

THE ETHIC OF WEALTH IN MATTHEW 6:19-21 & LUKE 12:33, 34

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An Exegetical Research Paper

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by

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*It must not be forgotten that the Kingdom of God at this period was identified with the person of Jesus, and the society of disciples who accompanied Him. To follow Jesus (literally) in His peregrinations was the only way of possessing this treasure, and of becoming fit to spread it in consequence. Then as we have seen, it was an army not merely of believers, but of evangelists, that Jesus was now laboring to form. If they had remained attached to the soil of their earthly property, they would have been incapable of following him and serving Him without looking backward.<sup>1</sup>*

## INTRODUCTION

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and eating destroy, and where thieves break through and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and consumption do not destroy, and where thieves do not break through and steal. For where your treasure is, there also will be your heart” (Matthew 6:19-21).

“Sell your possessions and give charitable gifts. Make for yourselves purses that might not become old, an inexhaustible treasure in the heavens, where a thief does not approach nor a moth destroy. For where your treasure is, there also your heart will be” (Luke 12:33-34).

This exegetical endeavor desires to return to these words of Jesus, hear them as they were spoken, and understand them as their writers intended them. Source and redaction critical considerations of the text, especially concerning Q, are a part of undertaking this endeavor. To a much greater degree, however, the discussion of Jesus’ teaching in these passages, and in turn Matthew and Luke’s use of that teaching, leads to questions concerning the nature or genre of the teaching. Is this a proverbial teaching? To what extent should it be taken literally? There are those who consider the teaching to be proverbial; not to be taken literally or even as much more

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<sup>1</sup>F. Godet, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (New York: I. K. Funk and Co., 1881), 346.

than the embodiment of a principle.<sup>2</sup> Then there are those that hold the teaching to be more literal, a command to be obeyed straightforwardly.

### INTERPRETIVE HISTORY

Although it will considerably lengthen the study's introduction, a glimpse at the interpretive history of Jesus' wealth ethic will be helpful on two counts. It will highlight the importance of the discussion on genre. It will also make evident the difficulty in hearing Jesus' words as the first disciples heard them. The survey will rely on the work of Barbara Nelson Gingerich. She compares two reformation perspectives whose interpretations of Jesus' wealth ethic differed ultimately on the basis of their starting point. The two representatives are John Calvin and the Hutterites (an Anabaptist reform group). Gingerich points out several complicating hermeneutical assumptions on the part of both parties, but most interestingly: 1) Calvin's "assumption that the words of a command are only truly understood when one appreciates the purpose for which it is given." 2) His belief in God's accommodation to men's changing capacities. 3) The Hutterite belief that the simplest sense of the text was preferable. 4) Their perception that the New Testament was speaking directly to them.<sup>3</sup>

Holding to only half of the points listed led either to the development to what became known as "the protestant work ethic," as with Calvinism, or to the evolution of a community into

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<sup>3</sup>Barbara Nelson Gingerich, "Property and the Gospel: Two Reformation Perspectives," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 59 no. 3 (Jl 1985): 259-260.

a form of exclusive communism, as with the Hutterites.<sup>4</sup> Neither extreme will do because, *generally speaking, all four of the assumptions listed are valid.* More should be said about each.

Points 1 and 3 might seem to be at odds with each other. On the one hand, it seems absurd to argue against Calvin's believe here, especially since finding the original purpose of the words is so much a part of our exegetical task. On the other hand, it is equally difficult to accept the thought that Jesus' disciples might have heard his words, carefully analyzed them, and decided he did not mean what he had said, thus they need not literally obey his commands. The possibility certainly remains, since Jesus said many things that were not meant to be taken literally, such as "Take up your cross and follow me."<sup>5</sup>

Gingerich points out that while Calvin himself spoke often of exegetical simplicity, his voluminous interpretive work gives credence to the notion that he did not view the task to be quite so simple. In all fairness, the same might be said of this study's approach to the subject. That is, we are suggesting simplicity in a very complicated manner. However, the validity of complex and difficult interpretive work is not contested here. Rather, such methods should not be used to endow a text with preconceived theological complexities, regardless of whether those complexities exist outside of the text.

Points 2 and 4 are the actual expressions of the interpretive conflict. To state the problem plainly, there is for many interpreters a difference between the significance of Jesus' words for his immediate followers and their significance for later disciples. For this reason Calvin spoke

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 259.

