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JESUS' PAROUSIA IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CRUCIFIXION

An Exegetical Analysis of Matt 24:1--26:2

Using the Semiotic Method

By:



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in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
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JESUS' PAROUSIA IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CRUCIFIXION

MATT 24:1--26:2

S U M M A R Y

The present research deals with Matthew's version of the eschatological discourse. Our first step was to determine the boundaries of this text. Our survey of scholarly opinions has shown that a general consensus regards 24:1 as the beginning of the discourse, while it places the ending in 25:46.

We are in agreement with the view about the beginning in 24:1 but contest the ending. Our proposal is that 26:2 marks the ending of this particular discourse rather than 25:46. Subsequently, 26:1-2 is an essential part of this eschatological discourse. From the content of the text there are several reasons in support of this position. The dialogue between Jesus and the disciples begun on the temple precinct up to the Mount of Olives (24:1-4a) is continued and concluded in 26:1-2. This is verified by the re-emergence of the two actors, Jesus and his disciples, in the latter pericope. While on the Mount of Olives, the disciples ask a question regarding the time and sign of Jesus' *παρουσία* and the fulfillment of the age (24:3). Jesus' response, which appears vaguely scattered all over the speech (24:4b--25:46), is clearly and definitively given in 26:1-2. From the spatial point of view, the entire description of the eschatological drama takes place on the Mount of Olives soon after Jesus' departure from the temple and its environs. This space does not change until 26:3 when the clandestine meeting of the chief priests and the elders of the people takes place in the high priest's palace.

Most importantly, the inclusion of 26:1-2 is in harmony with our proposed tripartite structure in which this pericope appears as the second part of the first level, while its corresponding pericope (24:1-4a) is the first part. The parallel between these two segments indicates that the narrative dealing with Jesus' movements from the temple and from the earthly life begun in 24:1 was interrupted after v. 4a by the insertion of a long speech (24:4b--25:46). Nevertheless, it was concluded in 26:1-2. The speech itself, however, is not in one piece. According to its content,

24:4b-31 corresponds to 25:31-46 in that both pericopes deal with the coming of the Son of Man. This is an indication that the account of the messianic woes and the *παρουσία* of the Son of Man from 24:4b was interrupted after v. 31 by a series of parable stories (24:32--25:30) and is continued and concluded with the account of the final judgment in 25:31-46. These two pericopes constitute the first and the second parts of the second level, and the parable section forms the third level.

From a theological point of view we consider the disciples's question in 24:3 to be an expression of their eschatological anxiety and expectation that after his departure Jesus as the Messiah will return to reclaim possession of the temple. But Jesus' announcement in 26:2 that the Son of Man will be crucified begs the question: how can Jesus' *παρουσία* take place if he will be crucified within two days?

This research is an effort to provide adequate answers to the structural and theological questions which arise in the course of reading this text. As our *modus operandi* we have used the semiotic method in its two stages of the discursive and narrative sequences, and then we made a theological commentary. Two hypothesis based on the above question have guided our investigation: one, the Son of Man's crucifixion on the day of Passover implies that it is necessary for the Son to go to his Father in order to come back empowered to judge all the nations, and two, the *παρουσία* of the Son of Man is above all a spiritual and personal experience of faith for those who await his coming.

The whole thesis consists of four chapters. The first chapter is devoted to the cutting of the text. The second and third deal with the discursive and narrative sequences of the text respectively. While the first half of the fourth chapter tackles the coherence of the discursive and narrative elements, the second half of the same chapter is a theological commentary.

The demarcation aims at establishing that Matt 24:1--26:2 constitutes the text of Matthew's eschatological discourse. However, since this text is a macrotext we sub-divide it into microtexts and smaller literary units. In some cases the units are used as a starting point for the analysis, but in other cases they are merely assumed.

At the core of first chapter is our proposal of the tripartite structure. Using the principle of extraction we have determined the peculiar construction of the material in this text. Two

distinct accounts are interrupted consecutively by the insertion of new accounts, so that as we read along we see only the first parts of the first and second levels of the discourse before we reach the parable section. From there the text builds up the story from the second to the first levels by adding the outstanding second parts.

The second chapter explores the discursive component of the text. In this case we are dealing with Matthew's discourse structured around three axes of spaces, time and actors to regulate many figures into a network of relations. The organisation occurs in a specific context determining a particular sense. Our goal in this case is not to interpret the meaning of the text, but to discover the thematic values and then to organise them into binary oppositions following the structural principle of difference. Since we are dealing with a macrotext, the discovery of the themes occurs gradually.

At the outset we notice two perceptions: the disciples' narrow view is limited to the physical reality while Jesus' perception broadly encompasses "all these things." In the speech, the enumeration of the messianic woes culminates in a dead end, after which something new emerges. Later in the parables the text speaks of a majority who do not know the exact time of his coming, and yet there is an exception, the Father knows. When the master returns some slaves are welcome to join in the master's happiness while others are excluded. Thus, all these instances indicate a termination of life while others show a continuation of life.

The narrative analysis in chapter three deals with the transformation of states. Since we are dealing with a complex text whose material is organised into a threefold structure, there are numerous narrative sequences. It is important to make a distinction between the main transformation, the narrative programs and the anti-narrative programs. Moreover, our challenge is to distinguish clearly between the value object of the main transformation and the modal objects of the narrative programs.

At the begin state Jesus' departure from the temple indicates that absence is the initial lack. So, the main transformation is a sequence towards the value of object of *presence*. However, due to the lack of a modality the sequence stops in 24:4a because the subject operator is incompetent. Hence, from v. 4b a narrative program occurs in search of the missing modality. The same process

occurs in v. 31 so that the parable stories appear as NPs also in search of the modality. Henceforth, the text indicates the discovery of the modalities one after another, so the modal object of the second sequence (25:31-46) and the value object of the main transformation (26:1-2) are acquired. The succession of these sequences indicates a downward movement from the main transformation to the NPs and an upward movement back.

The fourth chapter is preoccupied with two aspects: the coherence of the elements discovered in both the discursive and narrative analyses and the theological commentary which determines what the two analyses meant to me as a reader. From the discoveries made in the second and third chapters and guided by the principle that the operations move the thematic values, we now harmonize the elements of the network of relations and those of the network of operations in view of discovering one basic constant which binds together all the disparate elements of this text. Jesus' movements from the temple and from his earthly life are seen as an abandonment, disintegration, and departure. The most basic concept for these movements is /division/. But, the exhortations to the listeners to remain focused on the truth and not to panic appears as a negation of movement, /non-division/.

The παρουσία of the Son of Man is depicted as a force of presence harmonizing disparate elements such as east and west, all tribes of the earth, and all nations. It is labelled /unity/. Other expressions show that the Son of Man's coming is imminent, though delayed. Other expressions are punishments of exclusion meted against the wicked slaves, the foolish virgins and those at the left of the King indicate the concept of /non-unity/. Finally, with the announcement of the crucifixion of the Son of Man, the text reverts to /division/. But in this case even more is implied, because the context of the Passover in fact indicates a new life or a spiritual presence after death.

From the theological point of view we perceive a paradox in the movement of elements in this text. Death and new life co-exist. While the physical temple and Jesus' earthly life are fragile and destructible, there is a spiritual dimension of these realities which endures for ever. So, the παρουσία is that Jesus is the word made flesh. When the flesh dies, the word which is his gospel remains.

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

When I read Matthew's eschatological discourse, it became clear to me that according to its literary content 26:1-2 belongs to what precedes, i.e. to the eschatological discourse material rather than to the passion-resurrection narrative which follows it (26:3--28:20). However, a critical examination of scholarly opinions regarding the position of this short pericope (26:1-2) indicates that the general consensus was to assign it to the passion-resurrection narrative.

