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JESUS' ALLEGED CONFESSION OF SIN

The pericope of "the rich young ruler" is found in all three of the Synoptic Gospels, and it is associated in all of them with narratives of a common type. In all three it immediately follows the account of Jesus' receiving and blessing little children; and it is clear from Mark's representation (as also indeed from Matthew's¹) that the incident actually occurred in immediate sequence to that scene. In Luke, these two narratives are immediately preceded by the parable of the Pharisee and Publican praying in the Temple; in Matthew they are immediately succeeded by the parable of the workmen in the vineyard who were surprised that their rewards were not nicely adjusted to what they deemed their relative services. It cannot be by accident that these four narratives, all of which teach a similar lesson, are brought thus into contiguity. It is the burden of them all that the Kingdom of God is a gratuity, not an acquisition; and the effect of bringing them together is to throw a great emphasis upon this, their common teaching.

Perhaps this teaching finds nowhere more pungent intimation than in the declaration of our Lord which forms the core of the account of His reception of the children: "For of such is the kingdom of heaven," (or "of God": Mt. xix. 14; Mk. x. 14; Lk. xviii. 16). These "little children" were, as we learn from Luke, mere babies (Lk. xiii. 15: τὰ βρέφη), which Jesus held in His arms (Mk. x. 16: ἐναγκα-

¹ Accordingly, Th. Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Matthaeus ausgelegt*, 1903, p. 589 says correctly (on Mt. xix. 16): "The close chronological connection is assured by the καὶ ἰδοὺ, verse 16, after ἐπορεύθη ἐκείθεν, verse 15."

λισάμενος ; cf. ix. 36 and also Lk. ii. 28).² What Jesus says, therefore, is that those who enter the Kingdom of God are like "infants of days". Such infants are not to be debarred from coming³ to Him, because forsooth they cannot profit by His teaching or profit Him by their service. It is precisely of such⁴ as they that the Kingdom of God consists. "And verily I say unto you," He adds, "whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein" (Mk. x. 15; Lk. xviii. 17). The meaning is accurately expressed in Alford's paraphrase (the emphases are his own): "In order for us who are mature to come to Him, we must cast away all that wherein our maturity has caused us to differ from them and *become* LIKE THEM. . . . None can enter God's Kingdom except *as an infant*." But when Alford comes to explain what "as an infant" means, he loses the thread and

² Therefore Zahn, p. 587-8, is quite right when he comments on Matthew's *παιδιά*: "Little children who were still in the arms (therefore, Lk. xviii. 15 *βρέφη*), were brought by their mothers or nurses to Jesus."

³ T. R. Glover, *The Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire*, 1909, p. 121, remarks: "We are apt to forget that 'come' is a Greek verb carrying volition with it." This is scarcely true. *Ἐρχομαι* expresses rather mere motion, progress: cf. e.g. Mt. ii. 9, vi. 10, vii. 25, 27, ix. 15, x. 13, xviii. 7, xxiii. 35.

⁴ That is, not of infants like those now in His presence, but of people like those infants in the qualities which had led to their debarring. Zahn, however (p. 588), reasonably argues that in the *τῶν τοιούτων* there is included also a *τούτων*, or rather a *καὶ τούτων*. He soon, however, transforms this into its opposite, as if he were arguing that in a designated *τούτωι* there was also a *καὶ τοιούτων* included: "not only do the little children belong to the Kingdom and the Kingdom to them, but the Kingdom belongs only to them and to such as have become like them." Similarly Loisy, *Les Évangiles Synoptiques*, 1908, II, p. 205. What our Lord says is that the Kingdom consists not of children, but of those who are like children; actual children are no doubt included, but we must not reverse the emphasis. Even Calvin (*Inst.* IV, xvi. 7 *ad fin.*), arguing for infant baptism, yields to the temptation to reverse it: "When He commands that infants should be permitted to come to Him, nothing is clearer than that He means true infancy. That this may not seem absurd He adds: 'Of such is the kingdom of heaven'. But if infants must be included, it cannot be doubtful that by the term 'of such' there are designated infants themselves and also those who are like them."

thinks of the innocence, the simplicity, the trustfulness of childhood, or the like.⁵ That in which maturity differs from infancy, however, lies just in its self-dependence and power of self-help. We become "as a little child" when, in the words of the revival hymn which was such an offence to James Anthony Froude, "we cast our deadly doing down" and make our appeal on the sole score of sheer helplessness.

Zahn, therefore, strikes a much truer note when he comments:⁶ "Over against the fancy (*Diinkel*) of the disciples, who ground their claim that the Kingdom belongs to them on their intelligence and will, Jesus reminds them that they must rather, by renunciation of their own intelligence and will, obtain the receptivity (*Empfänglichkeit*) for the blessings and benefit of the Kingdom which the immature children possess of themselves." And so does Wendt:⁷ "But in this very respect, of having no claim, so that they could offer nothing but only wish to have something, Jesus finds the ground for the children being permitted to come to Him, that He might show them His love and give them His blessing. For in their unpretentious receptivity He recognizes the necessary condition which must exist in all who would enter the Kingdom of God." "Under this childlike character, He does not understand any virtue of childlike blamelessness, but only the receptivity itself (which is the notion impressively emphasized by Him) on the part of

⁵ It would be difficult to go more astray here than A. Loisy does (p. 205): "He profits by the occasion to remind them of the moral worth of infants, and of the merit which belongs to the spirit of infancy. . . . Nothing is opposed to Jesus' having in view infants and those who resemble them in the spirit of candor and of simplicity." C. G. Montefiori (*The Synoptic Gospels*, 1909, I, p. 243) is better, though still confused: "The child symbolizes or represents the temper in which the Kingdom must be received. Humble trust, a complete lack of assertiveness, no consciousness of 'merit' or desert, simple confidence and purity,—these are the qualities which Jesus means to indicate in the character of a true child. The Kingdom can only be entered by those who can approach it in such a spirit." New-born babies represent no particular temper, and exemplify no particular spirit: they illustrate a particular condition.

⁶ Pp. 588-9.

⁷ H. H. Wendt, *The Teaching of Jesus*, E. T., II, pp. 49-50.

those who do not regard themselves as too good or too bad for the offered gift, but receive it with hearty desire." The emphasis which these expositors throw on "receptivity" as the characteristic of infancy—as if it were an active quality—is not drawn from the text but belongs to the habits of thought derived by them from a Lutheran inheritance. It requires to be eliminated before the meaning of our Lord's enunciation can be purely caught. Infancy is characterized by "receptivity" as little as by "blamelessness" or by "trustfulness"; its characteristic is just helpless need. He who receives⁸ the Kingdom of God "as a little child" receives it (in this sense) passively; is the pure recipient, not the earner of its blessings. What our Lord here declares is thus, in brief, that no one enters the Kingdom of God save as an infant enters the world, naked and helpless and without any claim upon it whatever.

No more illuminating comment on our Lord's teaching here could easily be imagined than that which is supplied by the immediately succeeding incident, that of the rich young ruler. No sooner had our Lord announced that "whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein", than one appeared before Him bent on making his way into the Kingdom in quite another fashion. And, indeed, if any could hope to acquire it for himself, it might well be supposed to be this eager young man. He had everything to commend him. He was young, he was rich, he was highly placed, he was clean. He was accustomed to desire good things, and, desiring them, he was accustomed to obtain them for himself: and, with the resources at his command,—resources of youthful energy, wealth, position, moral earnestness—he was accustomed to obtain them without much difficulty. He had heard of Jesus, perhaps had heard Him; and he recognized in Him a good man whose counsel were well worth

⁸ Δέχομαι, not λαμβάνω (or αἰρέω) is the word our Lord uses, and despite the wearing off of the edges of the distinction in usage, the difference remains fundamentally good that λαβεῖν is taking, δέξασθαι is receiving.

having. And he had conceived a commendable desire for the eternal life which Jesus was proclaiming. What remained but to learn from this good teacher what needed to be done, in order to obtain it? It never occurred to this rich and influential youth, accustomed to get what he wanted, but that this good thing which he now desired might be obtainable at its own proper price; and was he not prepared and fully able to pay the price and so to secure it? It seemed to him an easy thing to purchase eternal life.

It was our Lord's painful task, in response to the young man's appeal for guidance, to reveal him to himself in the shallowness of his nature and outlook; to open his eyes to the nature of that eternal life which he sought, in its radical difference from the life he was living; and to make it clear to him that what he had thought so easy to acquire was to be had only at a great price, a price which he might not be willing to pay, a price which he might find it was impossible for him to pay. And it was our Lord's task, further, on the basis of this incident, to carry home poignantly to the consciousness of His disciples the lesson He had already taught them in the incident of the blessing of the little children, that the Kingdom of God is not a thing into which in any case men can buy their way; that they stand before it helpless, and can make their way into it as little as a camel can force itself through the eye of a needle. It may be conferred by God: it cannot be acquired by men.⁹

As the result of his conversation, the young man departed with his countenance fallen,¹⁰ exceeding sorrowful,¹¹

⁹ Nothing could be more inapt than to say with Montefiori (I, p. 243); "Wellhausen points out most aptly how Shakespeare [Rich. II, act v, scene v] has felt the contrast between this section [on the blessing of the children] and the section which follows it [on the rich young man]. For *here* the Kingdom is a gift which one must accept as a child, *there* it is only to be won by effort and self-denial." In both sections alike the Kingdom is a pure gift and cannot be earned.

¹⁰ Mk. x. 22, *στυγνάσας*, full of gloom; cf. Swete's note *in loc.*

¹¹ Lk. xviii. 23, *περίλυπος*, hemmed in on all sides by sorrow, so that there is no escape; cf. *Princeton Biblical and Theological Studies*, 1912, p. 76.

—the eternal life which he had expected to reach out his hand and take was not for him. And the disciples had had borne in upon them with tremendous force the fundamental fact that salvation¹² in every case of its accomplishment is nothing less than an authentic miracle of divine grace; always and everywhere in the strictest sense impossible with man, and possible only with God, with whom all things are possible. The effect of this teaching, if it was naturally to depress those who sought eternal life by their own efforts, was equally naturally to exhilarate those who were looking to God alone for the blessings of the Kingdom, giving them a higher sense of both their certainty and their value. This surely is the right account to give of Peter's question (Mt. xix. 27; Mk. x. 28; Lk. xviii. 28), with our Lord's response to which the conversation closes. We cannot say, then, with Edersheim:¹³ "It almost jars on our ears, and prepares us for still stranger and sadder things to come, when Peter, perhaps as spokesman for the rest, seems to remind our Lord that they had forsaken all to follow Him." Peter rather, his heart swelling with freshly inflamed hope (*spe ex verbis Salvatoris concepta*, remarks Bengel accurately) inquires eagerly (not boastfully but in humble gratitude) into the nature of the blessings which God has in mind for those who have entered the Kingdom.¹⁴ Our Lord meets the inquiry in its own spirit and grants to His followers

¹² It is worth noting how the terms "eternal life", "the kingdom of God", "salvation" are interchanged in the narrative, as an indication of the sense put upon them by our Lord. In the conversation with the young man, the term used is "eternal life" (Mt. xix. 17, "life"). But on our Lord's turning to His disciples (Mt. xix. 23; Mk. xvi. 23; Lk. xviii. 24) "the Kingdom of God [heaven]" is substituted for this with no substantial change of meaning. This in turn in all three narratives (Mt. xix. 25; Mk. x. 26; Lk. xviii. 26) is understood by the disciples to be equivalent to "salvation". "Eternal life" appears again at the end (Mt. xix. 29; Mk. x. 30; Lk. xviii. 30).

¹³ *Life and Times of Jesus*,¹ II, p. 343; cf. the even more condemnatory note of Swete on Mk. x. 28, where he seems to suggest that a "tactless frankness" of speech meets us in Mark's report, which Luke already found it desirable to soften, and that Matthew's "what then shall we have" we may hope was never spoken.

¹⁴ Cf. A. Plummer, on Lk. xviii. 28.

a splendid vision of their reward,—only closing with words which would leave fixed in their minds the consciousness that all things are reserved to the Divine discretion: “And many shall be last that are first; and first that are last.”

There are no substantial differences between the three reports which are given us of this remarkable incident. Each of the Evangelists records details peculiar to himself. Each narrative has its own tone and coloring: Mark's is distinguished by vividness, Luke's by plain straightforwardness, Matthew's by clearness. But it is precisely the same story which is told by them all: the same story in its contents, in its mode of development, in its dénouement, in its lesson. Having any one of the three we have it all, presented after the same fashion and with the same force. It has no doubt been common to represent the descriptions of the opening scene, by Mark and Luke on the one hand and by Matthew on the other, as divergent; and this divergence has been magnified, and serious inferences have been drawn from it, derogatory to Matthew's integrity as a historian and injurious to our Lord's dignity as a Divine person and even to His moral perfection. All this rests upon misunderstanding. The wide-spread vogue it has obtained requires, nevertheless, that it shall be carefully looked into.

A simple reading of the opening two verses in the three accounts reveals at once, of course, a formal difference between Mark and Luke on the one side and Matthew on the other in their reports alike of the words in which the young man addressed Jesus and of those in which our Lord responded to his inquiry. In Mark (and Luke) we read that the young man addressed Jesus as “Good Master” and asked Him broadly, “What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” In Matthew, he is represented as addressing Him simply as “Master,” and asking Him with more exact definition, “What good thing shall I do that I may have life?” Correspondingly, Jesus is represented in Mark (and Luke) as replying, “Why callest thou me good? No one is good except one, God. Thou knowest the commandments . . .”;

but in Matthew, "Why askest thou me concerning the good? One there is that is good. But if thou wishest to enter into life, keep the commandments" We have spoken of these differences as formal; it would seem to be difficult to magnify them into anything more. Though, naturally, a matter of curious interest, they in no way affect the significance of the story itself. Despite them the two narratives, even at this precise point, yield exactly the same general sense and differ only in the details through which this common sense is brought to expression. To make this evident we need only to attend separately to what each mode of telling the story actually places before us.