<sup>5</sup>"Take up your cross and follow me," is not to be taken literally. Yet, there is a literal spiritual crucifixion, which Paul so often references in his letters (e.g. Galatians 2:20). If a literal spiritual selling of possession or a literal spiritual avoidance of storing up possessions could be demonstrated, then perhaps the comparison would stand. Yet, rather than quibble about one example when so many others could be given, it will be more advantageous to review various reasons for and against a literal interpretation of the treasures teaching, and let them stand or fall on their own.

of accommodation, meaning in this case that the wealth ethic has been accommodated to believers not literally following Jesus. Conversely, the Hutterites made no such distinctions between themselves and the first disciples, so that if the commands were literal for the first disciples, they are literal for all believers. *This is the external theological complication that must not be read back into the text.*

Nonetheless, the historical survey also serves to indirectly point out a third issue, decidedly the most difficult. The fact is that Matthew and Luke were not simply recording the words of Jesus as he spoke to his first disciples. The audiences of those letters were first century Christians who themselves were not literally following Jesus. Therefore this study seeks to draw two exegetical conclusions: one concerning Jesus' intention and the other concerning the Evangelists' intention(s). We postulate that there is no indication in the text that *for either of them*, his words were not to be taken literally.

#### LITERARY FORM

Ulrich Luz notes that assuming v. 21 of Matthew simply to be a wisdom admonition is an improper starting point. He states, "Verse 21 has not been added as a proverb to vv. 19-20 but has *become* a proverb only in the history of influence of 6:19-21 because it was applicable in so many ways"<sup>6</sup> (italics his). If this is the case, it raises the question of why the tendency to view Jesus' teaching as proverbial exists. We do not deny the validity of that stylistic genre, but there certainly ought to be a rationale for labeling a given passage as such.

One particularly interesting view is that of Alfred Plummer, who saw the poverty of the Jerusalem church portrayed in Paul's epistles to be the result of taking Luke's "sell your

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<sup>6</sup>Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989), 392.

possessions and give to the poor” literally in Acts 2.<sup>7</sup> That notion is unfounded and does not take into account the possibility of economic difficulty as a result of something like famine (Acts 11:28) or persecution (Acts 18:2). Darrel Bock also sees the treasures teaching lived out in Acts 2 and 4, but notes that Ananias and Sapphira were presumably justified in keeping part of their money.<sup>8</sup> Rudy Baergen observes a similar phenomenon with Zacchaeus.<sup>9</sup> In discussing the danger of wealth, P. H. Davis notes that Zacchaeus is actually Jesus’ example of a rich man being saved, something he had just said to be possible only with God (Mk. 10:27). His point is, however, that salvation came to Zacchaeus’ house only after he had given up his riches. The emphasis is on what he had given up, not on what he had kept.<sup>10</sup>

The idea that Baergen has pointed to is not invalid. Davis will also go on to say that the disciples did not leave their possessions totally,<sup>11</sup> which R. T. France also discusses.<sup>12</sup> Here it is critical to review the Evangelists’ words. Luke does not record Jesus saying, “Sell all your possessions,” but rather, “Sell your possessions and give charitable gifts.” Likewise, Matthew does not write “Do not have for yourselves any possessions,” but instead, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth.” This is a significant point for the overall study, and France asks, “Was there a two-tier system, under which the most fully committed, those who traveled around

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<sup>7</sup>Plummer, 329.

<sup>8</sup>Bock, 1167.

<sup>9</sup>Rudy Baergen, “The Motif of Renunciation of Possessions in the Gospel of Luke,” *Conrad Grebel Review* 11 (Fall 1993): 235.

<sup>10</sup>P. H. Davis, “Rich and Poor,” in *Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 705.

<sup>11</sup>David, 709.

<sup>12</sup>R. T. France, “God and Mammon,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 51 (1979): 13, 14.

with Jesus, renounced private possessions, while a wider circle retained their possessions and so provided the means for the support of the inner circle?”<sup>13</sup>

His question is reminiscent of Calvin’s accommodation, although we are still dealing with Jesus’ audience. For the sake of space, we will also readdress at this point our question concerning the difference between Jesus’ intention for his hearers and Matthew/Luke’s intentions for theirs. This study’s assertion is that for all of the above groups of disciples, the unifying factor across time and space is the teaching’s emphasis on the concern for the poor. All the believers are to take part in the literal renunciation of possessions in order to give alms and thus store up treasures in heaven.

