally, leading us to support the idea that the Evangelist knew the Septuagint version and therefore used the expression in this way. At the same time, we can state that all Old Testament texts used in the New are subsumed under theological themes that the New Testament authors employ. Therefore, a strictly literal approach to this topic is insufficient. In this case, a theological interpretation is also required. The literal fulfilment quotation from Hosea casts Jesus' return from Egypt as the inversion of Israel's exodus. The divine Son succeeds where God's children failed. Bringing this passage from the prophet sheds light on the nature of Jesus' mission and identity where Israel reduced its calling to the status of mere nationhood. It also reinforces Matthew's consistent theme of Jesus emerging as the true and faithful Israel.

While a surface-level reading of Matthew may focus only on direct prediction-fulfilment proofs regarding Christ, the use of the Old Testament in the first Gospel functions at a deeper theological level as well. The Evangelist arranges his material to show Jesus as the pinnacle episode of salvation history while also subtly undermining certain Jewish interpretations of texts concerning election, Temple and ritual worship, outreach to Gentiles, and the ultimate reign of God triumphing over human rulers. Jesus as the divine Son inverts human expectations about power, validating spiritual seekers like the Magi and centurion over the scepticism of officialdom. Hosea speaks poetically of God calling His "son" out of Egypt about the Exodus generation liberated from slavery. By taking this prophetic verse and applying it literally to Jesus, Matthew universalizes Israel's history to show God delivering all peoples through this new Moses. Further, Jesus recapitulates the trials of Israel even as He proves more faithful and obedient unto death. The theological lens of the Evangelist detects traces of

alternatively," *In die Skriflig/In luce verbi* 50.3 (2016): 2-10; Wolfgang Treitler, "Toledoth Yeshu: A Jewish Critique of the Gentile Christian Transformation of Jesus Christ," *Cultural and Religious Studies* 8.2 (2020): 109-138; Ebenezer Fai, "The Old Testament in Matthew's Gospel," *The American Journal of Biblical Theology* 26.31 (2022): 1-17; Steve Moyise, "The Use and Reception of the Prophets in the New Testament," *Religions* 13.4 (2022): 2-8.

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the Christ event even in the intricate typologies of Israel's sacred story. This interpretative model invites disciples to search the ancient Scriptures for glimpses of their crucified and risen Lord.

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The Gospel of Matthew was the object of research of the members of the Society of Romanian Orthodox Biblical Scholars during two annual symposiums held in Romania at Lainici Monastery (Gorj county) in 2022⁸ and at Nicula Monastery (Cluj county) in 2023. In this volume, we publish the papers presented this year, except for one paper from the previous year. To familiarise the reader with their content, we will summarise the main ideas of each paper:

The intersection of the Gospel of Matthew and the *peshar* interpretation, a method utilized by the Qumran community, has intrigued biblical scholars since the 1950s. **Cristinel Iatan's** study probes whether early Christians, particularly Matthew's Gospel author, employed analogous exegetical techniques. Stendahl, in his groundbreaking 1954 work, *The School of St. Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament*, focused on Matthew's "formula quotations", asserting they contained *peshar* material, suggesting a radical reinterpretation of Old Testament passages considering Jesus. Scholars like Richard Longenecker supported this perspective by drawing parallels between Matthew's usage and Qumran *pesharim* commentaries. However, objections from scholars like Joseph Fitzmyer and Norman Hillyer emerged. Fitzmyer underscored distinctions between Qumran *pesharim* and Matthew's scripture usage, while Hillyer questioned whether the "fulfilment formula" indicated a distinct hermeneutic. Ulrich Luz emphasized that Matthew proclaimed fulfilment, not hidden meanings like *pesharim*. To contextualize the debate, understanding the broader Jewish exegesis during the first century is vital. Literal interpretation (*peshat*), midrashic methods, allegorical approaches, and *peshar* interpretation were diverse techniques employed by Jewish scholars. Literal interpretation, prevalent in the New Testament period, was evident in the Mishnah's examples, such as