According to Matthew, then, scarcely had Jesus issued from the house in which He had received and blessed the children,¹⁵ when an individual (there is a slight emphasis upon his being *one* out of the multitude) came to Him, and, addressing Him as "Master", (that is, "Teacher", or "Rabbi"), asked Him, "What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" He is asking, not for general prescriptions of righteousness, but for a particular requirement by doing just which he may secure the eternal life he seeks; and so set is his mind upon this particular good thing that when Jesus refers him to the divine commandments in general, he still demands (verse 18), "Which?" In response to his demand, nevertheless, Jesus points him just to the divine commandments, thus in effect repelling the implication that eternal life can be grounded on anything but that entire righteousness reflected in the law of God; and, behind that, suggesting that it was not instruction in righteousness that the young man needed but the power of a new life. Jesus' reply amounts, thus, to saying: "Why make inquiry concerning the good thing needed? There is One who is good and He has given commandments; keep them." It is the equivalent of, "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them" of Luke xvi. 29. What Jesus actually says is: "Why askest thou me concerning

¹⁵ So Zahn correctly, p. 589.

the good? There is One that is good, and,¹⁶ if thou wishest to enter into life, keep His commandments."

The thing to be noted particularly is that no emphasis falls on the enclitic $\mu\epsilon$, and therefore no contrast is intimated between Jesus and the One that is good. The contrast intimated is wholly between the good thing inquired of and the known commandments of God. To avoid the almost inevitable emphasizing of the "me" in a translation, it might be well to omit it altogether for the moment and to paraphrase simply: "Why dost thou inquire about the good as if that were a matter still in doubt? God, who is goodness itself, has published the eternal rule of righteousness." Keim,¹⁷ it is true, scoffs at the notion that no contrast is drawn between Jesus and God. "But $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\varsigma$," he cries, meaning that quite apart from the $\mu\epsilon$ the contrast is inherent in the mere declaration that "there is One"—that is to say, only One—"who is good". There is, however, an inadvertence apparent in this. The declaration that "there is One that is good" does set God in contrast with all others: it is to God in His already published will, not to anyone else whatever, that we are to go to learn the law of life. But it does not set God in contrast specifically with Jesus. So soon as it is read as contrasting God specifically with Jesus an emphasis is necessarily thrown on the enclitic $\mu\epsilon$ which it will not bear. Jesus is therefore not contrasting Himself here with God. He is only in the most emphatic way pointing to God and His published law as the unique source of the law of life. His own relation to that God is completely out of sight, and nothing whatever is suggested with reference to it. Zahn is accordingly entirely right when he writes:¹⁸ "For the question of the position Jesus assigns Himself between the one good One who is God and men who are evil, little occasion is given by this paedagogic conversation."

¹⁶ It is the continuative $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$, like *autem*: cf. Meyer *in loc.*

¹⁷ *Jesus of Nazara*, E. T., V, p., 37, note.

¹⁸ P. 590, note 64.

Mark, like Matthew, connects the incident of the rich young man closely with that of the blessing of the little children. It was while Jesus was in the act of coming forth from the house (verse 10) in which the blessing of the children had taken place, for His journeying,¹⁹ that an individual from the crowd (εἷς) came running, and fell on his knees, and, addressing Him by the unusual title of "Good Master", demanded of Him what he should do to inherit eternal life. It is the strangeness of the address, "Good Master"—apparently unexampled in extant Jewish literature²⁰—which attracts attention here; and naturally it was this which determined the response of Jesus.²¹ It threw into relief—as it would not have done had it been more customary—the levity with which the young man approached Jesus of whom he knew so little, with so remarkable a demand. Jesus' response naturally, therefore, takes the form, "Why callest thou me good? No one is good except one, God. Thou knowest the commandments" This response

¹⁹ Cf. B. Weiss *in loc.*

²⁰ Cf. Edersheim, *Life and Times*, II, p. 339: "In no recorded instance was a Jewish Rabbi addressed as 'Good Master'"; A. Plummer, on Lk. xviii. 19: "There is no instance in the whole Talmud of a Rabbi being addressed as 'Good Master': the title was absolutely unknown among the Jews. This, therefore, was an extraordinary address, and perhaps a fulsome compliment"; G. Dalman, *The Words of Jesus*, E. T., p. 337: "This address was at variance with actual usage, and, moreover, in the mouth of the speaker was insolent flattery." F. Spitta, *ZNTW*, ix (1908), p. 14, strangely wishes to divide the "Good Master" into two independent designations: "If we keep Mark and Luke alone in view, there is to be remarked first of all, with respect to the address to Jesus common to them, διδάσκαλε ἀγαθέ, that the difficulty adverted to above, of connecting רַבִּי with the predicate טוֹב, is removed if we take ἀγαθέ as a second address by the side of διδάσκαλε (cf. von Hofmann on Lk. xviii. 18). By this, of course, the stress on the designation of Jesus as ἀγαθός is further strengthened", . . . Lagrange on Mk. x. 17, very properly remarks: "No example is known of a Rabbi being designated thus (רַבִּי טוֹב), but this is no reason for cutting the appellation in two (against Spitta). It is only necessary to note that it exceeds usage and accustomed courtesies."

²¹ Cf. Edersheim, II, p. 339: "The strangeness of such an address from Jewish lips giving only the more reason for taking it up in the reply."

at first sight seems in itself to be capable of two constructions. We may either fill out: "Thou art wrong in calling me good; this predicate, in any worthy sense of it at least, belongs to none but God." Or we may fill out rather: "There is a great deal involved, if only you appreciated it, in calling me good; for there is no one that is good but one, that is God." The primary objection to the former view is that it presses the contrast beyond the power of the enclitic *με* to bear. For the *με* is enclitic here as well as in Matthew, and can be emphasized here as little as there. The emphasis certainly falls not on it, but on the *ἀγαθόν*.²² The sense is therefore certainly not that the young man had called specifically *Jesus* good; but that he had called Jesus specifically *good*. There is no contrast therefore instituted between Jesus and God. This is the fundamental fact regarding the passage which must rule its whole interpretation.

The sense need not be, however, that Jesus identifies Himself here with God, though the words are in themselves flexible to that interpretation: "Why is it that thou dost thus address me as *good*? Dost thou fully apprehend what is involved in this? Art thou really aware that I am indeed that God who alone is good?" It may rather be that Jesus, without implication as to His own real personality, is only directing attention to God as the only true standard of goodness: "Why dost thou use this strange address of 'Good Master'? Art thou seeking some one good enough to give sure directions as to eternal life? Hast thou forgotten God? And dost thou not know His commandments?" If it be thought that some slight contrast between Jesus and God is still discoverable, even in this understanding of the pas-

²² So Swete *in loc.* correctly: "The emphasis is on *ἀγαθόν*, not on the pronoun. The Lord begins by compelling the enquirer to consider his own words. He had used *ἀγαθέ* lightly, in a manner which revealed the poverty of his moral conceptions. From that word Christ accordingly starts. . . . The man is summoned to contemplate the absolute *ἀγαθωσύνη* which is the attribute of God, and to measure himself by that supreme standard."

sage, and the enclitic $\mu\epsilon$ is appealed to in order to forbid even so much emphasis on Jesus' person, the remark may be in place here as truly as it was with regard to Matthew's phrase, that the contrast involved in the words "No one is good except one, God", is not between God and Jesus, but between God and all others. There can be imported into the passage, in any case, no denial on Jesus' part, either that He is good or that He is God. It is again merely the "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them." The whole emphasis is absorbed in the stress laid upon God's sole right to announce the standard of goodness. The question of the relation of Jesus to this God does not emerge: there is equally no denial that He is God, and no affirmation that He is God.²³ The young man is merely pointed to the rule which had been given by the good God as a witness to what it is requisite to do that we may be well-pleasing to Him. He is merely bidden not to look elsewhere for prescriptions as to life save in God's revealed will. The search for a master good enough to lead men to life finds its end in God and His commandments.

Obviously the drift of the conversation in Mark (and Luke) is precisely the same as in Matthew. The two narra-

²³ So J. A. Alexander, on Mk. x. 18: "The goodness of our Lord Himself and His divinity are then not at all in question, and are consequently neither affirmed nor denied"; Swete: "Viewed in this light the words are seen not to touch the question of our Lord's human sinlessness, or of His oneness with the Father"; Wohlenberg: "Whether this predicate does not belong to Him in its complete and full sense is a question into which our Lord does not enter." Lagrange: "But it may be said that the most traditional opinion is that Jesus glorifies His Father without comparing Himself with Him. The question of His own nature is not raised; in responding to the young man He only takes account of the state of his mind. . . . There cannot be drawn from this passage any conclusion for or against Christological doctrine." Cf. also Plummer on Mt. xix. 10 ff.: "The explanation of 'Why callest thou me good? None is good save one, even God', belongs to the commentators on Mark (see Swete). Suffice it to say here that Jesus was neither questioning His own sinlessness, nor intimates that the rich man ought not to call Him good unless he recognized Him as divine. The rich man could not have appreciated either of these points. Rather He turns his thoughts from his own inadequate standard of what may win eternal life to the Standard of the Divine Goodness."

tives are in substance completely consentaneous.²⁴ It is not to be supposed that either has reported in full detail all that was said. Actual conversations are ordinarily somewhat repetitious: good reports of them faithfully give their gist, in condensation. It has been said that Jane Austen records the conversations at her dinner-parties with such, not faithfulness but, circumstantiality that her reports bore the reader almost as much as the actual conversations would have done. There is no reason to suppose that the Evangelists aimed at such meticulous particularity in their reports of our Lord's conversations. Not all that He said, any more than all that He did (Jno. xx. 30, xxi. 25), has been recorded. Each selects the line of remark which seems to him to embody the pith of what was said; and the skill and faithfulness with which they have done this are attested by such a phenomenon as now faces us, where, amid even a striking diversity in the details reported, a complete harmony is preserved in the substance of the discourse. Wilhelm Wagner²⁵ makes himself merry indeed over what he considers the conceit of Olshausen,²⁶ who recognizes in both forms of narrative exact historical tradition, and looks upon each as preserving only fragments of what was said. And, no doubt, if the state of the case were as Wagner represents it,—if, that is, the two narratives were mutually contradictory and exclusive of one another, so that one could not say of them, *Sowohl . . . wie . . .* but only *Entweder . . . oder . . .*, Olshausen's treatment of them would be absurd. Since, however, they are entirely in agreement in substance, Olshausen's assumption is a mere matter of course. Each gives us in any case only a portion of what was said. It may be plausibly argued, indeed, that Mark intimates as much by his employment of the imperfect tense when introducing the words reported from the

²⁴ Cf. Schanz on Lk. xviii. 18: "The *punctum saliens* in both forms is the reference away from Himself and the reference to God. . . . The two differ only in form."

²⁵ *ZNTW*, viii (1907), p. 144.

²⁶ *Synoptische Erklärung der drei ersten Evangelien*, on Mt. xix. 17.

lips of the questioner: ἐπηρώτα.²⁷ We are told, to be sure, that Mark's imperfects are not significant, that he interchanges them arbitrarily with aorists, and that therefore no inferences can be grounded on them.²⁸ This contention

²⁷ Cf. George Salmon, *The Human Element in the Gospels*, 1907, p. 400: "It had occurred to me as possible that Mark's imperfect (ἐπηρώτα) might be understood to imply that the rich man had put his question more than once, and that thus there would be no contradiction between Evangelists who recorded different forms in which the question had been put. But I am now disposed to think that the imperfect tense indicates that the young man puts a question which he had asked before, and that now, learning of our Lord's approaching departure, he runs up to ask it once more before our Lord goes away." The earlier view is certainly the more plausible.

²⁸ Cf. the discussion on the subject referred to by P. W. Schmiedel, *Encyc. Bibl.*, II, col. 1874, note 1: "Feine, *JPT*, 1887, pp. 45-57, 77; 1888, pp. 405 f.; Holtzmann, *ibid.*, 1878, pp. 168-171, with Weiss' reply, pp. 583-585." B. Weiss, in his *Das Matthäus-Evangelium und seine Lucas Parallelen*, 1870, p. 27, had said of Mark: "The judicious interchange of the descriptive Imperfect, of the vivaciously representative Present, and of the narrative Aorist is far from arbitrary; it is conformed with the greatest accuracy to the whole disposition and intention of the representation, which makes itself clear precisely by means of its careful observation." H. J. Holtzmann declares this overdrawn: the Imperfect is often employed merely to give vividness and an autoptic air to the narrative and is "frequently in use by later writers, especially with verbs of saying, giving, sending." He quotes Alex. Buttmann (*Grammatik des N. T. Sprachgebrauchs*, 1859, p. 173 [E. T., p. 200]) to the effect that the interchange of Aorists and Imperfects in historical writing depends only on the caprice of the writer. In reply, Weiss (p. 584) reiterates his belief that Mark does not use the Imperfect without significance. Feine in response, endeavors to show by examples that Mark uses the Imperfect quite arbitrarily, often in quite the sense of the Aorist (1888, p. 405), and that especially with regard to ἠρώτα which is only a verb of asking. Matthew uses this verb, when it occurs in a historical tense of the finite verb, always in the Aorist (seven times) while Mark uses it in the Aorist only six times, but in the Imperfect fifteen times, often in the Imperfect where Matthew in the parallel passage has the Aorist. Facts like these only show, however, that in narrating the facts the two writers present them to this extent from a different point of view, and this is what Buttmann means in the passage cited by Holtzmann,—not that the tenses do not differ in their implications but that it is often a mere matter of the way a writer looks at the same facts which is involved. For the matter in general, see the grammarians; beside Buttmann, §137, 7, also Winer, §40, 3, *d*, Blass, §57, 4, Jelf, §401, 34.

seems, however, to be overstrained; and in a case—like that now before us—where the present, aorist and imperfect tenses are brought together in close contiguity, their shades of implication can scarcely be wholly neglected. The general fact, however, does not rest upon the interpretation put upon Mark's ἐπηρώτα. It lies in the nature of the case that two accounts of a conversation which agree as to the substance of what was said, but differ slightly in the details reported, are reporting different fragments of the conversation, selected according to the judgment of each writer as the best vehicles of its substance.