Instead, however, the internalization of the “principle” has become the common practice in the interpretation of the Christian ethic of wealth. “Inward freedom”<sup>14</sup> from treasures is the essential thing, thus the attitude of the Christian towards his treasure is the key,<sup>15</sup> not actually disowning them. To digress for a moment, the real irony of this approach is manifested mostly clearly when considering the modern language often used to convey this idea: “What matters is where your heart is.” Such a starting point for interpretation is supremely circular since Jesus said that your heart will be exactly where your treasure is, nowhere else. Ulrich points out that the result of simply internalizing the principle has logically and historically lead to this end: “‘The direction of the heart toward God’ can be demonstrated not only in renunciation but just as

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<sup>13</sup>France, 13.

<sup>14</sup>Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), 359; Godet, 346, cf. “...all he had in mind was the disengaged and charitable spirit...”

<sup>15</sup>Gledenhuys, 359.

well in the acquisition of possessions.”<sup>16</sup> So the conclusion based on the non-literal or proverbial assumption is that Jesus’ words can mean exactly the opposite of their face value.

Perhaps the issue is complicated by the presence of “kingdom” language (Mt 6:33; Lk 12:31). Discussing the context of our pericope, Joel Green contends that the kingdom has already been given, referring to Jesus’ earthly ministry.<sup>17</sup> Andrew Overman refers to the “nature of membership in the kingdom of heaven,”<sup>18</sup> pointing out that the kingdom is both the church and the kingdom to come. Craig Blomberg also sees a connection between seeking the kingdom and storing up treasures in heaven.<sup>19</sup> He leans in the direction of Overman:

The broader context of Jesus’ teaching on the kingdom strongly supports this “already-not yet” interpretation of his ethic. Jesus does not expect his followers to be able fully to implement his commands in this age, but he holds them forth as an ideal for which they must ever strive, through the help of God’s Spirit. In short, proper interpretation and application of the sermon on the mount must avoid the twin errors of triumphalism and defeatism.<sup>20</sup>

Circumventing the question of application, it hardly seems fair to label the disciples’ obedience as triumphalism. This may be a fair warning for verses such as Matthew 5:48, but placing it in the context of 6:19-21 does no justice to the fact that obedience was attainable and expected. Moreover, returning to the complex of almsgiving and care for the poor, it can be demonstrated that practical implementation was the concern of Jesus and the Evangelists.

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<sup>16</sup>Ulrich, 394.

<sup>17</sup>Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 495.

<sup>18</sup>Andrew J Overman, *Church and Community in Crisis: The Gospel According to Matthew* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 91.

<sup>19</sup>Craig C. Blomberg, “On Wealth and Worry: Matthew 6:19-34 – Meaning and Significance”, *Criswell Theological Review* 6 (Fall 1992): 77.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 74.

Let it be said that poverty for its own sake is never the objective Jesus' teaching.<sup>21</sup> Rather, is it primarily the redistribution of property that the gospel wealth ethic is seeking.<sup>22</sup> Bruce Malina states, "Given the perception of limited goods and an embedded economy, Jesus' injunction to give one's goods to the poor is not about self-improvement but about redistribution of wealth."<sup>23</sup> France illustrates that despite an obvious lack of funds, Jesus still saw to the giving of alms (Mk. 14:5; Jn. 12:5).<sup>24</sup> He also states that the essential principle embodied in Jesus' practice is that of compassionately putting others' needs before even the calculation of one's own.<sup>25</sup>

An interesting dynamic arises among those previously mentioned disciples who did not follow Jesus but instead supported and hosted him (e.g. Martha and Mary or Joseph of Arimathea). Thomas D. Hanks proposes that such communities of support were essential to the "homeless prophets,"<sup>26</sup> and Davis contends that the wealth ethic is nonsensical within modern individualism.<sup>27</sup> More will be said in the arrangement section about community. The point here is that no less for these (and perhaps especially for these) "the focus is on their acts of charity toward 'one of the least of these brothers of mine.'"<sup>28</sup> Within the established Christian community there is still need to obey Jesus' teaching in a literal way.

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<sup>21</sup>Davis, 706.

<sup>22</sup>France, 5; cf. also Davis, 707.

<sup>23</sup>Bruce Malina, "Wealth and Poverty in the New Testament and Its World," *Interpretation* 41 (1987): 366.

<sup>24</sup> France, 7.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 15.

<sup>26</sup>Thomas D. Hanks, "Poor, Poverty," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* vol. 5, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doublday, 1992): 416.

<sup>27</sup>Davis, 708.

<sup>28</sup>Davis, 708.