⁸ The papers presented at Lainici Monastery are the following: Ioan Chirilă, *The Assumption of the Torah, the Toledots and the Prophecies in the Gospel of Matthew – quotation or exegesis?*; Alexandru Mihăilă, *The old-testamentary quotations from the Gospel of Matthew. New perspectives*; Stelian Pașca-Tușa, *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? (Ps 21:1 / Mt 27:46) – the unspoken words of Adam (the old one)*; Alexandru Moldovan, *Mt 28:16-20 - hermeneutical key to the Gospel of Matthew*; Hrisostom Ciuciu, *Zechariah 9:9 – Matthew 21:5: Typology between already and not yet*; Ioan Sorin Bora, *The place of the Gospel of Matthew in the canon of the New Testament*; Ion Reșceanu and Mihai Ciurea, *The Greek Tetraevangelion of Craiova: The Gospel of Matthew and the Biblical Text of the Manuscript*. Some of these have been published in the journal *Orthodox Theology in Dialogue* 8 (2022).

the Shema prayer's literal application. The term “*peshet*”, rooted in the Hebrew “*pashat*”, evolved, signifying “stripping” or “preparing for battle” in the Qumran War Scroll. Tannaitic writings associated *peshat* with direct interpretation. *Peshet* interpretation, observed in Qumran manuscripts, applied Old Testament scripture to contemporary situations without considering the original context. While scholars argue for parallels between *peshet* and Patristic exegesis, challenges arise in applying *peshet* ideas to the New Testament. The disconnect between Qumran *peshet* and Matthew's fulfilment formula raises questions about compatibility. In conclusion, the exploration of *peshet* interpretation in Matthew's Gospel adds complexity to biblical scholarship. Stendahl's intriguing assertion of a Matthean “school” employing *peshet* requires nuanced evaluation. The ongoing discourse emphasizes the perpetual quest for a deeper understanding of the intricate tapestry uniting the Old and New Testaments.

Archdeacon **Olimpiu-Nicolae Benea**'s study analyses Matthew 23:2-3, where Jesus tells his disciples that the scribes and Pharisees “sit on Moses' seat” but cautions them not to emulate the Pharisees' behaviour. The study covers the historical and cultural context of the Pharisees, what “Moses' seat” means, the exegetical challenges in interpreting this passage, and how this passage fits into Matthew's overall message about righteousness. The study outlines that Jesus' statement about the Pharisees sitting on Moses' seat likely acknowledges their social/religious authority to transmit the Torah. Yet Jesus still condemns their hypocrisy in not practising what they preach. The study surveys various interpretations, from John Chrysostom's view that Jesus establishes the Pharisees' authority to speak God's words but condemns their conduct, to Mark Allan Powell's view that Jesus simply recognizes the Pharisees' role in society to quote Moses even though they don't properly interpret or teach the Law. To further interpret Jesus' message, the study analyses a related passage from Matthew 5 where Jesus contrasts true righteousness with Pharisaic righteousness. The study shows how Pharisaic righteousness stems from misinterpreting Scripture, using the example of lax divorce laws. Jesus clarifies God's standards and calls his followers to greater righteousness not just outwardly but in their hearts, attitudes, and motivations too. While acknowledging the Pharisees' social position, Jesus unequivocally condemns their hypocrisy and faulty righteousness stemming from misapplying Scripture. His disciples must obey the Word of God but not emulate the corrupt religious leaders of the day. This passage encapsulates a core aspect of Matthew's Gospel contrasting shallow external religion with the deeper righteousness and integrity God requires.

Reverend **Ion-Sorin Bora**'s study analyses the attitudinal complex between pagans, tax collectors, and Jews in Matthew's Gospel, arguing it reflects tensions in the early Jewish Christian community before Gentile inclusion.