An account of the relations of the two narratives quite different from this, it is true, is very commonly given. The representation which for the moment seems to be most widely adopted, looks upon Mark's narrative as the original one, and supposes it to have been closely followed by Luke but fundamentally altered by Matthew under the influence of dogmatic considerations. This view implies an interpretation of the narrative of Mark different from that offered above, as well as a different account of the relations of the narratives of the Evangelists to one another. According to it, Mark represents Jesus as repelling the attribution to Him of the epithet "good", because He is conscious of creaturely imperfection; and thus as, in His creaturely humility, setting Himself over against God in the strongest possible contrast. Matthew then is supposed to have drawn back from this representation as derogatory to Jesus' dignity as he conceived it, and to have therefore modified the narrative so that it should no longer imply a repudiation on Jesus' part of either goodness or divinity. That the conception of the drift of Mark's narrative which is assumed in this view is exegetically untenable, we have already endeavored to show. It is already wrecked indeed on the simple enclitic με,²⁹ which will not allow the contrast between Jesus and God which is its core. That it throws

²⁹ The matter is explained by Blass, *Grammar of N. T. Greek*, §48, 3 (p. 165). Perhaps Mt. x. 32-33 may be profitably compared with our present passage.

into chief prominence a matter which lies quite apart from the main subject under discussion is also fatal to it. There are, however, general considerations which also quite forbid it. That Matthew should be gratuitously charged with falsifying the text that lay before him in the interests of his doctrinal views is an indefensible procedure. There is no reason to believe Matthew capable of such dishonesty. And why the narrative as it lies in Mark's account should have been less acceptable to Matthew than it was to Mark himself and to Luke remains inexplicable. It is not doubted that the dogmatic standpoint of Matthew was fully shared by Mark and Luke. It is quite certain, that, if the meaning put upon Mark's narrative by this conception of it is its true meaning, that fact was wholly unsuspected by either Mark or Luke. And there is no reason to suppose it would have been divined by Matthew either. There can be no doubt that Mark and Luke supposed, when they were narrating this incident, that they were writing down words in full harmony with their reverence for Jesus the Divine Savior, for the expression and justification of which they wrote their Gospels. To attribute to incidents which they record with this intent an exactly contrary significance, a meaning which flatly contradicts their most cherished convictions and the whole tenor of their Gospels, is to charge them with a stupidity in "compiling" their Gospels which is wholly incompatible with the character of the Gospels they have written. A critical theory which is inapplicable except on the assumption of stupidity and dishonesty on the part of such writers as the Evangelists show themselves to be, is condemned from the outset.

Despite its impossibility, however, this theory has of late acquired wide vogue; and it is perhaps worth while to see how it is presented by its chief advocates. We may perhaps permit P. W. Schmiedel to expound it for us. He is speaking at the moment of the Gospel of John and remarks:³⁰ "And equally unacceptable to this Evangelist

³⁰ *Das vierte Evangelium gegenüber den drei ersten* (Religions-

would be the record in Mark (x. 17 f.) and Luke, that to the address of a rich man, 'Good Master, what must I do to obtain eternal life?' Jesus replied: 'Why callest thou me good? No one is good except God alone'. And yet beyond question this reply came from Jesus' lips. How little it could have been invented by any one of His worshippers who write in the Gospels, is shown by Matthew. With him (xix. 16 ff.) the rich man asks: 'Master, what good thing must I do that I may have eternal life?' And Jesus answers: 'Why askest thou me concerning the good? There is one that is good.' How does Jesus come by these last words? Should He not rather, since He was asked concerning the good, proceed: 'There is one thing that is good'? And that would not only be the sole suitable reply, because of what had preceded, but also because of what follows: for Jesus says further: 'If, however, thou wouldst enter into life, keep the commandments.' Accordingly, in Jesus' view, the good concerning which He was asked, consists in keeping the commandments. How did Matthew come by the words: 'There is one that is good'? Only by having before him as he wrote the text of Mark. Here we have our finger on the way in which Matthew with conscious purpose altered this text in its opening words, so that it should no longer be offensive: and on the way in which at the end he has left a few words of it unaltered, which betray to us the manner in which the thing has been done."³¹ This

geschichtliche Volksbücher, I, 8 and 10), 1906, p. 19. Cf. *Encyc. Bibl.*, II, 1901, col. 1847; "In Mark x. 17 f. the answer of Jesus to the question, 'Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?' is 'Why callest thou me good? None is good, save God only.' In Mat. xix. 16 f. the question runs, 'Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?' and the first part of the answer corresponds: 'Why askest thou me concerning that which is good?' Very inappropriate, then, is the second part: 'One (masc.) there is who is the good (ὁ ἀγαθός)'. Had not Matthew here had before him such a text as that of Mark and Luke, he would certainly, following his own line of thought, have proceeded: 'One (neut.) is the good (τὸ ἀγαθόν),' all the more because the immediate continuation also (verse 5 17-19), the exhortation to keep the commandments, would have suited so admirably."

³¹ Cf. also Otto Schmiedel, *Die Hauptprobleme der Leben-Jesu-*

representation turns on three hinges. They are, first, that, according to Mark's account, Jesus repels the ascription of goodness to Him because He is conscious of not deserving it; secondly, that Matthew, offended by this attribution to Jesus of a consciousness of sinfulness, has deliberately³² altered the story so as to remove it; and thirdly, that Matthew has done this so bunglingly as to retain at an important

Forschung,² 1906, p. 47: "Here also belongs the passage which has been mentioned in another place, where Jesus, in Mk. x. 18, said to the rich young man, 'Why callest thou me good? No one is good except God.' Jesus denies therefore His absolute sinlessness. Matthew (xix. 17), seeks to efface that." At the place referred to (p. 27) he had said: "In Mk. x. 18 Jesus says to the rich young man, 'Why callest thou me good? No man is good except God.' To Matthew (xix. 17), this statement seemed dangerous to the sinlessness of Jesus, and so he changed it to: 'Why askest thou me concerning the good (neuter)?' Now, however, the following: 'No one is good', &c., naturally no longer fits on." Cf. also, the similar representation by W. Heitmüller in Schiele and Zscharneck's *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, III (1912), col. 359.

³² Even W. C. Allen declares the differences of Matthew from Mark "probably intentional" changes, and A. Plummer (*Com. on Mat.*, pp. 264-5) elaborately explains: "It is quite easy to see why Mt. has made these alterations. He could not bring himself to record that Jesus said, 'Why callest thou Me good? None is good save one, even God.' We have seen how readily he omits anything which seems to detract from the Divine nature of the Messiah, such as His asking for information or exhibiting human emotion, and how he loves to emphasize the wonderful features in His mighty works. Such a writer would feel that our Lord's reply, as recorded by Mk. was likely to mislead, and was not likely to be correctly worded; he therefore substitutes what seems to him to be more probable." Wilhelm Brückner (*Protestantische Monatshefte*, IV, 1900, p. 423), arguing that Mark looked upon Jesus as merely a creature, supposes that he naturally and without hesitation ascribes to Him the repudiation of the ascription of "Good Master", which Lk. xviii. 18, 19 retains, while at Mat. xix. 16, 17 there is found "a perfectly obvious tendential alteration." H. J. Holtzmann (*Die Synoptiker*, p. 268, cf. p. 88) also applies to Matthew's action the opprobrious epithet of "tendential". J. M. Thompson (*Jesus according to S. Mk.*, 1909, p. 160), considers Matthew's text "a clumsy attempt to get rid of what seemed to him a difficulty". F. C. Conybeare (*Hibbert Journal*, I, i, [Oct., 1902], pp. 109, 112), so far improves on this as to attribute this "bit of botching" not to the author of the Gospel of Matthew but to "an ancient corrector who could not bear even the shadow of an insinuation that the Lord was other than 'without sin'."

point, a trait from Mark which is meaningless in his own narrative.³³

The third of these contentions obviously neutralizes the second. A writer shrewd enough to undertake and so skillfully to begin the dogmatic alterations ascribed to Matthew would be shrewd enough to carry them successfully through. Certainly he would not have deliberately altered Mark's "No one is good except God alone", and yet have altered it so little to his purpose. To have supposed that Matthew, after having taken the trouble to reconstruct the first portion of the conversation of the young man with Jesus in order to adjust it to his own views, should have neglected to reconstruct the second portion of it and have left it in staring contradiction to what he had just written, would have been bad enough. But to suppose that he did not neglect to reconstruct the second portion also, but altered it too, but altered it so bunglingly as to leave it essentially the same in meaning as it was before alteration, and still in crass conflict with his reconstructed version of the former part of the conversation, is past crediting. A critical theory which will not hold unless we suppose not only that Mark and Luke were too stupid to perceive the open meaning of the incident they were recording, but also that Matthew, who was intelligent enough to perceive it and dishonest enough to attempt to adjust it to the view of Jesus common to all three, was yet so stupid that he could not carry the

³³ Cf. Wellhausen on Mt. xix. 17: "The εἰς ἀγαθός of his model he has retained, although it no longer makes sense. It should logically be 'There is one thing that is good'"; A. Plummer, *Com. on Mat.*, p. 264, note: "Somewhat illogically he has left εἰς and ἀγαθός unchanged: it should be ἓν and ἀγαθόν: 'one thing is good'"; Montefiori, *The Synopt. Gospels*, 1909, II, p. 696, "Matthew rather awkwardly keeps εἰς ὁ ἀγαθός, which is based on Mark's οὐδεὶς ἀγαθὸς εἰ μὴ εἰς ὁ θεός, although the words have really no meaning without the repudiation of 'goodness' as applied to Jesus." The odd thing is that none of the critics appears to have observed that "One thing is good" could scarcely be said by Jesus in this context, when the young man was inquiring after one good thing that he might do and Jesus was pointing him rather to the comprehensive law: "one thing is good" would be out of the key of the whole conversation.

adjustment through—although it required only the substitution of an obvious neuter for a baldly impossibly masculine,—is clearly unworthy of serious consideration. It is very plain that such a theory is violently imposed on the texts and is driven through in the face of impossibilities. We have already seen that it is based on a failure to catch the meaning, natural and easy, of either narrative the relations of which it professes to expound: we perceive now that the explanation it offers of these relations is nothing less than absurd. There is no reason to suppose that Matthew would put a meaning—and, be it remembered, an intrinsically unnatural and linguistically impossible meaning—on Mark's narrative which it is certain that neither Mark nor Luke put on it; there is no justification for imagining that, if he did, he was dishonest enough to attempt to reconstruct the narrative so as to bring it into harmony with his own conception of Jesus (which, be it remembered, was Mark's and Luke's also); there is no propriety in assuming that if he undertook such a task he was capable of botching it as he is, on this theory, represented as doing. Whatever may be the relations of these narratives, it is certain that Matthew's was not made out of Mark's; and assuredly not as a dogmatic revision in the interests of our Lord's sinlessness and deity.³⁴

³⁴Keim (*Jesus of Nazara*, V, p. 37) insists on the priority of Matthew's narrative. In point of fact neither narrative can be derived from the other. And in general, no form of criticism is more uncertain than that, now so diligently prosecuted, which seeks to explain the several forms of narratives in the Synoptics as modifications one of another. P. W. Schmiedel very properly acknowledges (*Encyc. Bib.*, II, col. 1846) that "every assertion, no matter how evident, as to the priority of one Evangelist, and the posteriority of another, in any given passage, will be found to have been turned the other way round by quite a number of scholars of repute." The illustration he gives is characteristic. It is Mk. vi. 3 as compared with Mt. xiii. 55; Lk. iv. 22. "On the one side it is held that Matthew and Luke are here secondary, because they shrink from calling Jesus an artisan; on the other the secondary place is given to Mark because he shrinks from calling Jesus the Son of Joseph." The fundamental fault lies in the primary presupposition that the Evangelists (or their sources) have manipulated their material in the interests of the glorification of Jesus.

There is no reason, therefore, derivable from this critical speculation why we should desert the natural understanding of Mark's (and Luke's) narrative and its relation to Matthew's which lies on its surface. And our confidence in it will be greatly strengthened, if we will attend for a little to the alternative interpretations of it which have been proposed. These are very numerous and very divergent. They may be arranged, however, in a not unnatural sequence, and we may thus be enabled to survey them without confusion, and to catch their essential significance with some ease.

The interpretation which imposes on Mark's (and Luke's) narrative a repudiation by Jesus of the predicate "good", with its involved contrast of Him with God, was already current among the Arians,³⁵ and possibly even in certain heretical circles of the second century.³⁶ It is only natural that it should be widely adopted again in modern Liberal circles. Wilhelm Wagner in an interesting sketch of the history of the interpretation of the passage³⁷ chooses G.

Omit this unjustified presupposition and no ground remains for either form of conjecture. An (unsuccessful) effort was made long ago by A. Hilgenfeld (*Kritische Untersuchungen über die Evangelien Justins, der Clementinischen Homilien, und Marcions*, 1850, pp. 220 f., 362, 426; *Theologische Jahrbücher*, 1853, pp. 207, 235 f.; 1857, pp. 414 ff.; cf. *ZWT*, 1863, pp. 361-2, note 3) to discover an older form of text of which both Mk. (and Lk.) and Mt. are modifications in doctrinal interests; cf. also W. Bousset, *Die Evangeliencitate Justins*, 1891, pp. 105-106, and (as a curiosity of critical literature) F. C. Conybeare, *Hibbert Journal*, I, i (Oct., 1902), pp. 109-112. See the detached note below (note 87).