Consequently, one of the major aims of this research is to establish that 26:1-2 is an essential part of Matthew's eschatological discourse. This particular segment, which is peculiar to Matthew's Gospel, incorporates the event of the Passover feast and the crucifixion of the Son of Man as a climax or a culminating point of Jesus' discourse while he was with his disciples on the Mount of Olives. It is our contention that without the event in 26:1-2, Matthew's eschatological discourse would be unduly curtailed. Consequently, Jesus' response to the disciples' question in 24:3 would remain incomplete for two reasons. First, from the structural point of view the dialogue between Jesus and the disciples, initiated in 24:1-4a and interrupted by long speech (24:4b--25:46), would remain inconclusive. Secondly, without the Son of Man's impending crucifixion on the feast of Passover in 26:2, the speech would not fulfill Jesus' goal of responding fully to the disciples' request for the information concerning the time and the sign of his $\pi\alpha\rho\omicron\upsilon\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$ and the end of the age (24:3).

Our survey of the commentators shows that an overwhelming majority representing the traditional view on the cutting of Matthew's eschatological discourse agree that 24:1 is the beginning of the discourse.¹ However, concerning the ending of the discourse, a general consensus regards 25:46 as the conclusion. Therefore, the predominant attitude treats 26:1-2 as

¹ Among recent commentators, see Fred W. BURNETT, The Testament of Jesus-Sophia: a Redaction-Critical Study of the Eschatological Discourse in Matthew (Washington: University Press of America, 1979), pp. 20-24. Burnett's position echoes that of Jan LAMBRECHT, "The Parousia Discourse: Composition and Content in Matt 24-25," in L'évangile selon Matthieu: Rédaction et théologie (ed. M. DIDIER, BETL. 29 Gembloux: Duculot, 1972), pp. 310-19.

part of the passion-resurrection narrative (26:1-28:20). In this regard Benjamin W. Bacon is an exception to the rule, since in his proposal of the five-fold structure of Matthew's Gospel he considers 26:1 as the last stereotyped formula which concludes and therefore is part of the fifth discourse.²

The discussion on the cutting of Matthew's eschatological discourse to determine its boundaries shall be dealt with in detail in the first chapter. In the course of that discussion we shall make a comparison between the traditional position and our new proposal on the cutting of Matthew's eschatological discourse as a text. We shall indicate how the excision of 26:1-2 hinders the full expression of the theological content of this particular discourse, as well as put forth arguments in favour of its inclusion.

This new proposal on the boundaries of Matthew's eschatological discourse introduces a shift of emphasis in the debate concerning the significance of the expression "the παρουσία of the Son of Man" (24:3c, 27b, 37b, 39b) in Matthew's version of the eschatological discourse. Henceforth, a tension occurs in the understanding of the παρουσία of the Son of Man as a reference to his presence, and Jesus' response to the disciples' question in which he makes reference to his impending crucifixion (26:2c).

Jesus' death on the cross echoes the dismantling of the temple buildings because both realities lose their physical existence.

² See Benjamin Wisner BACON, Studies in Matthew (New York: Henry Holt, 1930), pp. 325-26.

II. STATUS QUAESTIONIS:

A. PRELIMINARY REMARKS:

As readers we can understand the disciples' anxiety concerning Jesus' messiahship and the future well-being of Israel due to recent events in the temple. They had witnessed Jesus' unsuccessful ministry in Jerusalem (Chapters 21-22), characterised by a bitter controversy between him and the Jewish leaders and the rejection of his messiahship. This had culminated in Jesus' stinging indictment against the scribes and Pharisees and the announcement of the inevitable future punishment and the desertion of the city of Jerusalem (chapter 23). At the beginning of our text, we observe how this threat begins to unfold as Jesus, while leaving the temple, predicts its imminent doom (24:1-2).

Nonetheless, on the Mount of Olives, the disciples raise a question about the time and sign of Jesus' *παρουσία* and the end of the age (24:3c). This question reflects the disciples' hopes and expectations of a future when Jesus would return in power to reclaim his possession of the temple as the Messiah of Israel. At first sight it may appear that the disciples' hopes were dashed to the ground by Jesus' response indicating hard times to come: that there would be a great tribulation associated with the coming of the Son of Man, a subsequent judgment of all the nations (24:4b-25:46), and, most shocking of all, an announcement that after two days the Son of Man himself would be delivered up to be crucified on the feast of the Passover (26:2).

Hence, our question is: WHAT LITERARY SIGNIFICANCE AND MEANING CAN A READER DRAW FROM THIS TEXT WHICH SPEAKS ABOUT THE DISCIPLES' EXPECTATIONS OF JESUS' ΠΑΡΟΥΣΙΑ IN SPITE OF THE BAD NEWS, I.E., THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE AND JESUS' OWN VIOLENT DEATH ON THE CROSS?

B. ESCHATOLOGICAL DISCOURSE IN THE STRUCTURE OF THE GOSPEL

The delimitation of the boundaries of Matthew's eschatological discourse necessarily belongs to the debate about the structure of Matthew's gospel. We must determine the position of this discourse in the context of the entire gospel. The latter problem is notorious for innumerable and diverse scholarly views. Debate on the structure of Matthew's gospel continues up to this day, and a consensus of scholarly opinions appears to be a long distance away from our reach.

David R. Bauer follows Kingsbury in dividing the scholarly opinions into three broad categories: the geographical-chronological, the topical, and the conceptual outlines. Furthermore, he has rearranged the topical outlines into three parts.³ First, there are outlines based on Bacon's division of the gospel into five books of narrative-discourse sections; others are based either on the superscriptions according to the threefold formula (Matt 1:1; 4:17; 16:21) or on the chiasmic patterns; and others are not easily classifiable into groups. For the present purpose, we shall confine our discussion to the first two parts, because of the contributions they have made towards a better understanding of the theological content of Matthew's gospel as a whole and of the position of the eschatological discourse in particular.

1. Topical Outlines Based on Narrative-Discourse Material:

To begin with, there is the much debated topical structure which is attributed to Benjamin W. Bacon.⁴ It consists of five successive books characterised by a twin relationship between an introductory narrative and a discourse. This suggestion is based on the five books of the Old Testament, hence there is a reference to a Matthean Pentateuch. Moreover, each book ends with a stereotyped formula concluding the discourse: "And it came to pass when Jesus had finished..." (Matt 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1). This outline has brought as much approval as criticism from various commentators. Concerning the recent supporters, let us pay attention to some who

³ See both Jack Dean KINGSBURY, Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), pp. 1-25, and David R. BAUER, The Structure of Matthew's Gospel: A Study in Literary Design (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1988), pp. 21-55.

⁴ BACON, Studies, pp. 265-335.

adopted Bacon's insights with variations.

First, Dale C. Allison⁵ rejects the idea that the narratives play a subsidiary role of introduction to the discourses. Rather, he proposes a structure which throughout the gospel alternates narrative and discourse, each section standing on its own. Then, Allison points out that the successive various sections fall naturally, and that the topics such as "the plucking of the grain" (12:1-8), "Jesus' rejection by Israel" (11-12) and the parable discourse (13) appear in their proper places. The discourse on the foundation of the church (18) fittingly precedes the eschatological discourse (24-25). Allison suggests that all parts of the gospel are important and that narrative and discourse are placed in their proper positions. However, his insistence on the independent stand of each narrative plus discourse renders the theological continuity between the various sections questionable. Moreover, contrary to Bacon's views on 26:1-2 as a concluding part of the eschatological discourse (because of the stereotyped formula), we note that in Allison's structure the eschatological discourse is limited to chapters 24-25. The entire section of chapters 26-28, which includes the passion and the resurrection, is described as a conclusion. In that way the contribution of 26:1-2 to the meaning of the eschatological discourse is lost.