For those actually following Jesus, there remains another facet. We began the study with a quote from F. Godet that most aptly states the reality of the disciples *necessarily* literal understanding of Jesus' wealth ethic as it is expressed in Matthew 6:19-21 and Luke 12:33-34. Baergen puts it like this, "The motif of the renunciation of possessions . . . assists the author in delineating the frame of mind required for the disciple to travel together with Jesus to his destiny."<sup>29</sup> In summary, the disciples would have and did take Jesus' words concerning treasures at face value--not as a proverb, hyperbole, principle or ideal.

### SELECTIVITY

The texts of Matthew 6:19-21 and Luke 12:33-34 are not paralleled in Mark or John. As of yet there is not much upon which to base speculation about why either Matthew or Luke chose to include this pericope, although even a glance through Luke's Gospel will reveal a concern for money matters. Since the material is in the Double Tradition, the question of Q is immediately raised, a question that will be dealt with below. Even though Q is essentially a source-critical phenomenon, there have been attempts to reconstruct the Q source for these verses, which is primarily a redaction-critical project. Therefore the discussion of Q will be intermingled with the redactional commentary that follows.

It is quite interesting to choose a starting point for the discussion of Q, because for this pericope there are polar positions in regard to who represents Q more faithfully. Phillip Sellew has made a meticulous effort to reconstruct Q.<sup>30</sup> Sellew is fully in favor of Matthew's wording, with the single exception of Luke's use of ὑμῶν in v. 34. Schweitzer believes Matthean wording

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<sup>29</sup>Baergen, 238.

<sup>30</sup>Phillip Sellew, "Reconstruction of Q 12:33-59," *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* no. 26 (1987): 617-668.

to be original as well, but he thinks Lukan arrangement to be more accurate.<sup>31</sup> This is because when one removes the L material from Luke vv. 13-15, “Do not be worried” in vv. 11 and 22 match up nicely. The same thing happens when vv. 35-38 are removed, so that the thief imagery in vv. 33 and 39 are brought together. Matthew’s wording is preferred on the basis of a higher congruence between his διορύσσοισιν and διορυχθῆναι in Luke 12:39. However, Schweizer does not take into account the similarity between the thief coming near (ἐγγίξει in Lk 12:33) and the thief coming (ἔρχεται in Lk 12:39). Luz postulates that the only Matthean change is from τοῖς οὐρανοῖς (so Luke) to οὐρανῶ.<sup>32</sup>

As for those who hold a different opinion of Q, Overman sees Matthew’s material as derived from Q, but believes him to have edited it “slightly” to fit the context of his story.<sup>33</sup> The major proponent of extensive Matthean redaction is Robert Gundry,<sup>34</sup> who gives very reasonable explanations of Matthew’s editorial activity throughout the passages. Some of them will follow in the redaction section. In the end however, the two positions are found to be at an impasse. It is fitting that Blomberg points out the virtual impossibility of knowing whether material in such different Synoptic contexts represents independent sayings, variant oral traditions, or a common written source.<sup>35</sup> He does not deny the possibility of a Q-hypothesis, but opts instead to exegete “without postulating earlier, noticeably divergent forms of the material,” based on his belief that

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<sup>31</sup>Schweizer, 161.

<sup>32</sup>Luz, 392.

<sup>33</sup>Overman, 91.

<sup>34</sup>Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 111-113.

<sup>35</sup>Blomberg, 75.

Matthew and Luke are faithful transmitters of their traditions.<sup>36</sup> His remarks seem altogether sensible. Nonetheless, most of the redactional commentary that follows will assume Q-theory.

#### ADAPTATION

Πωλήσατε τὰ ὑπάρχοντα ὑμῶν καὶ δότε ἐλεημοσύνην (Lk 12:33a). Unique to Luke, the command to sell one's possessions is central to the dispute about how Christians are to handle their possessions. Bock, although he explains the passage proverbially, admits that the command is nonfigurative and notes the aorist tense, which "calls for decisive action."<sup>37</sup> Considering the encounter with the rich young ruler, Jesus most likely said words very much like those recorded in Luke. This makes one wonder why Matthew, assuming he had access to the information, would not have included it. Gundry points out that Matthew has already written about almsgiving in vv. 2-4, speculating that he felt no need to include the command.<sup>38</sup> Still, the distinction between Luke's positive command and Matthew's negative one is enough to indicate the presence of *two independent traditions*, be they oral or written. It is certainly not inconceivable that Jesus would say words like these more than once--indeed, it is likely that he would.