³⁵ So we are told explicitly by Athanasius (*Migne, Pat. Graec.*, 26, col. 985 C) and Epiphanius (*Pat. Graec.*, 42, col. 229): see also Ambrose (*Pat. Lat.*, 16, col. 563) and Augustine (*Pat. Lat.*, 42, col. 800); and as well the Clementine Homilies (*Pat. Graec.*, 2, coll. 404, 405), on which see Dom Chapman, *ZNTW*, IX (1908).

³⁶ Marcion is reported by Epiphanius, *H.* 33, 7 (p. 339, cf. p. 315) to have read the passage: "Call me not good; one is good, even God the Father" (but cf. Hippolytus, *Ref. Haer.*, viii, 19). See further Hilgenfeld and Bousset as above, note 34), and especially Th. Zahn *Geschichte des Neutestamentlichen Kanons*,¹ II, 1890, pp. 483 f. See the detached note below (note 87).

³⁷ *ZNTW*, viii (1907), p. 156.

Volkmar as the representative of this mode of interpreting it. In Volkmar's view,³⁸ what is given expression in Jesus' reply is that in the Kingdom of God proclaimed by Him God is the sole Good, to whom homage is due. God is the supreme Good, and the adoration of Him the highest aim of the Kingdom of God. "Jesus is the announcer and even the King of the Kingdom of God on Earth, but not the supreme Good itself, which is to be adored. The Son of Man sought only to lead man to the perfect worship of God." To make his meaning clearer he adds: "Also He went (Mk. i. 9) to the baptism of repentance in consciousness of sin (*sünderbewusst*)." Perhaps, however, the spirit of this interpretation is better expressed by no one than by H. J. Holtzmann³⁹ who writes: "We see Him who is addressed, in the consciousness of His own incompleteness, in remembrance of His severe moral battles and conflicts, in prevision of the approaching tidal-wave of a last and most violent trial, draw back, point above, and speak the humbly great word: 'Why callest thou me good? No one is good, except God alone' (Mk. x. 17-18; Lk. xviii. 18-19; cf. with this the deflection of Mt. xix. 16-17 which even the dullest eye must recognize as tendential). There is only one who stands above the world, without variableness or the necessity of ethical development, the eternally unchangeable God. By this, Jesus affirmed the fixed and immovable interval which separates Godhead and manhood in the moral sphere, as in Mk. xiii. 32 = Mt. xxiv. 36 He opens the same gulf between the two natures in the intellectual sphere. On both occasions Jesus takes His stand simply on the side of manhood." He goes on to say that the Lord's prayer, which he insists was not merely given to His disciples but was prayed by Jesus in company with His disciples, bears witness to the same effect, in its petitions for forgiveness and for protection from the evil one.⁴⁰ Among English writers

³⁸ *Die Evangelien oder Marcus und die Synopsis*, 1870, p. 469.

³⁹ *Lehrbuch der NT Theologie*, II, 1897, p. 268.

⁴⁰ Cf. also F. Barth, *Die Hauptprobleme des Lebens Jesu*,³ 1907, p. 251: "On the one side, Jesus takes His place wholly over against

J. M. Thompson affords an example of the same general point of view.⁴¹ "The stress in the last sentence is on 'good' not 'me'," he writes, "but this hardly lessens the force of the passage. It is not enough to suggest that the young man's idea of goodness needed correction, and that Jesus would point him from a wrong to a right meaning of the word. Nor is it Jesus' intention to deny as man any equality with God. The address, 'Good Master' contains no such suggestion. Theology is out of place in this passage, which deals with plain words in a plain way. There is in fact no adequate alternative to the natural interpretation. Jesus did not think Himself 'good' in the sense in which the young man had used the word, and in the sense in which it would be commonly used of God If He did not at this time feel Himself to be good in the sense in which God is good, neither did He think Himself to be divine in the sense in which God is divine." "A broad distinction is drawn—a distinction which cannot reasonably be confined to the simple ground of 'goodness'—between Jesus and God." Perhaps, however, no more pungent emphasis has been thrown upon this view than that thrown upon it by C. G. Montefiori.⁴² "The reply of Jesus," he writes, "is of the utmost significance. It is obvious that no divine being would or could have answered thus. Jesus knew Himself to be a man. . . . Yet it is a noble character which peeps through the fragmentary and one-sided records—none the less noble because we may be sure that of Jesus, both in fact and in his own estimate of Himself, the adage was true: 'there is no man that sinneth not'."⁴³

God on the side of man, and confesses Himself to possess the imperfection of human nature"—laying no claim to omniscience (Mk. xiii. 32), omnipotence (Mk. x. 40) or moral perfection (Mk. x. 17 f.). This last passage is misinterpreted if it is made to imply the deity of Christ: "the Christ of dogma would have spoken thus; the historical Jesus on the other hand refuses the predicate 'good', as belonging to God alone."

⁴¹ *Jesus according to S. Mark*, 1909, p. 159, also p. 254.

⁴² *The Synoptic Gospels*, 1909, I, pp. 246-7.

⁴³ The attitude of P. W. Schmiedel to the sinlessness of Jesus, and

The nerve of this interpretation resides of course in the contention that a repudiation of the epithet "good" is necessarily involved in the question, "Why callest thou me good?" (Mk. x. 18; Lk. xviii. 19). This contention is unjustified: whether the question involves a repudiation of the epithet "good", or is a call to a closer consideration of the implications of the original request, is a matter for the context to determine; and the context very decidedly determines it in the latter sense. Nevertheless the contention is often given very vigorous expression; and by no one is it given more vigorous expression than by Wilhelm Wagner, who writes as follows:⁴⁴ "Whoever cannot attribute to Jesus the use of language more to conceal than to reveal His thought, whoever rather holds the opinion that Jesus really meant His words in the sense in which they must be understood by every unprejudiced hearer,—cannot help allowing that Jesus in Mk. x. 18 distinctly distinguishes between God and Himself, and that He just as earnestly rejects the predicate *ἀγαθός* for Himself here, and reserves it for God, as in Mark xiii. 32 he denies knowledge of the day of the Parousia for His own person and ascribes it to the Father

the bearing of our passage upon it, is revealed in the following words from the paper contributed by him to the volume called *Jesus or Christ?* printed as a "Hibbert Journal Supplement" for 1908 (p. 68):—"As far as Jesus is concerned, it is certain that all the writers of the New Testament assumed His sinlessness, even though they speak of it with remarkable infrequency. But we are surely not at liberty to see a proof in this aspect of the matter, when we consider the attitude of veneration in which they stood towards Him, and the kind of being whom they held Him to be" [the meaning is that the testimony of the New Testament writers is invalid, because from their point of view they must have held Him sinless]. "Nor can we regard the passage in the Fourth Gospel (viii. 46) as an expression of Jesus Himself in view of the character of the book in which it stands. All the more importance attaches to Mark, x.16-18: 'Why callest thou me good? There is none good save God'. It is true that philologists are now proving with much zeal that the original Aramaic word means 'gracious' [*gütig*]; but they do not reflect that Jesus cannot have justly regarded Himself as morally good, if He repudiated even the epithet 'gracious'."

⁴⁴ *ZNTW*, viii (1907), p. 154.

alone." Wagner does not admit, however, that in thus repudiating the predicate "good" of Himself, Jesus confesses Himself a sinner. Thus we are advised that it has been found possible to hold to the interpretation of Jesus' response to the young ruler which sees in it a repudiation of the predicate "good", and yet escapes from the ascription of conscious sin to Jesus. There are in fact more ways than one in which this has been attempted. A series of variant interpretations of our passage has thus arisen, differing from one another in the sense put upon the term "good" or in the explanation offered of Jesus' intention in repudiating that predicate, but agreeing that He does repudiate it in some sense, not involving the confession of sin on His part. Some account should be given of these mediating methods of exposition.

Wagner himself, in company with a considerable number of recent expositors,⁴⁵ wishes to take the term "good" in the sense, not of moral excellence, but of graciousness, kindness. This, in itself attractive, suggestion is rendered nugatory, however, by the unfitness of the address, "Kind Master" as a preparation for Jesus' reply. Johannes Weiss seems to be right when he remarks of the *ἀγαθὸς*: "The questioner clearly wishes to express by it not merely his reverence but also his conviction that Jesus, as a perfect man, is able to give new life and particular information as to

⁴⁵ For example, G. Dalman, *The Words of Jesus*, E. T., p. 337: "The proper translation is 'Kind Master'"; J. Wellhausen on Mark x. 18 (p. 86): "Ἀγαθός means less 'sinless' than 'gracious'"; Karl Thieme, *Die christliche Demut*, 1906, pp. 106-7; M. J. Lagrange, on Mk. x. 17: "Goodness of heart (Schanz, Wellhausen, Spitta) rather than moral perfection (Loisy, etc.); ἀγαθός can mean goodness, it is true, but also the goodness of benevolence (Mt. xx. 15) and this is always the case when in the O. T. it is said that God is 'good' (Spitta: cf. W. Wagner, *ZNTW*, 1907, pp. 143-161)"; F. Spitta, *ZNTW*, 14 (1908), pp. 12 ff.; J. Lebreton, *Les Origines du Dogme de la Trinité*, I, 1910, p. 235, etc. *Contra*, e.g. Wohlenberg, *Kom. zu Markus*, p. 273, note 89; P. W. Schmiedel as above, note 41. Wagner thinks that Justin Martyr already took the 'good' here in the sense of 'kind'; but see on this the note of J. Moffat, *The Expositor* for January, 1908, p. 84.

the way to eternal life."⁴⁶ Jesus' reply puts the sense of moral perfection on the address. The advantage sought by reading the predicate as "gracious" rather than "good", is that in that case its repudiation by Jesus does not imply a confession of sin on His part. "If the word should be so understood," remarks Dalman, "then there is no need to inquire in what sense Jesus disclaims sinlessness."⁴⁷ "His sinlessness or moral perfection Jesus has, therefore, not denied in our passage", is Wagner's way of putting it.⁴⁸ The inquiry of P. W. Schmiedel whether the repudiation of "kindness" is not also, however, the repudiation of moral goodness,⁴⁹ is here very pertinent; and it is observable that Wagner at least does not seem prepared with a plausible answer to it. After declaring that, since what is under discussion is "kindness", Jesus does not deny His sinlessness or moral perfection, that there is no question raised as to that, he continues:⁵⁰ "No doubt, however, He does disclaim the predicate 'kind-gracious' (*Gütig-gnädig*) for His own person and reserve it for God. Should this result nevertheless seem to anyone equally objectionable with Volkmar's exposition, mentioned above, the reply is to be made to him that we must adjust our conception of Jesus to that of the Holy Scriptures and not *vice versa*. . . ." No doubt. Therefore the question presses whether it is easy to believe that the Jesus presented to us, we do not say broadly in the Holy Scriptures, but in the Synoptic Gospels, would repudiate the predicate "kind" or "gracious," when applied to Him, especially with the energy which is supposed in this interpretation of His words. It does not appear that the predicate *ἀγαθός* is elsewhere in the Synoptics attributed to

⁴⁶ Wagner (p. 159, note) criticises Weiss' use of the word "perfect" instead of "good" in this remark, but on the very next page himself equates the terms "sinlessness" and "moral perfection". Cf. what Dalman (p. 338) says in opposition to A. Seeberg's explanation which is similar to that of Weiss.

⁴⁷ P. 338.

⁴⁸ P. 160.

⁴⁹ See above, note 43.

⁵⁰ Pp. 160-161.

Jesus, nor is it, for the matter of that, elsewhere attributed to God—and it may be a nice question to which limb of this statement we might consider Mt. xx. 15 a quasi-exception. But surely it is difficult to suppose that the Synoptists, who attribute “compassion” to Jesus more frequently than any other emotion, and one of whose number represents the sponsor of another as summing up Jesus’ career as a “going about, doing good” (*εὐεργετῶν*, Acts x. 38), could have understood Him to be repelling here the attribution to Him of “kindness”. And surely this repudiation of the predicate of “kindness” sounds strange upon the lips of the Jesus who is represented by them as declaring that He had compassion upon the multitude (Mt. xv. 32; Mk. viii. 2), and as inviting all those who labor and are heavy laden to come to Him that He might give them rest (Mt. xi. 28).

Wagner endeavors to ease this difficulty by suggesting that like *εὐεργέτης*, which Jesus forbids His disciples to permit themselves to be called (Lk. xxii. 25), *ἀγαθός*, “gracious,” might have come to be employed almost as a divine attribute; and he connects this suggestion with Jesus’ disgust at the “honor-hunger” which characterized “the Scribes and Pharisees” of the time, and which provoked Him to forbid His disciples to be called Rabbi or Leader (*καθηγητής*, Mt. xxiii. 10). This line of thought had already been carried a step further by Karl Thieme,⁵¹ and before him by Karl Heinrich Weizsäcker.⁵² These writers,⁵³ threw the whole

⁵¹ *Die christliche Demut*, 1906, p. 107.

⁵² *Untersuchungen über die evangelische Geschichte*,² 1901, p. 295.

⁵³ Cf. also J. Lebreton, *Les Origines du Dogme de la Trinité*, I, 1910, p. 235: “It would clearly be a mistake to see in the ‘goodness’ in question here, virtue or moral excellence: and when our Savior attributes it exclusively to God, that is not in order to make it understood that God alone is morally perfect, but no doubt only because He alone is Goodness itself, infinitely beneficent and benignant. Applied to a Rabbi—and the interlocutor of Christ saw in Him nothing more—this designation of ‘Good Master’ was, as Dalman remarks, an ‘insolent flattery’: our Lord repelled it without revealing to an auditor so badly prepared to receive it a property he was far from suspecting. The meaning of the text is very similar to that of a text cited above: ‘Call no man here below Father, for you have but one Father, that is

burden of Jesus' repudiation of the predicate "good" upon His revulsion from Rabbinical vanity, and hence held that "this interdiction of the designation 'Good Teacher' has nothing at all to do with the self-consciousness of Jesus, but is solely a repulsion of the Rabbinical title." From this point of view, Thieme, who also takes the *ἀγαθός* in the sense of "gracious", is able to contend that Jesus by no means repudiates that quality for Himself. "According to this interpretation," he writes,⁵⁴ "Jesus defended Himself from involvement in the Rabbinical title-seeking. He repelled it from Himself without giving a single thought to whether He Himself had or had not a right to the title of 'gracious'. He did not address Himself here to a solemn deliverance as to His distinction from God, but, painfully affected by the extravagances of the rich man, He gave expression to His old aversion to the whole odious behavior of the Pharisees and Scribes, in a quick and sharply spoken word of reprehension. It is therefore rather an emotional declaration from which may be learned how unlike the Pharisees and Scribes He was."