Another recent supporter of Bacon's structure is Michael Crosby.⁶ He accepts Bacon's twin arrangement of narrative and discourse but introduces something new by arranging the various sections into a chiasmic pattern. The advantage of this structure is that it succeeds in laying sufficient emphasis on key sections of Matthew's gospel, thus enabling the reader to see the theological development of the various elements. For instance, the link between Jesus' rejection by Israel (11:2-12:50) and the subsequent themes of exclusion and inclusion as described in the parable discourse (13:1-53) are given a central position. These two pericopes represent a turning point in Jesus' teaching. The message of salvation only "...to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," (10:5-6) with the gentiles being treated as outsiders, changes to a new approach of addressing instructions exclusively to the disciples (13:10-17, 36-43).

⁵ Dale C. ALLISON, "Matthew: Structure, Biographical Impulse and the *Imitatio Christi*," in The Four Gospels 1992: Festschrift Frans Neirynck (Ed. Frans VAN SEGBROECK [et al.]. Leuven: University Press, Uitgeverij Peeters, 1992), pp. 1203-1221.

⁶ See Michael, CROSBY, House of Disciples: Church, Economics, and Justice in Matthew (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988), pp. 49-75, especially 53-59.

Crosby's structure shows one serious weakness. He cuts verse 2 of chapter 26 from what precedes and places it with the last section of the gospel: passion, death and resurrection (26:2--28:20). According to this arrangement only verse 1 of chapter 26 is linked with the eschatological discourse. This is contrary to Bacon's organisation of the material where the whole paragraph (26:1-2) is highlighted in capital letters as belonging to the stereotyped formula concluding the fifth discourse.⁷ In our opinion, Crosby's cutting deprives the eschatological discourse of its key element, i.e. the imminent crucifixion of the Son of Man on the feast of Passover. Consequently, any analysis of Matthew's eschatological discourse without this particular verse is bound to have an incomplete theological commentary that fails to capture the full depth of the discourse.

Concerning Bacon's proposal of the structure of Matthew's discourse, we are in agreement with his division of the gospel into five couples of narrative and discourse, with a stereotyped refrain concluding the discourses. At the same time we acknowledge the weaknesses of this structure as pointed out by the critics: viz., that the significance of the first section (1:1-2:23) and of the last section (26:3-28:20) is lost, since they are portrayed to be functioning merely as a "preamble" and an "epilogue" respectively. Moreover, in treating the narratives as introductions to the discourses, the importance of their role in the gospel is not fully realised. On the positive side, however, we confirm that Bacon's proposal gives to the eschatological discourse a prominent position which we may designate as a climax in relation to the other (four) discourses. For instance, it is important that in his proposal of the refrain of the stereotyped formulae Bacon always links each formula with the following phrase indicating the next incident which follows after Jesus' speech. As Kingsbury has correctly remarked, the formula does not stand on its own, "it is of the nature of the subordinate clause and is therefore always dependent upon the primary clause it modifies."⁸ Consequently, while the formula itself points backwards, insisting on "finishing" Jesus' speech, the primary clause points forward to the next incident. While we readily agree with this observation, we disagree with Kingsbury's conclusion that due to its repeated use the literary function of the stereotyped formula is merely an indication that the discourse is terminated. On the contrary, we maintain that precisely for its link with the following phrase the stereotyped formula acts as a literary device joining the

⁷ BACON, *Studies*, p. 325.

⁸ KINGSBURY, *Matthew*, p. 6.

successive pairs of the narratives and discourses.

Furthermore, it is our view that through the chainlike organisation of the material and the refrain, a great emphasis is placed on the importance of the words and the authority of the One who utters them. These words are found in the discourses and constitute Jesus' teaching which culminates in the eschatological discourse. For instance, there is a correspondence between the stereotyped formula of the first discourse (7:28-29) emphasizing the authority of Jesus as the teacher who surpasses the scribes, and the fifth formula which insists on the maximum number of words that Jesus has spoken in the all-inclusive expression, "...all these things" (26:1). This expression incorporates Jesus' sayings in other discourses so that the eschatological discourse is both the summary and the peak of Jesus' teaching. Hence, there is a gradual buildup of the momentum in Jesus' teaching. It starts from the teaching on the new righteousness on the mountain (5:1) and reaches its highest point in the eschatological discourse on the subject of his παρουσία and the end of the age on the Mount of Olives (24:3). While the three discourses in the centre focus on Jesus' ministry to others, i.e. the Twelve (chapter 10), the crowds and the disciples (chapter 13), and the building of the new community (chapter 18), in the first and the fifth discourses attention is paid to the person of Jesus, i.e. his teaching authority (7:28b-29) and his destiny (26:2).

Our question at this juncture is: What can we learn from the structure of Matthew's gospel which may help us understand the significance of the announcement of Jesus' crucifixion on the feast of Passover at the end of the eschatological discourse?

When we recall Crosby's chiasmic structure we are reminded of the central position given to the themes of Jesus' rejection as the Messiah by Israel (11:16--12:50), and the subsequent shift of emphasis in Jesus' teaching from the concentration on the house of Israel to the special attention given to the disciples in the privacy of the house (13:1-50). This shift in the teaching is immediately followed by the narrative on the death of John the Baptist and by the subsequent feeding of the multitudes (14:1-12, 13-21; 15:32-39). This event marks a turning point in Jesus' teaching.

The significance of the theme of death in the structure of Matthew's gospel begins with the beheading of John the Baptist (14:3-12), and culminates in the announcement of Jesus' crucifixion

in the context of the Passover (26:2). Yet it is not sufficiently explored by the commentators. There are numerous indications which show a continuity between both events. First, John the Baptist's death served as an impetus for Jesus to redirect the focus of his mission to extend the message of salvation beyond the borders of Israel, "Now when Jesus heard this (John the Baptist's death), he withdrew from there in a boat to a lonely place" (14:13). Secondly, the feeding of the multitudes occurs in a lonely place and on the mountain (14:13-21; 15:32-39); the ministry of healing is extended to the Canaanite woman's daughter (15:21-28). From then on Jesus travels further afield to Caesarea Philippi, where three major events take place: 1. Peter's profession of faith in Jesus as the Messiah and Jesus' explicit pronouncement that he will build his church⁹ on the rock which is Peter (16:13-20), 2. the transfiguration (17:1-8), and most important of all 3. Jesus' three announcements that he is heading towards Jerusalem where he will be crucified and then be raised again take place outside the confines of Israel (16:21-23; 17:22-23; 20:17-19).

Thus, from Crosby's central part of the chiasmic structure (chapters 12-14), we see a shift in Jesus' ministry that shows three important and successive events whose sequence has a distinct meaning. The rejection of Jesus' message by the Jewish leaders culminates in the beheading of John the Baptist. From that moment onward, the message of salvation, which had been the sole preserve of the house of Israel, is spreading far and wide beyond Israel's borders. Consequently, important events such as Peter's profession of faith in Jesus as the Messiah and the subsequent announcement that the church will be established on the rock (Peter) occurs in Caesarea Philippi, in foreign territory.

Most importantly, after the death of John the Baptist, Jesus is aware that his own execution is not far off; that is, his impending journey to Jerusalem will result in his passion and death at the hands of the Jewish leaders. Immediately after the first announcement he invites his disciples to take up their own crosses and follow him, and thus to give up their lives (16:24-25). What is significant is that in each of the three cases the announcement of Jesus' crucifixion is tied up with the resurrection on the third day. Moreover, on a closer examination these announcements show

⁹ Concerning Matthew's distinction between the Jewish houses of worship as "their synagogues..." (Matt 4:23; 9:35; 10:17; 12:9; 13:54; 23:34) and Jesus' reference to the disciples' house of worship as "my church" (ἐκκλησίαια 16:18), see CROSBY, House, pp. 50-53.

an interesting development. The first two instances use the terms “to suffer,” “to deliver” and “to kill,” with an explicit reference to the resurrection, “to be raised,” (16:21; 17:22-23). However, the third instance uses more expressions, some of which (in italics) are the same as those used in 26:2, for instance: “*to deliver up*” (mentioned twice), “to condemn,” “to mock,” “to scourge,” “*to crucify*” and “to be raised,” (20:17-19). The verbs “to deliver” and “to crucify” are echoed at the end of the eschatological discourse 26:2. But in this case instead of the term “to be raised,” the resurrection is represented by a more technical term, i.e., “the Passover” which refers to the liturgical celebration of the Passover feast¹⁰ by the early Christians. It assumed thus a different perspective from the Jewish celebration of this particular feast:

“ ‘...after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified’ ” (26:2).