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Matthew frequently associates tax collectors with pagans/Gentiles as groups religious Jews scorned. The study contends the injunction in Matthew 18:15-17 to treat an unrepentant sinner “as a pagan and tax collector” only makes sense in a solely Jewish church context before the Jerusalem Council welcomed Gentiles. The study details the social separation and contempt religious Jews held towards pagans/Gentiles and Jewish tax collectors. It centres on how association with either group, especially through meals, threatened Jewish identity and purity. Yet Matthew shows Jesus reaching out to and eating with such outsiders, scandalizing other Jews. The study also explores positive examples of pagans in Matthew whose great faith Jesus praises, though the text still does not depict them as fully included with Jews. In examining the tax collectors Matthew and Zacchaeus, the study notes different types of tax collectors, showing some were scorned more than others for serving Roman interests over Jewish ones. It highlights the tension Jesus eating with such collaborators caused. The study sees Matthew 18:15-17’s severe judgment of treating unrepentant sinners “as pagans and tax collectors” as only sensible in an early Jewish Christian context where such distinctions mattered, not later with Gentile inclusion. The summary statement at the end clarifies that while Matthew anticipates pagan salvation, his attitude contrasting lost Jewish brethren with pagans/tax collectors reflects early communal tensions rather than later Gentile-inclusive churches. Overall, the study utilizes a close reading of Matthew’s terminology for pagans and tax collectors to argue that his gospel originated from a solely Jewish church perspective wrestling with purity and identity concerns, evidencing an early, pre-Jerusalem Council date before 70 AD.

In his article, Rev. **Georgel Rednic** delves into the criteria for judgment outlined in the Parable of the Talents (Mt 25:14-30) and the Parable of the Last Judgment (Mt 25:31-46) in the Gospel of Matthew. The study aims to determine whether these parables refer to the judgment criteria for Christians and non-Christians, respectively. This study explores the eschatological and judgment context in Scripture, emphasizing the complexity of apocalyptic eschatology in Matthew’s Gospel. The author contends that the Last Judgment and the Second Coming are central themes in Matthean eschatology. The Parable of the Talents is presented as describing the judgment criteria for Christians, focusing on how they use God-given gifts and abilities to serve others. In contrast, the Last Judgment passage is argued to pertain to non-Christians, with key Greek words like “ethnos” (nation) and “adelphos” (brother) analysed to support this interpretation. The study addresses exegetical challenges, particularly in interpreting the Last Judgment parable. The author considers whether the judgment involves “unconscious Christians” or “anonymous Christians” but rejects these interpretations. Instead, the article proposes that non-Christians

are judged based on their acts of mercy towards Christ's disciples. Rev. Rednic concludes that, according to Matthew 25:31-46, non-Christians will be judged based on their love for those who confess Christ. Meanwhile, Christians are judged earlier, as implied in the Parable of the Talents, with their criterion being the use of the gifts received in the service of loving their neighbours. In summary, the article offers a nuanced interpretation of the Last Judgment criteria in Matthew's Gospel, distinguishing between the judgment of Christians and non-Christians based on their respective acts of love and service.

Rev. **Hrisostom Ciuciu**'s paper examines the interpretation of Jesus' teaching in Matthew 25:31-46 about serving "the least" (*ἐλάχιστος*) – a passage that poses exegetical challenges. The central question is: Who are "the least"? Modern scholarship offers two main views: the "universalist" perspective which sees this as referring to all people in need, or the "specific" view which sees it as referring to Christians/missionaries. Each has limitations. The author argues to bring these together – embracing the universalist view yet from the spiritual perspective of the Church. A key issue is determining who is being judged in the passage. The text refers to "all nations" (*πάντα τὰ ἔθνη*) – suggesting specifically Gentiles/non-Christians. Yet most interpret this as humanity universally. The author suggests the tension lies between exegesis and hermeneutics. Regarding the possible identity of "the least," Jesus uses related language in Matthew 10:40 about receiving His disciples. Yet here in chapter 25, while humility remains key, the scope may be broader. Considering Matthew's gospel, we see a trajectory from Jesus sending the disciples only to Israel, towards discipling all nations in 28:19. This development supports a universalist perspective. In the end, no purely literary analysis can definitively resolve the question. But emphasizing Church tradition, St. Chrysostom and Origen apply it to care for Christians and catechumens yet see Christ in all people. The author proposes harmonizing these views – "the least" are all dependents, for whom we bear responsibility. This accords with the inverted pyramid image of St. Sophrony, with Christ at the base bearing all things. Thus, rather than identifying the least, the focus becomes our call to be "least." In conclusion, a solely ethical interpretation falls short. our goal is Christlikeness and deification. Reading this text challenges, us to humble ourselves to the place of being "least." Though precise exegetical identification may not be possible, the call to serve all those depending on us resounds clearly.