Attractive as this exposition is it is burdened with the insuperable difficulty that Jesus does not, in point of fact, refuse for Himself any of the titles which He forbids His followers to accept. He forbade them to be called Rabbi or Leader; but He claims both titles for Himself (Mt. xxiii. 8 f.). It is not merely in John (xiii. 13) that He vindicates His right to the titles of Master and Lord. Both are put upon His lips with reference to Himself by the Synoptists also (Mk. xiv. 14; Mt. xxvi. 18; Lk. xxii. 11; Mk. xi. 3; Mt. xxi. 3; Lk. xix. 31), and He constantly and without apparent difficulty accepts them both when applied to Him by others. Thieme himself has to acknowledge that "when He was Himself called Rabbi, He found it right, for He was it,

God; and have not yourselves called Masters, for you have only one Master, the Christ.' The only difference between the two texts is that in the second (Mk. x. 17) the Christ effaces Himself far more before God His Father."

⁵⁴ P. 108.

He alone and no other in His little flock."⁵⁵ If He revolted against the lust for empty titles of the Scribes and Pharisees, that was because those titles were empty for them; they did not rightly belong to or describe them; were mere vanities with no other function than to gratify pride. He would not have His disciples like the Scribes and Pharisees in this. But it does not follow that He would repel these titles when applied to Himself, to whom they rightfully belonged: in point of fact He did not.⁵⁶ There is an essential difference between craving vain titles, and accepting just ones. We may be quite sure that Jesus would not have repudiated the ascription of graciousness to Him unless He had felt that it did not rightly describe Him and that He therefore had no right to it.

A far more widely adopted interpretation of the passage, seeking the same end, accepts the term *ἀγαθός* in the sense of morally good, but distinguishes between the quality of goodness which is proper to man, and that absolute and indeclinable goodness which belongs to God alone. Jesus, it is said, when He repels the predicate "good" of Himself, and declares that God alone is good, means the term good in its highest, its absolute, sense, and in no way implies that He is not good as a man wholly without flaw may be good. Sometimes what is meant by this is that only God is Good-of-Himself (*αὐτοάγαθος*), has the source of His goodness in Himself; men, though wholly good, can have only a derived goodness, and must owe all their goodness to the goodness of God. Origen,⁵⁷ indeed, would carry this distinction far beyond the sphere of creaturely relations, into the Trinitarian relations themselves. According to him our Lord speaks here not as a man but as the Son Himself, and yet

⁵⁵ P. 107.

⁵⁶ Cf. R. Stier, *The Words of the Lord Jesus*, Fourth American Edition, I, p. 360 f., note f: "Never has Jesus anywhere said (if He says so here it is the only time) that anyone honored Him too highly; never did He protest against any degree of love, honor, thanksgiving, adoration (Roos, *Die Lehre J. Christi*, p. 79)."

⁵⁷ *De Principiis*, I, ii, 13.

separates Himself in His goodness as Son from the Father, the *Fons Deitatis*, from whom is derived all that the Son is. No other goodness exists in the Son as such save that which is in the Father; and when the Savior says that "there is none good save one only, God the Father", He means to declare, not that He, the Son of God, is not good, but that all the goodness in Him is of the Father. God alone is primarily good; the Son and Spirit are good with the goodness of God: while creatures can be said to be good only catachrestically and have in them only an accidental, not an essential goodness. It is not of the subordinationism of Origen, however, that our modern writers are thinking when they say that our Lord, in denying that He was good and reserving this predicate to God alone, meant merely that His goodness was not original with Himself but derived from God the sole source of goodness. They are thinking of the man Jesus who, they suppose, is here referring His goodness to the Father, the source of all goodness. An example of this mode of expounding the passage is supplied by Karl Ullmann in the earlier editions of his famous book on *The Sinlessness of Jesus*.⁵⁸ According to him what Jesus means is, "If I am good, I am so only in and by means of God, so far as I am one with God", and he expounds his own meaning as follows: "Here, then, *ἀγαθός* is to be taken in the most pregnant sense: as the ultimate highest source of good, as the absolute good; Jesus is good, but only in His inward complete communion with God, as the expression of the divine; and in this sense He demands of the young man:

⁵⁸ *Ueber die Sündlosigkeit Jesu*. Eine apologetische Betrachtung. Hamburg, 1833, p. 112, note; ed. 3, 1836, p. 136. The former of these editions is called the "second, improved and enlarged edition" on the title page, but appears to be the first separately printed edition, the treatise having appeared in the first instance in the *Theologische Studien und Kritiken*, I, 1828. Cf. also Ullmann's *Polemische in Betreff der Sündlosigkeit Jesu* in the *TSK* for 1842. An English translation of *The Sinlessness of Christ* (Edinburgh, 1870, newly issued 1902) was made from the seventh German edition. The passage referred to has been so modified in the later editions that the feature for which it is cited has disappeared.

“Thou must rise above the common human goodness,—and in so far also above me, considered as a man detached from God, as merely a good teacher in the sense of the Rabbis and Pharisees—and hold to the supreme source of all good, and thence there will flow to thee the good, and eternal life.” Another example seems to be supplied by A. Plummer’s comment on Luke xviii. 19. The young man’s defect, he tells us, “was that he trusted too much in himself, too little in God. Jesus reminds him that there is only one source of goodness, whether in action (Matthew), or in character (Mark, Luke), viz., God. He Himself is no exception. His goodness is the goodness of God working in Him. ‘The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father doing. . . . For as the Father hath life in Himself, even so gave He to the Son also to have life in Himself. . . . I can of Myself do nothing; as I hear, I judge: and My judgment is righteous, because I seek not my own will but the will of Him that sent Me’ (Jno. v. 19-31) *Non se magistrum non esse, sed magistrum absque Deo nullum bonum esse testatur* (Bede). There is no need to add to this the thought that the goodness of Jesus was the goodness of perfect development (see on ii. 52), whereas the goodness of God is that of absolute perfection (Weiss on Mk. x. 18).”⁵⁹ An extraordinary number of

⁵⁹ Similarly, Henri Bois, *La Personne et l’Oeuvre de Jésus* propounds, and in an article in the *Revue de Théologie et des Questions Religieuses*, xxii, 1 (January, 1913), pp. 40-53, defends the view that Jesus does not indeed confess Himself a sinner yet ranges Himself definitely as subordinate to God in the moral sphere also. He thinks this view “the golden mean” between the “rationalistic” view which makes Jesus acknowledge His sinfulness and the “orthodox” view which makes Him proclaim Himself God, and defends it in the Review article against strictures by A. Berthoud, *Jésus et Dieu*, 1912. According to Berthoud (see also *Avant-Garde* for Ap. 15, 1907) Jesus proclaimed Himself *in point of goodness* equal to God. He repels the homage of which he was made the object, not because He felt Himself unworthy of it, but because He felt it to be banal. It was not a sense of imperfection which dictated His response; He speaks rather out of a consciousness of purity without flaw, of perfect holiness. He is thus not assimilating Himself with men, but proclaiming Himself equal with God—not indeed metaphysically, but morally. The ideas of immuta-

expositors have retained the fundamental notion of this interpretation as one, but not the chief, element in their explanations: a clause or two suggesting that the goodness of Jesus finds its source in God is inserted in the midst of other matter. The difficulty with it is that there is nothing in the passage either to suggest or to sustain it. An attempt has, indeed, been made by Karl Wimmer to find a point of attachment for it in what he calls the conditional sense of *εἰ μὴ*. Instead of "No one is good except God", he would render rather, "No one is good if not—that is to say, without,—God"; and then explain this as declaring that goodness cannot exist apart from God. But this is only a curiosity of exegesis.⁶⁰

bility, absoluteness, eternity, are not here in question: goodness is a *moral* conception, and it is from a moral point of view only that Jesus feels on an equality with God. Bois rightly rejoins that the moral and metaphysical cannot be thus separated. If Jesus is equal with God in holiness, He is metaphysically the same with God. He cannot be the prototype of the moral law, the sole inspirer and source of all good, without being God, the creator and conservator of the world. Bois does not himself seem to conceive his own interpretation clearly. He cites *both* Dalman, who denies that *moral* good is here in question, and Swete who denies that Jesus' goodness in any sense is here in question, as if they supported him who thinks that it is precisely of moral good that Jesus is speaking and that He is proclaiming Himself subordinate to the Father precisely with respect to *it*. "Jesus recognizes," he says, "His subordination over against God even in the moral point of view,—subordination, which is, however, perfectly compatible with the absence of sin." In this moral subordination of Jesus to God, he recognizes on the one side that His holiness is positive and not negative; but declares on the other side that it finds its whole source in God—that "every idea of the good is in Jesus, an inspiration which He receives from God, the sole absolute good."

⁶⁰ *TSK*, 1845, p. 128. He argues that *εἰ μὴ* is fundamentally conditional, not exclusive, in its meaning; and that, therefore, when Jesus says, "No one is good *εἰ μὴ* God", He does not mean that no one except God is good, but that no one without, apart from, God, is good; that the divine goodness is the condition of all other goodness, and all that is good has its ground in God's goodness. Jesus, thus, does not set God over against all others as the only good one, and does not contrast Himself with God, either as not unexceptionally good or as not absolutely good. He only declares that He does not wish to be called good, without the proper recognition that any goodness which belongs to Him, has its source in God.

It has been more common, therefore, to seek the contrast which Jesus is supposed to intimate between His goodness and that of God in the essentially developing character of human goodness as distinguished from the absolute goodness of God. A very clear expression is given to this view by the compressed comment of E. P. Gould:⁶¹ "The reason of the question and of the denial of goodness to any one but God which follows it, is that God alone possesses the absolute good. He is what others become. Human goodness is a growth, even where there is no imperfection. It develops, like wisdom, from childhood to youth, and then to manhood. And it was this human goodness which was possessed by Jesus. See Lk. ii. 52; Heb. ii. 18, v. 8." The longer comment of H. A. W. Meyer on Mark x. 18, which has in substance been retained by B. Weiss through all of his revisions is perhaps, however, more typical.⁶² "Ingeniously and clearly Jesus makes use of the address, *διδάσκαλε ἀγαθέ*, in order to direct the questioner to the highest moral Ideal in whose commands the solution of the question is given (verse 19). He does this in such a manner that He takes the predicate *ἀγαθός* in the highest moral sense (against Bleek and Klostermann, according to whom He only denies that man *as such*, and without relation to God can be called good). 'Thou art wrong in calling me good: this predicate, in its complete conception, belongs to none save One, God.' Cf. Ch. F. Fritzsche, in *Fritzschor. Opusc.*, p. 78 ff. This declaration, however, is no evidence against the sinlessness of Jesus; rather, it is the true expression of the distance which human consciousness—even the sinless consciousness as being human—recognizes between itself and the absolute perfection of God (cf. Dorner, *Jesu sündlose Vollkommenheit*, p. 14). For⁶³ the human per-

⁶¹ *International Critical Commentary on Mark*, Mk. x. 18.

⁶² Meyer on Mark, E. T., vol. I, p. 164: We quote from the sixth German edition, which is the first of those prepared by Weiss, p. 152: in ed. 8 (p. 176) which announces itself as revised by Bernhard and Johannes Weiss, it is somewhat compressed; and in ed. 9 in which Johannes Weiss' name falls away again, it remains much as it appears in ed. 8.

⁶³ This important last sentence is retained verbally through the ninth edition.

fection is necessarily a *growing* (*werdende*) one, and even in the case of Jesus was conditioned by His advancing development, even though it can respond at every point to the moral ideal (Lk. ii. 52; Heb. v. 8; Lk. iv. 12, 22, 28. Cf. Ullmann in the *TSK*, 1842, p. 700); the absolute being-good that excludes all having become and becoming so (*das absolute, alles Gewordensein und Werden ausschliessende Gutsein*) pertains only to God who is *verae bonitatis canon et archetypus* (Beza)."⁶⁴ "Even the man Jesus," adds Meyer (omitted by Weiss) "had to wrestle until He attained the victory and peace of the cross." Quite similarly E. K. A. Riehm⁶⁵ writes: "The emphatic 'No one is good except one, God', or, as the words stand in Matthew, 'One is good', does not fit in well with the explanation according to which Jesus does not wish to refuse the predicate 'good' for Himself, but wishes to say only that the young man should not, *from his standpoint*, that, namely, He was only a human teacher, address Him as 'Good Master'. We

⁶⁴ Cf. here Paul Feine, *Theologie des NTs*, 1910, p. 28: "He, who had given out of the perfection of His inwardness all the ideal commandments of the Sermon on the Mount, and had conceived the nature of God out of the pure ground of His life in an ethical purity hitherto unknown, declines to be called good. That predicate belongs to God only." He adds in a note: "It is wrong when many seek to make capital of this declaration in favor of the contention that Jesus was ethically imperfect. When Jesus says to the rich young man, 'Why callest thou me good?' or 'Call me not good' (*μή με λέγε αγαθόν*), as Conybeare, *Hibbert Journal*, 1902, I, 92-113 represents the oldest form, after Marcion, the Clementine Homilies, Tatian, Origen, &c., in Mk. and Lk. xviii. 19), 'No one is good except *one*, God'—that is as much a refusal of the address as in the case of the Syro-phoenician woman, Mt. xv. 25 f. As nevertheless in that case, Jesus yet fulfilled the request of the repulsed one, so there occurs here too in the end an answer to the question, 'Good Master, what shall I do to have eternal life?' He knows the way, and indeed He alone, for His answer culminates in the word, 'Come and follow me' (Mk. x. 21). He could not have said that, in the loftiness of His requirement for entrance into the Kingdom, had He not been 'good'. We must have an eye for the antithetical, contrast-loving manner of Jesus. Then we can avoid such essential misunderstandings as the repulsed young man fell into."