Nevertheless, the third announcement of the passion (20:17-19) within the fifth narrative (chapters 19-22) indicates its closeness to the last announcement in the eschatological discourse (26:2). Hence, we maintain that the announcement of the crucifixion in 26:2 is part of the refrain which began in 16:21. Since the occurrence in 26:2 is the final one, it is a climax just before the passion-resurrection narrative itself (26:3-28:20).

¹⁰ The meaning of the term τὸ πάσχα is fully discussed in both the discursive and narrative analyses below.

2. Topical Outlines Based on the Superscriptions of the Threefold

Formula:

The second most debated topical structure recommends the division of Matthew's gospel into three main sections (Matt 1:1-4:16; 4:17-16:20; 16:21-28:20) based on the superscriptions as indicated in the two fixed formulae, "From that time onward, Jesus began..." (4:17; 16:21). In its present form the tripartite structure was initially suggested by Edgar Krentz, but it has found a clearer and more rigorous exponent in Jack D. Kingsbury.¹¹

For our purpose we shall make only a brief examination of Kingsbury's views. He attributes the combination of the temporal adverb "from that time on" and the verb "to begin," together with their present positions in the Gospel (4:17; 16:21) to Matthew's pen for several reasons. First, 4:17 and 16:21 are the only instances (apart from 26:16) where the expression appears as a fixed formula, and Jesus appears as the subject. Secondly, the role of the temporal adverb and Jesus' movements indicate the evangelist's view of salvation history. Thirdly, unlike the fivefold formula which has no thematic significance, the appearance of this formula in both cases serves as superscriptions, so that together with 1:1 they describe Jesus as the Messiah in various stages covering his life and ministry (*the person of Jesus the Messiah* [1:1-4:16], *the proclamation of Jesus the Messiah* [4:17-16:20] and *the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah* [16:21-28:20]).

Though Kingsbury's proposal of the divisions in Matthew's gospel has had several critics as well as supporters,¹² in our view this tripartite structure is unacceptable because it is too general. It fails to account for the features peculiar to Matthew's gospel, such as the logical sequence of the five discourses and the significance of the eschatological discourse as Jesus' final speech before his passion and resurrection. Moreover, in Kingsbury's division we notice an overlapping or undue

¹¹ See Edgar KRENTZ, "The Extent of Matthew's Prologue: Towards the Structure of the First Gospel," Journal of Biblical Literature, 83 (1964), pp. 409-14; KINGSBURY, Matthew, pp. 7-25, and "The Figure of Jesus in Matthew's Story: A Literary-Critical Probe," Journal for the Study of the New Testament, 21 (1984), pp.3-36. Both Krentz and Kingsbury acknowledge the pioneering works of Sir John Hawkins, Ernst Lohmeyer and N. B. Stonehouse long before their own contributions.

¹² Among the recent supporters, see BAUER, Structure, pp. 40-45; and with variations Frans NEIRYNCK, "ΑΠΟ ΤΟΤΕ ΗΡΕΑΤΟ and the Structure of Matthew," Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses, 64 (1988), pp. 21-59.

separation of materials which belong together. For instance, the *person of Jesus Messiah* is mentioned 4:16, the *proclamation of Jesus Messiah* does not adequately represent the content of Jesus' ministry in the second section consisting of teaching, preaching and healing. Thus, we agree with Dale Allison's criticism¹³ of Kingsbury's view that 4:17 would mark the structural break from the first part (1:1--4:16), on the ground that v. 17 is part of the immediate context of vv. 12-16. The same can be said of 16:21 which from a contextual point of view belongs to what precedes (16:13-20), i.e. Peter's profession of faith.

Our main interest lies, however, with Kingsbury's description of Matthew's christology as indicated in the analysis of the first section (1:1--4:16) where the person of Jesus as Messiah is discussed. Using a redaction-critical approach, Kingsbury argues convincingly that Matthew has organised the various christological titles in such a way that they demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah. Throughout the first section we notice the following buildup in the organisation of the titles: Jesus is identified as "the Christ" (1:1, 16, 17); then, according to the genealogical list, he is the son of Abraham (vv. 1, 2, 17). Thus through him Israel's history of salvation finds its fulfillment, up to the point that it also benefits peoples of other nations (8:11). Moreover, the birth of this child occurred through the Holy Spirit (1:20-21), and later on as an adult Jesus is empowered by the same Spirit at his baptism (3:16). After Jesus' birth Joseph is instructed by divine agency (the angel) to name the child *Jesus*. Hence, he becomes the royal son of David through his adoption by Joseph. It is in his capacity as the son of David that Jesus fulfills the eschatological expectations which were associated with David and the Messiah to come. That is why Jesus was able to respond to John the Baptist's enquiry whether or not he was the Messiah by presenting the works that were performed through him: *healing* various diseases, *raising* the dead to life (a point that is not sufficiently emphasized by Kingsbury) and *proclaiming* the good news to the poor (11:2-5). Furthermore, in chapter 2 we find other titles showing that in the person of Jesus Israel's eschatological expectations are fulfilled. At this juncture the royal title "king of the Jews" appears (v. 2), and the title "Christ" is reiterated (v. 4). Jesus is also "the leader" and "the shepherd" of God's people Israel in fulfillment of yet another eschatological prophecy (Mic 5:1). Thus, the background of Jesus' birth and of his person conveyed in the christological titles fulfill the Lord's promise as indicated in the

¹³ ALLISON, "Matthew: Structure, Biographical Impulse and the *Imitatio christi*," p. 1203.

prophecy (Is 7:14), "...he [the newly born child] shall be called *Emmanuel*," i.e. God-with-us (Matt 1:23). The idea of God's presence among his people through the person of Jesus recurs in key parts of Matthew's gospel, such as the presence through prayer (18:20). Then, just before the ascension, Jesus is portrayed promising his disciples that he will continue to be with them throughout the proclamation of the gospel to all the nations (28:20b).

However, it is in his article, "The Figure of Jesus in Matthew's Story,"¹⁴ that Kingsbury eloquently describes how the organisation of the titles in the first section (1:1-4:16) climactically culminates in God's entry as an actor into the world of Matthew's story. This occurs at the baptism of Jesus where the voice (of God) declares about Jesus, "this is my Son" (3:17). Moreover, God's claim that Jesus is his own Son is not unique to 3:17 because it is echoed in the event of the transfiguration (17:5).

Therefore, we agree with David Hill's criticism¹⁵ that Kingsbury's comment on the title "Son of God" in 3:17 does not say everything about Jesus' unique filial relationship with God. Kingsbury ignores Matthew's allusion to the Servant Song of Isaiah as it appears in the description of Jesus' filial relationship to God (3:17, see also note n in Jerusalem Bible) and in the extensive quotation in 12:18-21 where Isaiah's prophecy is applied to Jesus. It is particularly in the formula quotation of 8:17 where the idea of suffering with expiatory value is explicitly associated with Jesus' ministry (see note f). Furthermore, a more complete description of Jesus' messianic ministry is given in 11:4-5 in response to John the Baptist question. Notably, this description includes a reference to the resurrection from the dead. Consequently, in this part of Matthew's Gospel Jesus' titles are treated in such a way that they prepare the reader for the announcement of the Son of Man's passion death and resurrection. From the idea of God's Beloved Son (3:17 and 17:5) Jesus is portrayed as someone who took away people's sorrows through his healing ministry (8:17). Moreover, the Gospel attributes to Jesus the title "Servant" in the context of his death as plotted by the opponents (12:14-21). Ultimately, the idea of suffering surfaces more explicitly as Jesus' unavoidable destiny in the three announcements of his passion, death and resurrection (16:21; 17:22-23; 20:17-19).