Archdeacon **Alexandru Mihăilă**'s study examines the resurrection account in Matthew 27:51-54, where saints are raised from the dead after Jesus' death. It explores how this resurrection fits with the wider context of resurrection beliefs in early Judaism and Christianity. His study reviews interpretations by Church Fathers like Origen, Jerome, and Chrysostom. Some

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saw it as a one-time sign confirming Jesus' power over death. Others connected it to Christ's descent to Hades to preach to the dead. It outlines Jewish views on the resurrection. Pharisees believed in a future resurrection and judgment. Sadducees rejected this. Essenes saw the soul as immortal but rewarded or punished after death. Daniel 12 speaks of a future resurrection to rewards or contempt. The study contrasts the original Jewish idea of bodily resurrection with the later Christian spiritualized notion tied to Greek philosophy. But the Gospels preserve the idea of bodily resurrection, including in John 20. Finally, this paper proposes reconciling the tension between this Matthean resurrection and later Christian teaching. It suggests Matthew may preserve an early tradition of Messiah's victory over death. This gets reinterpreted in two stages – first Jesus' death then his resurrection. So, the saints' resurrection inaugurates the general resurrection now expected at the Parousia. This fits the early expectation of Jesus' imminent return. In summary, the study explores how Matthew's unique resurrection account relates to wider Jewish and early Christian ideas, proposing it shows the development of resurrection beliefs about Jesus as Messiah.

Rev. **Alexandru Moldovan**'s analysis of Matthew 28:16-20 serves as a hermeneutical key to understanding the entire Gospel of Matthew. This pericope, considered a “key pericope” by many exegetes, holds theological significance as it concludes the Gospel and comprises Jesus' last words to the disciples. The study emphasizes the narrative and speech elements in verses 16-20, highlighting the disciples' encounter with the risen Jesus in Galilee and the commissioning to evangelize all nations. The choice of Galilee as the setting symbolizes openness to the Gentiles, fulfilling Old Testament prophecy. The mountain location signifies an encounter with God, mirroring key moments in Jesus' ministry. The disciples' worship and doubt illustrate imperfect faith, inviting readers to mature in their beliefs. Jesus asserts absolute cosmic authority from God as the basis for commissioning the disciples to a universal mission, correcting earlier limitations to Israel. The analysis delves into the disciples' actions and attitudes, underscoring their initial doubt and the subsequent promise of Jesus' perpetual presence. The text unfolds programmatically, presenting a model of mission that directs the Church's focus outward to the Kingdom of Heaven and humanity, rather than internal administrative concerns. The study emphasizes discipleship as the model and content of evangelization, with the eleven defined primarily by their status as disciples. Matthew portrays the Church as the “family of God”, emphasizing divine sonship and ethical responsibility. The higher righteousness advocated by Jesus involves unity between confession and action, aligning with God's will. The missionary mandate to teach and baptize all nations corrects previous limitations, highlighting the universal dimension of the Christian mission. The study concludes with the assurance of Jesus' active presence in the

Church until the end of the age, inviting readers to seek and discover the Lord amid the challenges and uncertainties of their faith. In conclusion, the author's analysis of Matthew 28:16-20 provides a comprehensive hermeneutical perspective, elucidating the theological, contextual, and programmatic aspects of this key pericope in the Gospel of Matthew.