The next section of the text we will examine is Mt. 6:19-20. The most impressive thing about the passages is surely their parallelism. In order to see it more clearly the verses are printed in the following manner:

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 76.

<sup>37</sup>Bock, 167.

<sup>38</sup>Gundry, 111.

<sup>19</sup> Μὴ θησαυρίζετε ὑμῖν θησαυροὺς ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, ὅπου σῆς καὶ  
<sup>20</sup> θησαυρίζετε δὲ ὑμῖν θησαυροὺς ἐν οὐρανῷ, ὅπου οὔτε σῆς οὔτε

βρῶσις ἀφανίζει καὶ ὅπου κλέπται διορύσσουσιν καὶ κλέπτουσιν;  
 βρῶσις ἀφανίζει καὶ ὅπου κλέπται οὐ διορύσσουσιν οὐδὲ κλέπτουσιν;

It is striking to see how closely the two verses echo each other. Jesus has rightly been called a creative genius, and no one could deny the possibility that he structured his own words thusly as a sermonic device. This parallelism in particular, though, leads some to conclude that Matthew extrapolated from Jesus' original words. Gundry takes this view and looks to a similar phenomenon in vv. 14-15, in the Lord's Prayer.<sup>39</sup>

Gundry maintains that two things have been accomplished in so doing. One, there is now double the emphasis placed on treasures, an emphasis he holds to be typical of Matthew.<sup>40</sup> Even Schweitzer, who unlike Gundry favors Matthean wording as original, concedes to the apparent formulation by Matthew of the parallel.<sup>41</sup> We would agree that while Matthew is certainly remaining faithful to the *ipsissima vox* of Jesus, *he likely formulated these verses in his own fashion*. R. C. H. Lenski observes the treasures emphasis in the parallelism and also in the use of the phrase θησαυρίζετε θησαυροὺς ("treasure treasures").<sup>42</sup> Two, Gundry points out that Matthew maintains the motif of a negative command followed by a positive command (vv. 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 16, 25, 31, 34).<sup>43</sup> Hendricksen agrees with this observation,<sup>44</sup> as does Lenski, who offers

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<sup>39</sup>Gundry, 113.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 111, 113.

<sup>41</sup>Schweitzer, 162.

<sup>42</sup>R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of Matthew*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 275.

<sup>43</sup>Gundry, 113.

<sup>44</sup>Hendricksen, 344, 345.

a slight nuancing of the dynamic. He notices that previous to this point, the commands have been formulated in a ὅταν clause.<sup>45</sup> That is, *whenever* you do those things, do not do them like the hypocrites (vv. 3, 5, 16). Now the implication is, do not store up treasures at all. This observation is well met. Over all, it does seem likely that whatever the original phrase was, Matthew has adapted it for his purposes.

The word tenses in the two passages have been the subject of some debate in regard to adaptation. First, treasure is plural in Matthew vv. 19, 20 and singular in Luke v. 33. Gundry attributes this to Matthew changing the original singular to match more closely his compound “moth and eating” and plural “thieves.” Schweizer points out instead the divergence of plural treasures in vv. 19, 20 and singular treasure in v. 21 (along with the plural tense used in 19, 20 vs. the singular “your” in 21). This leads him to the conclusion that the verses were not originally associated. Thus, he believes Luke to have changed his tenses to correspond with each other.<sup>46</sup>

It is important at this point to note the virtual uniformity of Matthew 6:21 and Luke 12:34. *Their similarity indicates much more certain authenticity and makes them the standard.* Since they both contain the singular “treasure,” either Schweizer is correct, or these verses did actually go together, and Luke is transmitting the more faithful rendering of tense. Considering Matthew’s apparent redactional tendencies so far, the latter is preferable. If that is the case, it does, as Bock notes,<sup>47</sup> create an interesting change of tense when Matthew uses σου. However, it could very well be that here Matthew has chosen to emphasize the personal nature of the heart.

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<sup>45</sup>Lenski, 274.

<sup>46</sup>Schweizer, 161, 162.

<sup>47</sup>Bock, 1168.

If so, it is all the more emphatic in contrast to the otherwise plural subject tense. This is in addition to its emphatic placement at the end of the sentence in Matthew.