¹⁴ KINGSBURY, "Figure," pp. 10-11.

¹⁵ David HILL, "The Figure of Jesus in Matthew's Story: A Response to Professor Kingsbury's Literary-Critical Probe," Journal for the Study of the New Testament, 21 (1984), pp. 43-44.

The development of the idea of suffering in relation to the person of Jesus so early in Matthew's gospel is of great significance to our proposed thesis, since it indicates that Jesus' παρουσία is inseparably linked with the way of the cross. This idea will be reiterated with a greater resonance in Jesus' last speech, the eschatological discourse (24:1--26:2), before it actually takes place in the passion narrative.

At this juncture, we consider the chiasmic structures of both Michael Crosby and Charles H. Lohr¹⁶ as the best representations of the structure of Matthew's gospel. These structures are based on B. C. Bacon, and show parallels between the prologue and the conclusion, the first and the last discourse. This arrangement presents Jesus' rejection, the shift in Jesus' ministry from Israel to the gentiles, and the founding of the church or the new community at the very centre of the gospel structure. Thus, the chiasmic organisation of the various parts of the gospel seems to be more satisfactory in showing the theological developments in Matthew's gospel. Furthermore, in these two structures the position and significance of the eschatological discourse as Jesus' last teaching on the Mount of Olives is given due prominence in relation to other discourses.

As a conclusion to this brief survey, two points can be made. First, Kingsbury's description of God's participation in Matthew's story as an actor who claims that Jesus is his own Son (3:17) is regarded as a major contribution. Secondly, we have high regard for Hill's contribution on the Suffering Servant and on the fact that it is attributed to Jesus as the Son of God. This reinforces the notion that God is present in a new way in Jesus the Servant Son of God. Moreover, we note that the "raising of the dead to life..." (11:5c) in this part of the text is of great significance to our proposed research on the παρουσία of the Son of Man in relation to his impending crucifixion in the context of the Passover (26:2).

¹⁶ CROSBY, House, p. 55; see also Charles H. LOHR's division as cited by Benedict T. VIVIANO, "The Gospel According to Matthew," in The Jerome Biblical Commentary, 1990, p. 633.

C. GENRE: TESTAMENT OR APOCALYPTIC?

Our preceding discussion of the position of Matthew's eschatological discourse within the context of the whole structure of the gospel, and theological link between the παρουσία of the Son of Man and his crucifixion helps us to appreciate the presence of the apocalyptic-eschatological elements in this particular text.

Many commentators agree that the synoptic eschatological discourses are non-apocalyptic in form.¹⁷ Rather they fit the description of eschatological predictions or farewell discourses after the pattern of the Jewish testaments such as the Testament of the XII Patriarchs.¹⁸ Here an authoritative message is communicated by a privileged seer or a dying prophet to whom knowledge of the proceedings of the heavenly court has been revealed, either by dream, vision, or heavenly ascent, and he communicates this revelation to his disciples. In Matthew's eschatological discourse we encounter basically the same setting. Jesus communicates knowledge about the future events to his disciples on the Mount of Olives (Matt 24:3-4, 13, 25, 32, 34, 42, 44; 25:13; 26:1-2), and he is about to die (26:2). However, there is an exception in that Jesus has not yet been allowed the privileged access to the divine secrets, notwithstanding his intimate filial relationship with the Father to whom the knowledge of "that hour" is an exclusive reserve (Matt 24:36).¹⁹ This smacks of a special strategy of Matthew's discourse. Hence, our first question is: How is the authority of Jesus' message as a testamentary prediction going to be established in spite of his lack of knowledge (24:36)?

¹⁷ For the definition of the literary genre "apocalypse" see John J. COLLINS, "Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a genre," in *Semeia*, 14 (1979), p. 9. See BURNETT *Testament*, pp. 185-86; and Lars HARTMANN, *Prophecy Interpreted: The Formation of Some Jewish Apocalyptic Texts and of the Eschatological Discourse Mark 13 par.* (trans. Neil TOMKINSON and Jean GRAY. Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1966), pp. 145-67, 169-77, 202-05.

¹⁸ Christopher ROWLAND, *Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1982), p. 43. See also BURNETT, *Testament*, pp. 186-90.

¹⁹ While Matthew shares with Mark the idea of Jesus' ignorance of the divine secrets concerning "that day and hour" (Mk 13:32), it is Matthew alone who links Jesus's crucifixion (Matt 26:2) with Jesus' παρουσία speech. See Kurt ALAND, ed. *Synopsis of the Four Gospels: Greek-English Edition of the Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum* (3rd ed. Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1979), pp. 262 and 276.

On the other hand, although the eschatological discourses are non-apocalyptic in form, their content combines both apocalyptic and farewell elements, such as predictions and parenthesis. Namely, in Matthew's version we find phrases about the period of tribulation (Matt 24:9, 21, 29), the antichrists and the antiprophets prior to the end-time (Matt 24:4-26). There will be God's direct intervention in human affairs (24:22, and 36), the *παρουσία* of the "Son of Man" (24:27, 30, 37, 39; 25:31; 26:2), and the establishment of the "kingdom of heaven" (25:1, 34-40, 46b), "judgment," "eternal punishment," and "eternal life" (Matt 25:32-46).

Apart from the literary genre, some commentators have also raised the question concerning the presence of the theme of "Wisdom" in Matthew's eschatological discourse. In this regard Jesus as the Son of Man is identified with Wisdom, and at the same time Wisdom is associated with the Shekinah.²⁰ According to Burnett Jesus-Sophia as Shekinah had been rejected by Israel (23:37). Consequently, he withdrew from the temple (24:1) to fulfill the threat he had made against Israel that he would abandon their "house" (23:38-39) and leave it vulnerable to destruction (24:2). On the other hand, the disciples accepted Jesus-Sophia. Therefore, on the Mount of Olives Jesus-Sophia is revealing to the disciples the mysteries concerning his *παρουσία* (v. 3) as his testament just before the crucifixion (26:2). Hence, the farewell and the apocalyptic elements seem to function as a medium through which Wisdom communicates herself in this discourse.

Our second question concerns the significant role of the "wisdom" element in this discourse as seen from the perspective of the reader. What literary signification can a reader draw from the combination of the "Apocalyptic-farewell" and "Wisdom" elements in the text (Matt 24:1--26:2)? As a basis of our response we acknowledge that Matthew's eschatological discourse is part of the early Christian apocalyptic eschatology.²¹ Therefore, we are dealing here with a text that has a peculiar language, and whose expression combines both Jewish and early Christian messianic

²⁰ Marion Jack SUGGS, *Wisdom, Christology, and Law in Matthew's Gospel* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 48-55, 66-70. See also BURNETT, *Testament*, pp. 58-81.

²¹ The existence of early Christian Apocalyptic as a distinct feature is fully attested by Elizabeth SCHÜSSLER-FIORENZA, "Phenomenon," in *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East*: Proceedings of the International Colloquium (ed. D. HELMHOLM. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1983), pp. 302-05. See also Eugenio CORSINI, "Introduction," in *The Apocalypse: The Perennial Revelation of Jesus Christ* (trans., ed., F. J. MOLONEY. Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1983), p. 50.

aspirations and beliefs. Thus, its doctrine of the *παρουσία* ought to be read and understood within that context.