⁶⁵ *Lehrbegriff des Hebräerbriefes*, 1867, p. 383.

are of the opinion that Christ wishes the word 'good' to be taken in the absolute sense (cf. the *ὁ ἀγαθός*) and really refuses the predicate in this sense for His own person, and ascribes it to God only. When so understood, the expression does not at all show that Jesus had any other consciousness than that of essential unity with the God-will, but it does show that He was conscious that in His moral development He had not yet reached the highest stage of absolute perfection, which still was therefore proper to God alone."

Following Wagner's example we may add some further examples of this exposition, taken from dogmaticians. He selects for the purpose R. A. Lipsius and J. Kaftan. The former⁶⁶ maintains for Jesus, indeed, a development free from the consciousness of guilt, but nevertheless conceives of Him so humanly as to open a great gulf between His hardly retained integrity and the absolute perfection of God. To wish to deny for Him the possibility of sin or natural temptability, he declares, would abolish the reality of His humanity, for to it the *σάρξ* of necessity belongs. Jesus was tempted, and that shows that He was not free from inner vacillations and momentary obscurations of His God-consciousness. All of this He no doubt victoriously overcame: but certainly we cannot wonder that He felt impelled to distinguish His goodness, if He so conceived it, from God's absolute goodness. In much the same spirit, Kaftan,⁶⁷ will not hear of the attribution of impeccability to Jesus. This would yield, he thinks, only an unmoral notion of Him. Jesus' sinless perfection was a truly moral condition and receives its content from the uninterrupted moral trial to which He was subjected. In Mk. x. 18 "the predicate *ἀγαθός* applies in its absolute sense to God only, who is *ἀπελραστος*, not to man who, while living and walking in the world, remains always subject to temptation. If we would wish to find expressed in this declaration of Jesus, instead of this, the consciousness of a moral fault attaching

⁶⁶ *Lehrbuch der Evangelisch-protestantischen Dogmatik*,² 1879, p. 596 f.

⁶⁷ *Dogmatik*,³ and ⁴ 1901, p. 441.

to Him, that would come into contradiction with His testimony with respect to Himself elsewhere. He is the sinlessly perfect man, but He became such by His own act and confirmation, by virtue of actual ethical decision through temptation." If we may appeal to a prophet of our own, we may find the whole tendency and significance of this mode of interpreting the passage very clearly expounded by H. R. Mackintosh.⁶⁸ The salutation of the young ruler, he tells us, Jesus "waved back with the uncompromising rejoinder, 'None is good save one, even God'." And then he continues: "The words cannot be a veiled confession of moral delinquency, which certainly would not have taken this ambiguous and all but casual form. What Jesus disclaims, rather, is *God's* perfect goodness. None but God is good with a goodness unchanging and eternal; He only cannot be tempted of evil but rests for ever in unconditional and immutable perfection. Jesus, on the contrary, learnt obedience by the things which He suffered, being tempted in all points like as we are (Heb. v. 8, iv. 15). In the sense of transcendent superiority to moral conflict and the strenuous obligation to prove His virtue ever afresh in face of new temptation and difficulty, He laid no claim to the absolute goodness of His Father. Which reminds us emphatically that the holiness of Jesus, as displayed in the record of His life, is no automatic effect of a metaphysical substance, but in its perfected form the fruit of continuous moral volition pervaded and sustained by the Spirit. It is at once the Father's gift and progressively realized in an ethical experience. This follows from the ethical condition of incarnation."

That the goodness of Jesus' human nature was a developing goodness, and was not only not while He was on earth but never can be the infinite goodness of God is a matter of course. It is further not inconceivable that in referring to His moral quality He might on occasion quite readily speak of the moral quality of His human nature

⁶⁸ *The Doctrine of the Person of Christ*, 1912, p. 37.

only, as, in a famous instance, in referring to His knowledge, He has spoken only of His human mind (Mk. xiii. 32). It is certain, still further, that in speaking of God's goodness in our present passage He has the absoluteness of His goodness in view. So far we encounter no grounds of objection to the general line of interpretation which we have just been illustrating. There is no reason in the nature of the case why Jesus might not have contrasted His human goodness with the infinite goodness of God, which is here adverted to. But neither is there any reason obvious why we should suppose Him to wish, at this moment and in the midst of the irrelevant conversation recounted, to interpose a bit of instruction upon the developing character of His human goodness. The remark of Fritzsche seems also pertinent: "the words, *τί με λέγεις ἀγαθόν*, do not mean *in what sense* do you call me good? but *why* do you call me good?"⁶⁹ If this question has, as Fritzsche also insists, the force of an "objurgation", and means "You wrongly call me good", it is hard to see how Jesus could have expected His interlocutor to understand Him as meaning no more than that His goodness (as respects His human nature) was not the absolute goodness of Deity. To say, 'You are wrong in calling me good, because though, even in my human nature, I am really good, good through and through, good without flaw, I am nevertheless (in my human nature) not good as the infinite God is good', would not only be a subtlety which this interlocutor could not be expected to follow, but as addressed to him inconsequent. If Jesus means to contrast Himself as not good with God as good, He can scarcely mean less in this context than that He is in the common sense of the word, not good; that is, that He is not free from sin. The interpretation which would pare this down to a contrast between immaculate goodness and absolute goodness is a refinement unbecomingly with the simplicity of the language employed and the directness with which the conversation develops. It is idle to appeal to

⁶⁹ *Fritzschorum opuscula academica*, 1838, p. 79.

such passages as Job iv. 18, xv. 15, xxv. 5; for the point is, not that the distinction in question is not real, nor that it cannot be expressed in natural language, but that it is not suggested by the language of the present passage and breaks in upon the course of its development.⁷⁰ From the dogmatic point of view this interpretation is of course more acceptable than that which sees in the passage a plain confession of sin. It has moreover the great advantage of not giving us a Jesus wholly out of harmony with the Jesus of the rest of the Synoptic tradition, and even perhaps with the Jesus of the remainder of this very narrative—where He speaks of “following” Him as the foundation of the new life. But from the narrower exegetical point of view it is at a disadvantage in comparison with the other; and yet lies open to all the exegetical objections which are fatal to that view.

Still another modification of the interpretation which supposes Jesus in our passage to repudiate the predicate good, has had large vogue. Jesus, it is said, repudiates this predicate not from His own but from His questioner’s point of view. This interpretation, which is very common among the Fathers, is well illustrated by a passage in one of Athanasius’ anti-Arian tracts.⁷¹ “And when He says,” we read, “‘Why callest thou me good? No one is good except one, God’, God, reckoning Himself among men, spoke this according to His flesh, and with respect to the opinion (*νοῦς*) of him who came to Him. For that one thought Him man only and not God, and the response keeps this opinion in view. For, if you think me a man, He says, and not God, call me not good, for no one is good. For the good does not belong to human nature but to God.” It is obvious, that to say that Jesus repudiates the predicate only from the point of view of His interlocutor is to say that He does not really repudiate it at all. It is not strange, therefore, as Montefiori

⁷⁰ Cf. what R. Stier excellently says in criticism of Oettinger and Ullmann, in *The Words of the Lord Jesus*, I, pp. 360b-361b.

⁷¹ Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, xxvi, col. 993 A and B.

seems to find it,⁷² that "the capable Roman Catholic commentator," Schanz, "who honestly insists on the correct translation of this verse," understanding its repudiation to be meant *ad hominem*, adds that "the words do not exclude 'that Jesus as respects His higher nature, may belong to this divine Being'."⁷³ And Olshausen is quite logical when he writes:⁷⁴ "The questioner saw in Christ a mere διδάσκαλος. To such a conception, however, the ἀγαθός was not suitable. He [Jesus] repudiates, therefore the name and directs him to Him who is Goodness itself. By this, however, the Lord does not deny that He is Himself just the ἀγαθός, because the true God is reflected in Him as His image; only this teaching could not be dogmatically presented to the young man, but should vitally form itself in his own heart." And Keil:⁷⁵ "Jesus, taking this predicate in its full sense, uses this address to direct the young man to God as the Supreme Being, when He replies: 'Why callest thou me good?', that is, 'Call me not good', 'no one is good except one, God'. Jesus by no means repudiates goodness or sinlessness by this, but only says that the predicate would not be suitable for

⁷² I, p. 264.

⁷³ Schanz's comment on Mk. x. 18, runs as follows: "Jesus makes use of the address διδάσκαλε ἀγαθέ, in order to teach the young man that the word ἀγαθός in its full sense, as the designation of essential, immutable goodness, belongs to God only, so that it is only by conforming to the will of God that blessedness can be attained. Since, however, the young man had addressed Jesus, according to his conception, as a human teacher, even though exalted far above others, Jesus replied to him, as He often does elsewhere, from the standpoint of the questioner (Chrysostom, Jerome, Bede, Euthymius, Theophylact, and all Catholic expositors; Bengel, Olshausen, Ebrard, Keil), an explanation to whom of His Sonship to God was not now in place. No doubt, there must be supplied with οὐδεὶς not λέγεται but only ἐστὶ (Krüg, 62, 1, 1, Kühn, 417, 21) and the sense of οὐδεὶς εἰ μὴ is nothing else than *nemo nisi*, i.e., 'none but'; but all this does not exclude that Jesus, with respect to His higher nature, can Himself belong to this Divine Being: 'and He does not say, "Except my Father" that you may learn, that He did not ἐξεκάλυψεν Himself to the young man' (Chrysostom)."

⁷⁴ *Erklärung der drei ersten Evangelien*,² p. 735 (quoted by Wagner, p. 153).

⁷⁵ On Mark x. 18 (Wagner, p. 153).

Him if He were nothing more than a διδάσκαλος, for which the young man took Him. This question gives no occasion, however, to instruct the young man thoroughly as to His Divine-human nature." This interpretation, therefore, readily passes into the essentially different one—with which we are on the entirely different ground that Jesus does not in any sense repudiate the goodness attributed to Him—which understands Jesus in His response to be really announcing His deity. The transition from the one to the other of these interpretations is perhaps indicated by such a comment as that of M. Lepin, who writes as follows:⁷⁶ " 'Why callest thou me good?' says He to the young man who accosts Him; 'No man is good except God only.' The young man, no doubt, saw in the Master only an ordinary Rabbi. Seemingly Jesus refuses, as due to God alone, a title which is given Him only as man. Perhaps, however, He does not refuse it absolutely, and wishes discreetly to insinuate to His interlocutor, or to His disciples, who surrounded Him, that He to whom this title is given and who, as they well know, thoroughly deserves it, is not merely man but is God also. There is indeed nothing to show that our Savior wishes formally to decline such an attribution; that would indeed be strange and out of keeping with His usual attitude; had He not said, 'Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart?' The turn of expression employed, 'Why callest thou me good?' seems rather intended to cause the young man to reflect upon the unconscious bearing of his appellation. It is thus that on another occasion the Divine Master asked the Jews, 'Why do the Scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David?' Considering the subsequent reflection made by the Savior, the method employed when He remitted the sins of the paralytic is recalled: 'God only can forgive sins, as you say; well, I claim to forgive sins; and thus I prove my authority to do so!' Similarly here: 'Thou callest me good. The title is de-

⁷⁶ *Jésus Messie et Fils de Dieu*,³ 1907, pp. 336 ff. (E. T. *Christ and the Gospel*, 1910, pp. 412 ff.).

served: thou thyself hast judged me in comparison with ordinary masters; I therefore do not decline it; but consider well! there is none that is good but God alone!"

A comment like this brings us to the point of turning away altogether from the "objurgatory" interpretation of our Lord's demand, "Why callest thou me good?" It remains therefore only to read the question simply as a question, that is to say as an incitement to inquiry on the part of the questioner.⁷⁷ In that case only two lines of interpretation lie open. Either the question, along with the succeeding clause, "no one is good but one, God", is intended to suggest to the interlocutor that Jesus is Himself divine, or else it is intended to turn attention for the moment away from Jesus altogether and focus it on God. The former line of interpretation has been taken by many and was for long indeed the ruling view.⁷⁸ As so understood, so far from suggesting that our Lord is neither divine nor good, it is an assertion that He is both good and divine. Ambrose will supply us with a good example of this interpretation.⁷⁹ Inveighing against the Arians who make out that our Lord

⁷⁷ A. Plummer, commenting on Lk. xx. 42 (p. 473) suggests that the question there may be intended only to make the Scribe think; and illustrates by a reference to our present passage: "The question 'Why callest thou Me good?' appears to serve a similar purpose. It *seems* to imply that Christ is not to be called good (Mk. x. 18). But it need mean no more than that a young man who addressed Jesus as 'Good Master' ought to reflect as to the significance of such language before making use of it." He compares also Lk. xi. 19 as possibly a similar case.

⁷⁸ Cf. Schanz on Lk. xviii. 18: "The most of the Fathers, if they do not call the question an ensnaring one (*versuta*, Ambrose; *tentans*, Jerome, Cyril) and therefore look upon the reply as a repulse, *arguta responsio*, assume that it is meant for the young man's instruction as to the deity of Christ. Jesus, it is said, reproves the ruler for calling Him a good teacher instead of a good God." He cites as expressing this latter view, Ambrose, Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nanzianzus, Basil, Cyril, Chrysostom, Hilary, Jerome, Augustine, Bede. Cf. A. Plummer, on Lk. xviii. 19 (p. 422, note 1), where Cyril and Ambrose are quoted and Jerome, Basil and Epiphanius referred to (with Maldonatus and Wordsworth among the commentators).