The difference between the plural “heavens” in Luke and singular “heaven” in Matthew is the other tense debate. Sellew cites sources noting that the plural is rarer in Luke, and the singular is rarer in Matthew, which does not help much.<sup>48</sup> Gundry proves helpful when he judges the Semitic plural to be most authentic, explaining Matthew to have corresponded the singular “heaven” with the singular “earth.”<sup>49</sup> All of this is very reasonable in light of previous findings.

### ARRANGEMENT

The Sermon on the Mount certainly sets the stage for whatever Matthew is trying to convey with this passage. In the most general sense, one might say that the sort of living proposed by Jesus in these verses is simply another example of “better righteousness.”<sup>50</sup> Another very important framework to consider is that of the community which is being addressed. Blomberg puts it aptly, “And the observation that he is speaking to his disciples as a group, as part of their itinerant *community*, suggests that he is giving instructions not only for individuals but also for corporate Christian living” (italics original).<sup>51</sup> Overman observes that both community and righteousness are summed up together in 6:33.<sup>52</sup> One other interpretive window might be highlighted, particularly when considering the narrower context of earthly anxieties. Still based on the concept of kingdom discussed previously and readdressed in 6:33, eschatology

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<sup>48</sup>Sellew, 627.

<sup>49</sup>Gundry, 111, 112.

<sup>50</sup>Douglas R. Hare, *Matthew*, Interpretation (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1993), 71.

<sup>51</sup>Blomberg, 74.

<sup>52</sup>Overman, 92.

surely plays a role in understanding the dynamic of the pericope.<sup>53</sup> Bock denies the notion,<sup>54</sup> but if it is not evident in Matthew, it will certainly be so in Luke.

Much of what has been said is encapsulated in the quote that began this study. Godet has captured the essence of the teaching because he understood its foundations. “The heart, once set free from its earthly burden, will live on the new attachment to which it is given up, and on the expectation with which it is thus inspired (vers. 35-38).”<sup>55</sup> Eschatological expectation inevitably gives rise to a lifestyle unconcerned with material possessions.<sup>56</sup> The parables that follow Luke 12:33, 34 emphasize readiness for the master’s return and stewardship. Considering that, it would be difficult to deny the relationship between those parables and the teachings on wealth and worry that precede them.

### SOCIOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This final discussion relies mainly on the work of Abraham Malherbe.<sup>57</sup> Malherbe’s intent is to demonstrate Luke’s awareness of moral teachings on greed common to Cynic philosophers of the day. Indeed, there are striking similarities between the issues addressed in Luke 12:13-34 and those discussed in the philosophical world at large. Malherbe contends that Luke utilized terms widely known in order to convey his message, and in the process Christianized the pagan *topos*. This is doubtlessly as true as it would be for writers today. As a result, a couple things are evidenced. One, ideas about the reduction of possessions were by no

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<sup>53</sup>Blomberg, 73.

<sup>54</sup>Bock, 1167.

<sup>55</sup>Godet, 347.

<sup>56</sup>A.J. Mattill, Jr., *Luke and the Last Things* (Dillsboro, NC: Wester North Carolina Press, 1979), 87, 88.

<sup>57</sup>Abraham J. Malherbe, “The Christianization of a Topos (Luke 12:13-34),” *Novum Testamentum* 38 (April 1996): 123-135.

means figurative. People actually did without them in order to avoid anxiety. Two, the avoidance of anxiety as an end in itself is in stark contrast with the Christian teaching. Matthew 6:19-21 and Luke 12: 33, 34 show the end to be a concern for another kingdom;<sup>58</sup> saving up another kind of treasure. The anxieties that Matthew and Luke write to assuage are derivative of doing without, not having too much. In the end, it is only the provision of God that gives the disciple confidence to follow Jesus and obey his commands.

### CONCLUSION

In the final analysis, it must be said that Matthew and Luke's teachings on treasures in heaven are replete with significance. As Christians try to follow Jesus today, it will do them good to consider the significance it held for the first followers. "If it was necessary for those who accepted his call to full-time discipleship then to sell their possessions and give to the poor, it can hardly be that an acceptance of the same values today will leave our bank balances and our life-style unaffected."<sup>59</sup> These two passages are certainly not all the New Testament has to say about wealth. But all that these passages say is enough to accomplish their purpose, which is to point the disciple away from futility and toward great expectation. The Christian community, the Kingdom of God, is sufficient for its people. It is His provision. Perhaps as we come to understand this more fully, we will be able to follow him and serve him without looking backward.

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<sup>58</sup>Warren Carter, *Matthew and Empire: Initial Explorations* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001), 129.

<sup>59</sup>France, 17.

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