In this regard we observe a marked difference between two aspects of the apocalyptic eschatology of the first century. There is first Jewish apocalyptic eschatology which despairs of the evil conditions of the present world order, so much so that it envisages no solution for it other than its imminent and total destruction. In this type of apocalyptic eschatology the gap between the two aeons, the present and the future, is wide and unbridgeable.²² It pins its hope for salvation exclusively on a radical and violent intervention of God at some future time. On the other hand, there is early Christian apocalyptic eschatology which carries a doctrine of hope and emphasizes the “now” of salvation. Thus, the beyond is made to erupt in the present. That is how the death and the resurrection of Christ were understood by the early Christians, as a unique event in which the end-time was set in motion already for the Christian community. Hence, the early Christians rightly regarded themselves as “an eschatological community.”²³ This is where the present-day reader of Matthew’s eschatological discourse fits in: as a member of the Christian community he or she shares in the eschatological experience of the “now” of salvation.

Notwithstanding the riddle that characterises Jesus’ *παρουσία*, i.e. the tension between “now” and “not yet,” Schüssler’s phenomenological research on this subject begins to merge the two aeons at least to a certain extent. However, the results of her research remain too general for our purpose, since it leaves unresolved the entire question of how the now of salvation is expressed in the individual synoptic versions of the eschatological discourse, and how it relates to the reader. This project hopes to respond to that lack by calling attention to Matthew’s version of the eschatological discourse simply as a text: HOW CAN A READER BE EDIFIED BY THIS ESCHATOLOGICAL DISCOURSE AS A TEXT?

In this regard, Victor Kossi Agbanou’s discovery of the importance of the theme of “universality” (Matt 24:14; 25:32-46)²⁴ in Matthew’s eschatological discourse has brought the

²² ROWLAND, Open Heaven, p. 25.

²³ SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA, “Phenomenon,” in Apocalypticism, p. 303.

²⁴ Victor Kossi AGBANOU, Le discours eschatologique de Matthieu 24-25, tradition et rédaction (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1983), pp. 182-84, and 201.

eschatological message closer to home to the various cultures, so that a reader from any part of the world can read it meaningfully. In search of solutions to the problems and conflicts which beset Matthew's community, Agbanou maintains that Matthew the evangelist has employed the theme of "universality." In this regard, Matthew's insight is particularly evident in 24:14 where it expresses the need to proclaim the good news to the whole of the inhabited earth as an urgent move toward the end-time.

On the other hand, Jacques Dupont's analysis of Matthew 24--25 is based on the surface reading of the text.²⁵ It is a redaction-critical study which examines the literary organisation of the material in Matthew's eschatological discourse in comparison with that of Mark. Dupont makes this comparison between the two evangelists in order to distinguish Matthew's version of the discourse from other versions and to show how he (Matthew) as an author organised the material that was available to him in order to produce this particular discourse. In short, Dupont's goal is to discover the intentionality of Matthew as the author of the text known today as Matthew's eschatological discourse.

Dupont's approach to the text has discovered the symmetrical structure in which the "glorious coming of the Son of Man" (Matt 24:29-31) is perceived as the central theme. We agree with Dupont on the centrality of the theme of the $\pi\alpha\rho\upsilon\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$ in Matthew's eschatological discourse. But since our intention is to use the semiotic analysis of Matthew's eschatological discourse as a text, (see "Methodology" below), we do not share with Dupont his goal of discovering the intentionality of Matthew as author; nor do we agree with him on his selection of certain parts of the text (Matt 24:29-30) and giving them a higher status than other parts in the whole discourse.

²⁵ Jacques DUPONT, Les Trois Apocalypses Synoptiques: Mark 13; Matthieu 24--25; Luc 21 (Paris: Cerf, 1985), pp. 49-97. None has yet analysed Matthew's eschatological discourse using the semiotic method, apart from Daniel Patte's structuralist approach in a commentary where he searches for the faith of Matthew the evangelist. See, Daniel PATTE, The Gospel According to Matthew A Structural Commentary on Matthew's Faith (Philadelphia; Fortress Press, 1986), pp. 333-50.

III. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES:

Our hypotheses are based on the new delimitation of Matthew's eschatological discourse as a text. We propose that Matt 24:1--26:2 represents the full extent of Matthew's eschatological discourse on the ground of its literary genre "testament." As a testament this discourse requires that Jesus be vested with the knowledge of the heavenly secrets which the text has explicitly denied him (24:36) in his present state.

Hence, we propose that this text presents Jesus' παρουσία in the context of his impending death, i.e. his crucifixion on the day of Passover (τὸ πάσχα γίνεται 26:2) as a strategy to allow him an access to the Father, and *ipso facto* to the divine secrets. Thus, the whole event of Jesus' crucifixion with its timing (26:2) will be an occasion for his empowerment as the "Son of Man." This empowerment adequately reassembles the jigsaw puzzle within the text itself: Jesus makes a remark about the "Son's" ignorance concerning the day and the hour (24:36), yet there is an assurance that the "Son of Man's" appearance (24:30a, 34) and the glorious "coming" (24:30b, 25:31) are imminent, and that all these things will take place during the lifetime of this generation (24:34).

Our second hypothesis is that in this text (Matt 24:1--26:2), the passion and death of Jesus as well as the persecutions and death of the disciples give a spiritual meaning to Jesus' παρουσία today as a reality that we can have access to through personal experience and faith.

IV. METHODOLOGY:

A. PRELIMINARY REMARKS:

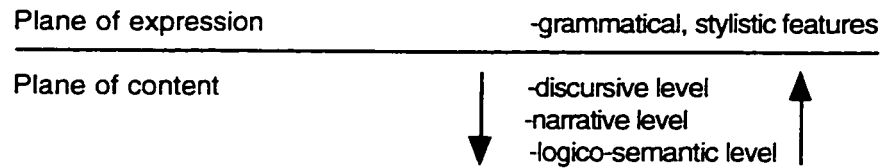
For this project we propose a semiotic reading of the text of Matt 24:1--26:2. This process involves an analysis comprising three stages which follow one another, viz., the discursive analysis, the narrative analysis and the coherence of the text. The semiotic approach is based on Julien Algirdas Greimas' method²⁶ which considers the present text as the *whole of signification*. It follows the synchronic principle.²⁷ In this regard the text is seen as a self-contained, intelligible reality or a structured organisation. Hence, with semiotic analysis we go through the whole of signification in this particular text in order to manifest the form of the content. The immediate goal of our analysis is not to interpret the meaning of the text, it is rather to examine the regulation or organisation of its elements both on the discursive and on the narrative levels.

A clear explanation of this process is found in Jean-Claude Giroud's work²⁸ where a distinction is made between the plane of the expression and the plane of the content. In semiotics we deal with the plane of the content consisting of the textual manifestation (discursive and narrative components) and the profound structures or logico semantic.

²⁶ Algirdas Julien GREIMAS, Structural Semantics: An Attempt at a Method (intr. Ronald SCHLEIFER, trans. Daniel MCDOWELL, Ronald SCHLEIFER, & Alan VELIE, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), pp. 18-134, 161-215, 222-256. See also, Jean-Claude GIROUD, Louis PANIER, Sémiotique: une pratique du lecture et d'analyse des textes biblique (Lyon: CADIR, 1987), pp. 5-59; GROUPE D'ENTREVERNES, Analyse sémiotique des textes: introduction, théorie, pratique (Lyon: Presses universitaires de Lyon), pp. 7-157, 197-200; Jean CALLOUD, "A Few Comments on Structural Semiotics: A Brief Review of A Method and Some Explanation of Procedures," in John C. KIRBY (trans.) Semeia 15 (1979), pp. 51-83; Walter VOGELS, Reading & Preaching the Bible: A New Semiotic Approach (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1986), pp. 30-67.

²⁷ Ferdinand de SAUSSURE, Course in General Linguistics (eds. Charles BALLY; Albert SECHEHAYE; and Albert REIDLINGER, trans. Wade BASKIN. London: P. Owen, 1960), p. 90.

²⁸ GIROUD, Sémiotique, pp. 47-48.