⁷⁹ *De Fide*, II, 1 (Migne, *Patr. Lat.*, 16, col. 563; E. T., *Post Nicene Fathers*, second series, X, p. 226).

here denies that He is good, he asks that we consider when, where and with what circumspection our Lord speaks here. "The Son of God," he continues, "speaks in the form of man, and He speaks to a Scribe,—to him, that is, who called the Son of God 'Good Master', but denied Him to be God. What he does not believe Christ adds, that he may believe in the Son of God, not as a Good Master but as the Good God. For, if wheresoever the 'One God' is named, the Son of God is never separated from the fullness of the Unity, how, when the one God is declared good is the Only-begotten excluded from the fullness of the divine goodness? They must therefore either deny that the Son of God is God, or confess that He is the good God. With heavenly circumspection, then, He said, not 'No one is good but the Father only', but 'No one is good but God only'. For 'Father' is the proper name of Him who begets, but the 'one God' by no means excludes the Godhead of the Trinity, and therefore extols the Natures: goodness is therefore in the nature of God, and in the nature of God is also the Son of God, and therefore what is predicated is not predicated of the Singularity but of the Unity. Goodness is, then, not denied by the Lord, but such a disciple is rebuked. For when the Scribe said, 'Good Master', the Lord responded, 'Why callest thou me good?' And that means, 'It is not enough to call me good whom thou dost not believe to be God. I do not seek such disciples, who rather believe in a good master according to manhood than according to Godhead the good God.'

It is not easy to turn up a modern comment moving on precisely these lines. Perhaps something like it is intended by Friedrich Köster, when he writes:⁸⁰ "Should it, now, seem as if Jesus in the words, 'Why callest thou me good', repels the predicate of goodness from Himself, it is already remarked by Wolf (in *Curis ad h. l.*), *Haec quaestio non negantis est, sed examinantis*. 'Dost thou consider well, when thou callest me good, that this predicate belongs to God

⁸⁰ TSK, 1856, p. 422.

alone?' It belongs to Jesus, therefore, only by virtue of His perfect union with the Father." And Rudolf Stier plays upon the same note amid others which go to make up his chord, when he writes:⁸¹ "Christ takes care not to say, *I am not good*, for One only is good, *my Father*. . . . He deals more exactly with the word than the rationalists, who 'exhaust themselves in phrases, call Him the best, noblest, most excellent, most perfect, etc.', and yet deny His divine dignity. He said then to the young ruler what He must say still more strongly to these modern panegyrists, not in kindness but in anger: 'Why callest thou me good?' He, however, at the same time attests His divinity (although He does not speak plainly of what is concealed) when He who knew no sin affirms: 'None is good save One, that is God.'" In support, he quotes in a note⁸² the following dilemma: "Choose then, ye friends of reason, between these two conclusions dictated by reason itself. None is good but the one God; Christ is good; therefore Christ is the one God. Or: none is good but the one God: Christ is not the one God; therefore Christ *is not good*." The sober and pregnant comment of Bengel may also find a place here. "Nevertheless," he writes,⁸³ "He does not say, I am not good; but, Why dost thou call me good? Just as in Mat. xxii. 43 He does not deny that He, the Lord of David, is at one and the same time, also the Son of David. God is good: there is no goodness without Godhead. This young man perceived in Jesus the presence of goodness in some degree: otherwise he would not have applied to Him: but he did not perceive it in the full extent; otherwise he would not have gone back from Him. Much less did he recognize His Godhead. Wherefore Jesus does not accept from him the title of goodness without the title of Godhead (cf. the

⁸¹ *The Words of the Lord Jesus*, I, p. 360b. Cf. p. 361a: "Thou speakest with too much readiness of *doing* good (I too should not be good as thou thinkest, if I were a man as thou supposest)."

⁸² From the *Hom. lit. Correspondenzblatt*, 1826, p. 176. He tells us that the same dilemma is well presented also in a sermon by Nitzsch.

⁸³ *Gnomon*, on Mk. x. 18.

'Why call ye me Lord, Lord', Lk. vi. 46); and thereby He vindicates the honor of the Father with whom He is one. See Jno. v. 19. At the same time He causes a ray of His omniscience to enter into the heart of the young man, and shows that the young man has not as yet the knowledge concerning Himself, Jesus Christ, worthy of so exalted a title, which otherwise is altogether appropriate to Him. Wherefore, He does not say, *There is none good save one, that is my Father*, but, *There is none good save one, that is, God*'. Our Lord often adjusted His words to the capacity of those who questioned Him (Jno. iv. 22)."

Most recent writers, however, who have come to see that our Lord's question is *non negantis sed examinantis*, have also come to see that His purpose here is not inconsequently to proclaim His own deity, but in accordance with the demands of the occasion to point the young man inquiring after a law of life to Him who had once for all proclaimed a perfect law of life.⁸⁴ They have, of course varying ways of

⁸⁴ Cf. J. A. Dorner, *Ueber Jesu Sündlosigkeit*, 1862, pp. 13-14. After showing that Jesus had no intention of leading the young man to suppose that he could enter into life apart from Him, or of pointing him away from Himself when He pointed him to God, Dorner continues: "But the first thing he had need of, as Jesus saw from the light, easy way in which he used the word 'good' was self-knowledge, not the announcement of Christ's mission and dignity, for the understanding of which he still lacked the preconditions; concerning which therefore, in accordance with His method as elsewhere manifested, Jesus meanwhile preserved silence. . . . The purpose of the passage is, therefore, not to deny goodness to the person of Christ, nor to make a positive declaration as to what He is, but to rebuke the frivolous attribution of goodness to a teacher at the cost of reverence to God, and by a striking declaration, which would conquer through its humility, to reveal to the young man his fundamental fault, namely that he took goodness too lightly. That Jesus intended to ascribe sinfulness to Himself is impossible, since that would be out of accord with His other self-expressions as to His redemptive vocation, both in the Synoptics and in John, and with the position He takes in the Kingdom of God. The Evangelists too, as little as the primitive church so understood Him. . . ." Dorner thinks, however, that there is nevertheless intrinsic in the passage a contrast between Jesus' goodness, as human, and God's, as absolute—"since no earthly, creaturely goodness can yet be called perfect, because it is not yet perfected, and is not yet raised beyond temptations and change."

expressing the general understanding of the passage common to them all; and they inevitably bring out its implications and connections with more or less completeness, and with more or less penetration.⁸⁵ The emphasis seems to be particularly well distributed in a passage in A. Schlatter's *Theology of the New Testament*,⁸⁶ and we therefore venture to quote it here. "To him who sought from Him the Good Master, direction as to the work by which he could secure for himself eternal life, He replied that no one is good except God, but God is really good; and instead of meeting his wish and Himself giving him a commandment, He binds him to the divine commandments in their simple clearness. The desire to obtain, instead of them, a new prescription which should now for the first time assure eternal life, Jesus calls impious, a denial of God, which is made no better by being attributed to Him too. To permit Himself to be praised as good, while at the same time, or even thereby, God's goodness is denied, could not be endured by Jesus. Against this kind of religion He ever spoke as the Son who defended the goodness of the Father against every doubt, and hallowed His commandments as perfect. A glorifying of His own dignity at the cost of God's, a trust in His judgment along with distrust in God's commandments, an exalting of His own goodness along with reproaches against God—meant to Him absolute impossibility." No doubt, there are elements in this statement which are open to criticism. But the main matter comes in it to clear announcement. Jesus' concern here is not to glorify Himself but God: it is not to give any instruction concerning His own person whatever, but to indicate the published will of God as the sole and the perfect prescription for the pleasing of God. In proportion as we wander away from this central thought, we wander away from the real meaning of the passage and misunderstand and misinterpret it.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ See above, note 23, for some of the commentators of this class.

⁸⁶ A. Schlatter, *Die Theologie des NTs*, I, 1909, p. 303.

⁸⁷ *Detached note on some attempts to discover a more original text than that transmitted by our Gospels, especially F. C. Conybeare's* (see

notes 34, 35, 36).—H. J. Holtzmann, *Hand-Commentar zum N. T.*, I, *Die Synoptiker*,³ 1907, p. 88, writes: "This section concerning riches early aroused doubts on the score of the repudiation of the predicate 'good' (Mk. verse 17 = Lk. verse 19). Instead of recognizing the distinction between deity and humanity (see on Mat. vi. 12), which is obliterated by Matthew (verse 18) in a tendential manner, but is otherwise manifoldly witnessed in the early ecclesiastical literature (Bousset, *Justin*, 105 f.), the patristic exegesis found here instruction on the deity of Christ, as if Jesus' reply presented the major and the address to Him the minor premises of a syllogism, of which the reader is expected to draw the conclusion." At the place referred to in this cautious allusion (*Die Evangelienzeit Justin's*, &c., 1891, pp. 105-6) Bousset seeks to show from certain early citations of our passage that there existed an early form of the text—from which Matthew's text was derived "by dogmatic adjustment"—in which the latter part of our Lord's response stood something like what we find in Justin, *Dial.* 101^e: εἰς ἔστιν ἀγαθὸς ὁ πατήρ μου ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς. How the first part of our Lord's reply ran, he seems to be less sure. He supposes, however, that there lay behind Justin a form of text in which were combined a repudiation of the address of "Good Master" and a response to the demand "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?"—much as we find them combined in the Gospel according to the Hebrews. This text, though an earlier source than our Synoptic Gospels, he does not consider the original text (p. 106, note 3). The form preserved in Justin, or something like it, he judges to be more likely to be that. In *Dial.* 101^e this stands merely τὶ με λέγεις ἀγαθόν;

In this discussion Bousset makes no advance upon what Hilgenfeld had argued a half-century before (*Kritische Untersuchungen über die Evangelien Justin's, der Clementinischen Homilien und Marcians*, 1850, pp. 220 f., 362, 426; *Theologische Jahrbücher*, 1853, pp. 207, 235 f.; 1857, pp. 414 ff.; cf *ZWT*, 1863, pp. 361-2, note 3). That the reading attributed to Marcion by Epiphanius, *H*, 42,⁵⁰ p. 339: μὴ με λέγεις (p. 315 λέγετε) ἀγαθόν, εἰς ἔστιν ἀγαθὸς ὁ θεὸς ὁ πατήρ is a divergent text-form and not an interpretation, Hilgenfeld is sure; and that this text-form was in circulation beyond Marcionite, or even Gnostic, circles he thinks is shown by its occurrence four times in the Clementine Homilies (*Th. Jhbb.*, 1857, p. 415). Our present Matthew-text preserves from this earlier form the positive clause εἰς ἔστιν ὁ ἀγαθός. This positive clause is not to be supposed, therefore, to have been made out of the negative form found in our Mark and Luke: οὐδέεις ἀγαθὸς εἰ μὴ εἰς ὁ θεός. The contrary is the fact: the negative clause (first found in Justin, *Apol.*, I, 16) is rather a correction of the positive clause in an anti-Gnostic interest. For the Gnostics interpreted the εἰς ἔστιν ὁ ἀγαθὸς ὁ πατήρ (in which the ὁ πατήρ is the essential thing) as a distinguishing declaration that the only good God was the Father of Jesus Christ. The difference between the positive and the negative forms is, then, far from unimportant; it was of deep polemical significance. "If this difference seems small, it is nevertheless by means

of the negative turn that the contrast between the perfect God and the imperfection of all men is made the sole possible interpretation. And if, now, in our present Matthew-text there is apparent a purpose to exclude the distinction of Jesus from the perfect goodness of God, we recognize in this just a second alteration of this expression, at the basis of which lies already the doctrine of the deity of Christ" (*Theol. Jhbb.*, 1857, p. 416). It is an illusion to suppose therefore, that Matthew is made out of Mark: Matthew preserves a reading earlier than Mark's which Mark has set aside in an anti-Gnostic interest. But our present Matthew is a product of a still later revision,—in the interests of the deity of Christ.

A further attempt is made by F. C. Conybeare (*Hibbert Journal*, I, i, Oct., 1902, pp. 109-112) to validate the Marcionic text as underlying all three of the Synoptics, with the interest shifted now, however, to the opening (instead of the closing) words of our Lord's reply. The contention in which Conybeare is particularly interested is that, in the original text, we have not a question but a categorical injunction: "Call me not good!" And he endeavors to show that this reading held its ground into the fourth century, not in heretical circles only, but also, as at least an alternative reading, among the orthodox (Origen, Athanasius, Didymus, Ephrem). Conybeare does not write with judicial balance or in the spirit of scientific objectivity. He has a thesis to sustain, and pushes matters to such an extreme as to be self-refuting. There would be no reason for entering upon any examination of his contentions except for the fact that some tendency has shown itself of late to accept these speculations whether of Hilgenfeld or of Conybeare as findings of fact, and even to build critical conclusions upon them.