Rev. **Mihai Ciurea**'s article provides a detailed analysis of the Epistle of James, examining its intertextual connections to the Gospels, especially Matthew and Luke. It argues that while no explicit quotes are present, there are significant thematic and verbal echoes indicating James' familiarity with Jesus' teachings preserved in those Gospels. The analysis progresses section by section through James, highlighting parallels in ethical exhortations, wisdom themes, perspectives on wealth/poverty, the use of "woes", and other motifs. Examples include James 1:12's beatitude resembling Matthew 5:10-12; James 1:17's teaching on good gifts reflecting Matthew 7:11; and James 2:13's link between mercy and judgment echoing Matthew's Last Judgment scene. Clear parallels are also observed between the Beatitudes in Matthew/Luke and blessings/woes in James – particularly regarding the poor, the mournful, the hungry for righteousness, and the reviled/persecuted. While not exact quotations, keywords and ideas resonate across these texts. James appears to creatively interpret these teachings to address the context of suffering Christians. While a few potential Lukan echoes are noted (e.g. Jas 5:17 and Lk 4:25 on droughts), Matthew remains the dominant gospel influence. This includes the extended form of the Great Commandment in James 2, resembling Matthew more than Mark/Luke. It also includes verbal links between James 4-5 and Matthew 6 on wealth, storing up treasures, and the ephemerality of earthly comforts. In conclusion, while certainty is impossible, the cumulative case suggests James' familiarity with a set of blessings/woes akin to Matthew's Sermon on the Mount. He adapts them to provide moral exhortation to Christians facing trials and injustice. This shows the diversity of gospel interpretation in early Christianity as different authors emphasized different applications. But through it all, Jesus' radical ethical teachings endured as a unifying reference point.

Saint Nicodemus of Tismana's Tetraevangelion, crafted in 1405, stands as the oldest preserved biblical manuscript originating from the territory of modern-day Romania. In this study, Rev. **Ion Reșceanu** delves into the objectives guiding Saint Nicodemus in creating this Tetraevangelion and seeks to comprehend its uniqueness among Slavic-Byzantine manuscripts. The investigation focuses on the manuscript's relationship with Bulgarian and Serbian counterparts from the late 14th to early 15th century. The study emphasizes three main objectives guiding Saint Nicodemus. First, it addresses

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the need to provide the Tismana Monastery with an updated Tetraevangelion that caters to contemporary liturgical requirements. The choice of Vodița Monastery as the probable place of composition is explored, influenced by the historical context and the political dynamics between Hungary and Wallachia. Second, Saint Nicodemus endeavours to update the biblical text linguistically, incorporating Greek elements into the Slavonic manuscript. This “Greekization” reflects Saint Nicodemus’ dual cultural background and Greek heritage. The study posits that he may have drawn from a Greek Tetraevangelion, such as the Codex Craiovensis, to accomplish this linguistic transformation. The third objective revolves around the modernization of the liturgical apparatus, aligning it with the ecclesial context of Romania and the specific needs of Tismana Monastery. Notably, the placement of the liturgical apparatus at the beginning, departure from traditional structures, and omission of certain elements signify Saint Nicodemus’ distinctive approach. Concerning the relationship with Bulgarian manuscripts, the study explores Saint Nicodemus’ connection to the Vidin region, where he founded monasteries. The cultural and ecclesiastical influences of Vidin, particularly its mixed spelling combining Bulgarian and Serbian norms, are considered in light of Saint Nicodemus’ potential exposure during his stay. The study also examines the Serbian influence on Saint Nicodemus’ Tetraevangelion, with a focus on the similarities and differences in the script, language, and liturgical apparatus. While Saint Nicodemus adopts a script reminiscent of the Rașca School, distinct features in the liturgical apparatus align with evolving trends in the early 15th century. In conclusion, Saint Nicodemus’ Tetraevangelion signifies a pivotal transition in Slavic-Byzantine manuscripts, bridging the late 14th and early 15th centuries. It reflects the multifaceted objectives of updating liturgical practices, linguistic adaptation, and preserving ecclesial culture in response to contemporary challenges, contributing to the rich tapestry of Eastern Orthodox manuscript tradition.