These three levels take shape according to two trails. First, there is a generative trail which deals with the theory. It previews the passage from the logico-semantic level where the elementary values of signification are articulated (these are the most abstract elements), to the narrative level where the elements are presented as *actants* who are engaged in narrative programs, and the discursive level where the actants appear as *actors* in relation to the given *spaces* and *time*. Secondly, there is the analytic trail which indicates the procedure followed by the semiotician in the analysis of texts, and this will determine our procedure. In this case the process starts with the discursive analysis which is closest to the surface of the text. On this level of reading we deal with the organisation of the figurative elements which appear in the form of actors, spaces and time. Then follows the narrative analysis where the figurative elements in the form of actants are engaged in a narrative sequence. Finally, at the logico-semantic level, elementary values which constitute the fundamental elements of the text are dealt with.

B. THE PROCEDURE OF ANALYSIS:

The first chapter is devoted to the delimitation of Matthew's eschatological discourse as a text. At this stage a comparison will be made of the traditional cutting which limits this particular text to the two chapters 24--25, and the new cutting which will propose the inclusion of the first two verses of chapter 26. However, since 24:1--26:2 is a macro-text, we shall cut it into micro-texts. These will be further divided into sub-units using the same principles of delimitation which were used in the cutting of the macro-text. The first chapter will nonetheless make brief previews of both the discursive and the narrative sequences of Matthew's eschatological discourse. These will indicate how the analysis will proceed in the second and third chapters.

The exegesis will comprise two main levels of semiotic analysis, the discursive and the narrative. We shall begin with the discursive analysis to which chapter two will be devoted. The

discursive analysis is based on the principle that a text communicates meaning through the discourse on the level of semantic values. The discursive composition is structured on three axes of actors, spaces, and time which regulate a multitude of figures as the basic elements which are recognisable in the course of reading. In a given text they are organised into a specific network of relations.

In some cases we shall use the sub-units of the micro-text as our starting point for analysis. But in other cases the sub-units will be merely assumed without being explicitly indicated in the analysis depending on the areas of emphasis and the details considered to be important in each microtext. Three stages are envisaged in the second chapter. First, we shall analyse the whole text searching for the network of relations of the figures, while paying special attention to repetitions, emphases, and oppositions. Secondly, we shall go over the whole text again to determine the semantic *values* and classify them into *themes* which will be arranged into pairs of oppositions. Sometimes the oppositions appear explicitly, but in other cases they are only implicitly indicated.

Then, the narrative analysis, which deals with the narrative sequence or the transformation of states from the begin state to the end state, will be dealt with in the third chapter. At this stage we shall observe the linear movement of the various actants, and determine the value object of the main transformation and the modal objects of the narrative programs.

The first half of the fourth and the final chapter will be dedicated to the coherence within the logico-semantic. It is a search for harmony or homogeneity of the various elements discovered during the discursive and the narrative analyses. In this regard, coherence of meaning is found in the isotopy, i.e. the most basic and abstract meaning which makes the whole of Matt 24:1--26:2 to be one coherent story. In the second half of chapter four we shall investigate the theological message which can be deduced from the previous discursive and narrative analyses, as well as the coherence and the movement of the basic elements in the semiotic square.

Finally, the conclusion will be a hermeneutical exercise on a limited scale. The aim is to show what the whole analysis, as well as the theological reflection, meant for me. Thus, the conclusion will be in a form of a summary commentary on the text of Matthew's eschatological discourse.

CHAPTER ONE

DELIMITATION OF THE TEXT:

A. THE DELIMITATION OF MATTHEW'S ESCHATOLOGICAL DISCOURSE (Matt 24:1-26:2)**1. Preliminary Remarks:**

The following delimitation²⁹ is based on our hypothesis that Matthew's eschatological discourse extends further than the traditional demarcation which limits it to 25:46. Hence, in addition to the traditionally recognized text (24:1--25:46) the discourse includes also the first two verses of chapter twenty six (26:1-2). The first step is to examine the main trends of the scholarly opinions which reflect the traditional view regarding the boundaries of Matthew's eschatological discourse. The second step is to make a critical evaluation of some proposed structural divisions, and then to present arguments in favour of a new demarcation and eventually a new structure of the discourse as a text.

2. Some Scholarly Views on the Boundaries of the Discourse:

The views of commentators concerning the beginning and ending of Matthew's eschatological discourse may be roughly divided into two main trends. At this stage it is important to state that the great majority of commentaries on this subject are based on redaction-source criticism. The method aims to discover the intentionality of the evangelist who edited the material using various sources in order to produce the text as we have it today.

Concerning the specific place in Matthew's gospel where the eschatological discourse begins, we notice two contrary opinions. On the one hand, there is a group of commentators who consider the eschatological discourse to comprise chapters 23, 24 and 25. These are the scholars

²⁹ For the rules on delimitation of texts see, Jean-Claude GIROUD, "Problèmes sémiotiques du découpage et des titres dans les traductions bibliques," in *Sémiotique et Bible* 26 (1982), pp. 10-24; and "Remarques sur l'extraction et le découpage," in GIROUD, *Sémiotique*, p. 33. See also VOGELS, *Reading*, pp. 45-47.

who have leanings towards Benjamin W. Bacon's theory of the division of Matthew's gospel into five books where each discourse concludes with the fivefold formula, "When Jesus had finished these sayings..." (7:28; 11:1, 13:53; 19:1; 26:1). There are three arguments based on Matthew's skillful use of the sources and his redactional activity, which are put forward in order to postulate that chapters 23, 24 and 25 constitute a unity³⁰, and that all the three chapters constitute the fifth and the final discourse. First, at the end of chapter 23 the stereotyped formula is omitted, whereas the presence of this formula would have indicated the independence of chapter 23 as the fifth discourse and its separation from chapters 24 and 25 which would constitute the sixth discourse. Secondly, unlike Mark's eschatological discourse, preceded by the story of the widow's mite (Mk 12:41-44), Matthew has intentionally excised this story from his account in order to link chapter 23 with chapters 24 and 25³¹. Thirdly, the doom oracle against Jerusalem (23:37-39), i.e. that the city will be forsaken, is fulfilled in 24:1 when Jesus actually leaves the temple while uttering its imminent doom (v. 2d). In that way, the message in chapter 23 – the indictment of the scribes and Pharisees and the oracle of doom against Jerusalem – is linked with 24:1-2 as its culmination point. Therefore according to this trend of thought, chapter 23 marks the beginning of Matthew's eschatological discourse. Concerning the relation between 23:37-39 and the eschatological discourse, our stand point is that 26:2 (rather than 24:1) is the fulfillment of the doom oracle.

On the other hand, there are other commentators who propose that 24:1-2 is the introductory part of the discourse, and that chapter 23 is an independent discourse which must be treated separately from chapter 24. In support of their point of view, these scholars point at the radical changes of Jesus' audience between the two chapters. While in chapter 23:1 Jesus is addressing "the crowds and his disciples" (23:1), in chapter 24:1 it is only "the disciples" who become Jesus' audience. Twice they come to him privately, during his exit from the temple (v. 1) and when he is sitting on the Mount of Olives (v. 3). But to this general view there is an exception as

³⁰ See, BACON, Studies, pp. 317-25; Francis BEARE, "Understanding the Synoptic Apocalypse," in Understanding the Sacred Text: Essays in Honor of Morton S. Enslin on the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Beginnings (ed. John REUMANN. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1972), pp. 119-22. See also BURNETT's discussion in Testament, pp. 20-29.