Thus, for example, F. Barth, *Die Hauptprobleme des Lebens Jesu*,³ 1907, p. 251, describing Jesus' testimony to His person, writes as follows: "That Jesus saw Himself compelled to make clear His position with reference to God by a self designation, we see better in proportion as we closely contemplate this position in detail and convince ourselves that it is a thoroughly peculiar, almost an enigmatical one. On the one hand, Jesus takes His place wholly on the side of man, over against God, and confesses Himself to possess the imperfections of human existence. He lays claim to no omniscience, but declares that He does not know the time of the parousia (Mk. xiii. 32); nor to any omnipotence, for it is not His to make determination as to the places of honor in the Kingdom of heaven (Mk. x. 40). We may be most struck, however, that He also seems to repudiate absolute moral perfection in the answer to the rich young man who asked Him, 'Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' (Mk. x, 17 f.; Lk. xviii, 18 f.). Jesus responded: 'Why callest thou me good? No one is good but *one*, God.' The reading: 'Why callest thou me good?' (or 'Call me not good!') 'No one is good but one, my Father in heaven'* is no doubt a Gnostic heightening. It would originally emphasize the contrast with the world-maker, the Jewish

God, who is not the Father of Jesus and not good (gracious), but righteous and wrathful. The Catholic counterpart to this is formed by the rare reading: "No' one is good except God only who has made all things"; here the sole good one is identified precisely with the world-maker. Still more decisively in contrast with it is the change which the Gospel of Matthew contains. . . ." At the point marked by an asterisk he gives a list of vouchers which certainly show that a reading in which "the Father" or "my Father who is in heaven" took the place of "God" in our Lord's response was in early circulation: but it is not so clear that this reading was manufactured by the Gnostics, though no doubt it was utilized by them; and neither is it clear that the alternative reading in the first clause "Call me not good" is a genuine "various reading". And it is certainly not clear that the readings which Barth enumerates, Justin's and Matthew's, illustrate how readily "uncomfortable readings are pushed out of existence". An even better example of the unjustified use of these textual speculations is supplied by Paul Feine, *Theologie des NTs*, 1910, p. 28, note, who, in explaining the meaning of our Lord in His response to the young ruler, incorporates quite simply, these words: "When Jesus says to the rich young man: 'Why callest thou me good.' or 'Call me not good' (*μή με λέγε αγαθόν*, as Conybeare, *Hibbert Journal*, 1902, I, 96-113, represents the oldest form, after Marcion, the Clementine Homilies, Tatian, Origen, in Mk. and Lk. xviii. 19). . . ." A phenomenon like this seems to require that we should subject Conybeare's argument to a sufficiently close scrutiny to bring out its real character.

Conybeare is engaged in seeking out doctrinal modifications of the original text occurring in the text of our Gospels. In the present state of critical opinion it is not unnatural that he fixes at once upon Mt. xix. 17 as an instance. This "bit of botching", as he calls it, however, contrary to the common critical opinion, he attributes not to the author of the Gospel, but, in accordance with his present quest, to an ancient corrector, working on the original text of Matthew "before Matthew was joined in one book with the other two gospels". He is not content however to find "doctrinal modifications" in Matthew's text; he discovers them in the text of Mark and Luke as well. The evidence on which he relies for this discovery, he gives as follows. Marcion, according to Epiphanius, read at Lk. xviii. 19: *μή με λέγε αγαθόν· εἰς ἐστὶν αγαθὸς ὁ θεὸς ὁ πατήρ*. "And Marcion's evidence goes back far behind any other." It is *a priori* unlikely, from Marcion's philosophical views, that he himself made the reading, "Call me not good". And that he did not make it is put beyond doubt by its appearance in the Clementine Homilies also, where, although it appears rather as a citation from Matthew than from Mark-Luke, it *a fortiori* argues the presence of the imperative reading in Mark-Luke. All this is borne out by the persistence of the imperative reading in later writings. In the Old Armenian version of a tract of Athanasius', it appears four times, and though in the present Greek text it is found in only one of these places, the editor tells us it occurs in the best manuscripts

in another of them; and we may believe that if the best manuscripts were scrupulously followed it would occur in all four of them. It seems to be presupposed in certain passages in the Armenian version of Ephrem's commentary on Tatian's *Diatessaron* "though the actual citations have been conformed to the ordinary text". It seems likewise to be presupposed in some passages in Origen's commentaries "though the text has been conformed either by the scribes or editors of his MSS".

As marshalled by Conybeare there seems to be presented here a considerable body of evidence. This is, however, illusory. The whole of the later evidence, from Origen to Didymus and Ephrem, may be at once dismissed. No question of reading is raised by it but only of interpretation. To suggest that Tatian must have read the imperative in his text because Ephrem, in commenting on this passage, speaks of Christ as "renouncing the appellation of 'good'" is nothing less than monstrous (cf. Zahn's *Tatians Diatessaron*, p. 173). To intimate that Origen must have read the imperative in his text, because he understands the Lord to reject the epithet "good", is so absurd that it reaches almost the level of the sublime. Not only does Origen repeatedly quote the passage and always with the interrogative, not the imperative (e.g. in the first two volumes of the Prussian Academy's edition, I, 9, 5; II, 12, 19; II, 355, 16; in the Commentary on John in the same series, 45, 10; 261, 28); but he explicitly tells us that the interrogative stood in his text of Mark and Luke,—that while Matthew reads, "Why askest thou me concerning the good", "Mark and Luke on the contrary say that the Savior said: 'Why callest thou me good? No one is good except one, God'" (*Com. in Mat.*, Tomus xv, 10; Lommatzsch iii, p. 346). Conybeare's dealing with Athanasius and Didymus, however, is so characteristic and therefore so instructive as regards his methods, that it deserves to be quoted at large and examined in some detail. "Among the writings of Athanasius," he writes, "is one called 'About the Epiphany of the Flesh of the God word and against the Arians', printed in Migne, *Patr. Gr.*, vol. xxvi, col. 984 foll. The text is cited from Mark or Luke four times, viz., col. 985 C, col. 993 A and B, col. 1012 B. In only one of these passages, 993 B, has the imperative, *μή με λέγε αγαθόν* survived the efforts both of editor and copyist to keep it out, and won its way into the printed text. But in 985 C the editor, Montfaucon, in his note states that it was so read in the three best MSS. In all four passages the old Armenian version renders, 'Call thou me not good' so testifying that the Greek MSS had it. Perhaps a more accurate editing of these would show that they have it still. In his treatise on the Trinity (c. 377) Didymus also cites the text in the form 'Call thou me not good', but with condemnation." Possibly it is Conybeare's predilection for things Armenian which has led him astray with reference to Athanasius' reading. The fact is that Athanasius cites the text of Mark and Luke in the form in which it now finds a place in these Gospels, and never otherwise. It stands in this form, therefore in 993 A and 1012 B where he is directly citing the text: in 993 B he is not making a citation; and in

985 C, he is citing the text not directly but from the lips of his Arian opponents. There is no evidence to be derived from these passages, therefore, that the text was read by Athanasius in the form "Call me not good". It will repay us to look at the passages.

In 1012 B, Athanasius is directly citing Scripture to support a proposition. He argues: "For unless the Holy Spirit were of the essence (*τῆς οὐσίας*) of the Only Good (*τοῦ μόνου ἀγαθοῦ*) He would not be called good, since the Lord prohibits Himself to be called good, in so far as He had become man, saying, 'Why callest thou me good? None is good but one, God.' The Holy Spirit, however, is not forbidden by the Scriptures to be called good, as David says, 'Thy good Spirit shall lead me into the right land.'" What we read in the continuous passage embracing both the references, 993 A and B, is this: "And when He says: 'Why callest thou me good? No one is good but one, God', God, reckoning Himself among men, spoke this according to His flesh, and with respect to the opinion of him who came to Him. For that one thought Him man only and not God, and the response keeps this opinion in view. For, if you think me a man, He says, and not God, call me not good, for no one is good. For the good does not belong to human nature but to God." Obviously the "Call me not good" here is not a citation but a free rendering of the sense of the "Why callest thou me good?" which is immediately before formally cited. The final passage, 985 C, is more complicated. Athanasius is talking of his Arian opponents. "And now, these people," he says, "if they knew the Holy Scriptures, would not dare to blaspheme the Creator of all things as a creature and a piece of handiwork. For they distort them to us, saying How can [the Son] be like [the Father], or of the Father's essence, when it is written, As the Father has life in Himself, so He has given also to the Son to have life in Himself. There is, they say, a superiority in the giver above the receiver. And, Why callest thou me good? they say, No one is good but one, God. And again, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And once more, Of the last day no one knoweth, not even the Son, except the Father. And again, Whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world. And again, Whom the Father raised from the dead. How then, they say, can He that is raised from the dead be like or of the same nature (*ὁμοούσιος*) with Him that raised Him?" Here is a series of Scriptural texts in use by the Arians and cited from their lips—Jno. v. 26; Mk. x. 18; Mt. xxvii. 47; Mk. xiii. 32; Jno. x. 26; Gal. i. 1. Some of them are quoted with accuracy (Jno. v. 26; Mt. xxvii. 47; Jno. x. 36). But some of them merely reproduce the sense (Gal. i. 1). Mk. x. 18 is printed as an accurate quotation. But the editor tells us in a note that in some of the MSS. it is read rather: *μή με λέγε, φησὶν, ἀγαθόν*, that is to say, "Call me not, they say, good". It may well be, as Conybeare contends, that this reading should be put into the text. In this context this would not mean that Athanasius so read it in his Mark, but only at the most that the Arians so read it in their Mark. We say "at the most", for there would be little more reason for

supposing that even they so read it in their Mark than for supposing that they read also in their Mark (at xiii. 32): *περὶ τῆς ἡμέρας τῆς ἐσχάτης οὐδεὶς οἶδεν, οὐδὲ ὁ υἱός*. If this is merely a paraphrase of the meaning, that may equally well be so too.

We presume that the "c. 377" attached to the reference to Didymus' treatise on the Trinity is meant to indicate the column in Migne, *Patr. Gr.*, where the passage referred to may be found. No such passage, however, is found at that reference. In cols. 349-352, however, there is a passage which we take to be the one intended. Heb. ii. 24 had just been quoted and commented on; and the discourse continues: "The Son also, however, showed that the deity is one, when He said, 'Why callest thou me good? No one is good but one, God'; but that the three hypostases are of equal dignity and of equal power, by the teaching concerning baptism [that is, by Mat. xxviii. 19]. Not responding to the lawyer who questioned Him temptingly, "Call me not good' but 'Why callest thou me good?' He showed that He too is good equally with the Father, and from His Father's goodness manifests His own, and demonstrates that He is good generated from God" It is, of course, conceivable that Didymus is referring here to a rival reading of Mk. x. 18 rejected by him. But there is no likelihood of that being the case. On the face of it, what he says is that this reading is *not* found in Mk. x. 18. We observe in passing that Didymus elsewhere also quotes Mk. x. 18 in the form "Why callest thou me good?" without betraying any consciousness of another reading; e.g. at col. 864: "And the response to the lawyer who temptingly addressed our Lord as a man, 'Good Master' and heard 'Why callest thou me good?' is of this kind"

Thus nothing is left as evidence of the currency of a reading "Call me not good!" but Epiphanius' representation that this was the reading of Marcion's Gospel, supported by the appearance of the passage in this form in the Clementine Homilies. Conybeare seems very sure that Marcion's text read as Epiphanius represents. A glance at the very full note of Zahn at the place (*Geschichte des Neutestamentlichen Kanons*,¹ II, 1890, pp. 483-4) will show how little this confidence is justified. Zahn himself prints Marcion's text in the hesitant form: *τί (or μή) με λέγετε αγαθόν; εἰς ἐστὶν αγαθός, ὁ (?) θεός ὁ πατήρ (?)*; tells us that it is "variously transmitted"; and suggests that the *μή* transmitted by Epiphanius may be only a transcriptional error for *τί*, —unless, he adds, the *τί* transmitted by Hippolytus is a transcriptional error for *μή*. " We ought not to let it fall out of sight, that there is no evidence for the currency of the phrase "Call me not good", as a reading at Mk. x. 18; Lk. xviii. 19, Mt. xix. 17 earlier than the fourth century, for it seems that the Clementine Homilies should be assigned to that century (cf. Dom Chapman, *ZNTW*, IX, 1908). When Hippolytus (*Refut.*, VII, 31) cites this text from a Marcionite book—apparently from Marcion himself—he gives it in the form, *τί με λέγετε αγαθόν*. Our own inclination is to suppose that the reading *μή με λέγε αγαθόν* stood in Marcion's Gospel as it was in circulation in the fourth century,

but was not original in it. We are led to this view by the circumstance that in the Clementine Homilies too (where this reading occurs four times; iii. 57, xvii. 4, xviii. 1, 3) it seems to appear (xviii. 1) as a Marcionite reading (Zahn, pp. 469, 483). But it is to be observed that in this understanding of the matter, all appeal to the Clementine Homilies as evidence that this reading was in circulation elsewhere than in Marcionite circles, or earlier than the fourth century, is precluded. Conybeare is as sure that Marcion (he would doubtless extend this to the Marcionites as a body) could not have invented the reading "Call me not good" as that it was read by Marcion. One would think a simple reading of Hippolytus' chapter just referred to (*Refut.*, vii, 31) would disabuse anyone's mind of this misjudgment. Whether, however, the reading arose by "doctrinal modification" on the part of the Marcionites or by simple transcriptional error as Zahn supposes, is of little moment. The point of importance is that there is no convincing evidence that such a reading was known earlier than the fourth century and no evidence whatever that it ever had any currency outside (later) Marcionite circles and perhaps among the Arians, to whom it was transmitted by the Clementine Homilies; for this is apparently the significance of the Clementine Homilies in this matter—that they formed the connecting link between Marcionite and Arian. It is meaningless, therefore, when Conybeare remarks: "Marcion's evidence goes back far behind any other", though that remark would be inexplicable in any case. It is probably not Marcion's personal evidence that is in question, but only that of the later Marcionites. And were it his personal evidence that was in question, Justin who quotes the text in the interrogative form was his strict contemporary, Tatian but a little younger contemporary, to say nothing of Marcosians and Naasenes with whom Irenaeus and Hippolytus connect the text in its interrogative form. In any case the total direct transmission of the text of the New Testament is not to be treated with this levity. On the face of it, apart from all citations of as early a date as Marcion, the text as set down in the critical editions of the New Testament is older than Marcion and was already in his day in wide circulation in versions as well as in the original Greek. When we speak in terms of relative originality—instead of in those of mere chronology—there is no room for question here. Any history which may be back of our existent manuscript-text of Mark and Luke in this passage (as indeed of that of Matthew too) is not a textual history but a literary history. What emerges from the ruck of confusion into which Conybeare has gratuitously cast the matter is thus simply that there may have been in circulation in heretical circles in the fourth century a reading in Mk. x. 18 or Luke xviii. 19 which substituted an imperative for the interrogatory form. Needless to say such a fact affords no slightest justification for looking upon this form as "the original" form.

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