³¹ See BEARE, "Understanding," p. 132, footnote 2; LAMBRECHT, "Parousia," pp. 314-16; and BURNETT, Testament, p. 21.

expressed by Fred W. Burnett³² who claims that on the redactional level Matthew has made a caesura between 24:2 and v. 3 by organising the material in such a way that 24:1-2 becomes the fulfillment of the oracle of doom against Jerusalem in 23:38-39. Thus, the first two verses of chapter 24 are seen as the conclusion of the previous theme of judgment against Israel. Burnett concludes that 24:3 is the beginning of Matthew's eschatological discourse. But we disagree with Burnett in this particular case. Instead, we find Jan Lambrecht's argument³³ more convincing: i.e., that Jesus' prediction of the future desolation of Jerusalem: "Behold your house is forsaken and desolate" (23:38) and "you will not see me again, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord'" (v. 9) is fulfilled in both the events of Jesus' departure from the temple and his death. Thus, on the strength of this view we consider Jesus' prediction (during his final speech) about his impending crucifixion on the feast of the Passover (26:2) to be the third refrain regarding the fulfillment of this prophecy. This refrain echoes two previous instances: when Jesus predicted that the house of Israel will be forsaken (23:38) and Israel will no longer see him (v. 39); and also when he actually left the temple (24:1).

There is even less clarity regarding the ending of Matthew's eschatological discourse due to the lack of consensus on this point among biblical scholars. While 25:46 is generally assumed as the ending, some commentators hold different opinions. For instance, Francis Beare³⁴ maintains that when we take into account Matthew's extensive use of the Markan material characterised by parenesis, then the eschatological discourse in Matthew comprises 24:1-44. Nevertheless, Beare admits that Matthew has also made additions drawn from his non-Markan sources such as the judgment scene. Through these additions Matthew creates a more comprehensive version of the eschatological discourse which culminates in the final judgment (25:31-46). Unfortunately, Beare does not explain the position and the role of the parables in his vision of the structure of Matthew's discourse.

More recently, Fred Burnett postulates that Matthew's apocalyptic discourse consists of 24:3-31, and that it functions as a *testament*. But this position leaves unaccounted several other

³² *Ibid*, p. 23.

³³ LAMBRECHT, "Parousia," pp. 316-18.

³⁴ BEARE, "Synoptic," pp. 117-19.

pericopes which form part of this discourse. At first, Burnett notices a break at 24:32 in the manner in which Matthew has arranged the discourse material; and then he calls the entire portion of 24:32-25:46 a *parenetic section*. Moreover, Burnett acknowledges that there should have been a connection between the παρουσία story (24:30-31) and the judgment scene (25:31-46), yet there is a gap between these two sections. In order to solve this problem, he proposes that Matthew is in the habit of using certain pericopes as *transitional material* to link one section with another section. For instance, Burnett suggests that just as Matthew used the concluding pericopes (23:37-39; 24:1-2) as transition material in order to separate the discourse on the indictment of the scribes and Pharisees (23:1-36) from the testament (24:3-31), similarly he uses 24:30-31 as a transitional pericope to the parenetical section of the seven parables (24:32--25:46).³⁵ However, Burnett's literary explanation regards the seven parables (including the judgment scene) as merely an expansion which is typical of Matthew's tendency to arrange the material in blocks of seven. He thus emphasizes that the concluding section of the apocalyptic testament is 24:30-31, on the ground that the disciples' question in 24:3 is "... definitively answered in 24:30-31."³⁶ This literary explanation is unsatisfactory, because it tends to stress the separation of the various pericopes instead of indicating how the diverse elements of the discourse constitute a whole. Moreover, we do not agree with Burnett's conclusion that 24:31 constitutes the ending of the apocalyptic testament because such a conclusion implies that the rest of the speech (24:32--25:46) is less important than what precedes (24:3-31). Consequently, the question regarding the proper ending of Matthew's eschatological discourse is not adequately answered in this analysis.

It is such lack of clarity characterising some commentaries on the structure of Matthew's eschatological discourse which prompts us to revisit the structure of this discourse in order to clarify how the disparate sections are organised and fit together in a logical pattern to communicate a theological message.

Finally, apart from the general view which cuts off 26:1-2 from the eschatological discourse and treats it as part of the passion-resurrection narrative (26:1-28:20), we find an exception to the

³⁵ Obviously, the quotation of 24:39-41 is a mistake, the correct passage is 24:29-31: see BURNETT, *Testament*, pp. 358-59 and compare with pp. 194-95.

³⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 194 (especially footnote 2), and 197.

rule in Benjamin W. Bacon's view. He proposes that the material in the Fifth Book Division B is organised in such a way that the ending of the discourse is found in chapter 26:2 instead of 25:46. Although we do not subscribe to Bacon's suggestion that the eschatological discourse begins in chapter 23, nevertheless, we agree with him about its ending, i.e. when he includes 26:1-2 as part of the eschatological discourse. Bacon has reached this conclusion from the perspective of his preoccupation with the stereotyped formula, "When Jesus had finished all these sayings,..." (v. 1). To confirm his position regarding the ending of Matthew's eschatological discourse, Bacon starts the long section on the passion-resurrection narrative from 26:3 with the title "The Plot to Kill Jesus."³⁷ We shall see that this view is different from the traditional position represented in the book edited by Kurt Aland and companions entitled, *The Greek New Testament*.

3. A Closer Observation of the Traditional Cutting:

Our aim in this section is to re-examine a few examples of the structure of Matthew's eschatological discourse as a starting point in our search for a more satisfactory structure. In this regard three examples will be evaluated for their strengths and weaknesses: Lambrecht's proposal, Jacques Dupont's views and the various divisions of the discourse as can be observed from the surface of the Greek Text.³⁸

We have already observed above that Jan Lambrecht belongs to the school of thought which considers Matt 24:1-2 as a culmination point of chapter 23. Hence, in Lambrecht's scheme, the first two verses of chapter 24 are not part of Matthew's eschatological discourse. What is the structural significance of vv. 3-4a? According to Lambrecht, the first appearance of the expression $\pi\alpha\rho\upsilon\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$ in v. 3 indicates an internal unity of this verse with three other instances in the discourse (vv. 27, 37, 39). Lambrecht's commentary on the disciples' question in v. 3 "We may expect that the Matthaean discourse will answer the double question of XXIV,3"³⁹ indicates that the portion of the text 24:3-4a is seen as an introductory part of the discourse, although this is not

³⁷ BACON, *Studies*, p. 326.

³⁸ Kurt ALAND, Matthew BLACK, Carlo M. MARTINI, Bruce M. METZGER, and Allen WIKGREN, eds., *The Greek New Testament*, [3rd. ed. Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1983], pp. 92-100

³⁹ LAMBRECHT, "Parousia," p. 318.

readily apparent.

Lambrecht divides the discourse into three main parts. Section A is called *“The Phases of the Future”* (24:4b-35), and this is sub-divided into four pericopes: “Not yet the end” (vv. 4b-14), “The great tribulation” (vv. 15-28), “The parousia” (vv. 29-31) and “The certainty that the coming is near” (vv. 32-35). B is entitled, *“Exhortation to Vigilance”* (24:36-25:30) and has four sub-sections: “The unknown time of the parousia” (24:36-44), “Parable of the Faithful or Unfaithful Servant” (24:45-51), “Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids” (25:1-13); and “Parable of the Talents” (25:14-30). Section C, “The Judgement of All the Nations” (25:31-46), is not divided into sub-sections. This structure emphasizes the speech part of the discourse and does not pay attention to the narrative aspect. But the question arises whether or not the disciples' question concerning the time and the sign of Jesus' παρουσία and the end of the age (v. 3) is fully answered in the speech section (24:4b-25:46). Our observation is that, if Lambrecht perceives 24:3-4a (which is prior to the speech) as the introduction (24:4b-25:46), then there ought to be a concluding pericope outside the speech itself; and this is not reflected in this structure.

A more complete and convincing presentation of the structure of Matthew's eschatological discourse is the one proposed by Jacques Dupont.⁴⁰ While Dupont uses redaction criticism to discover the intentionality of the author, he nevertheless limits his approach to a synchronic reading based on the surface of the present text. This approach can show the overall organisation of the various pericopes of the text as a totality. Specifically, Dupont suggests that there are seven sections of the discourse which he arranges into the following symmetrical structure:

- A.** 24:1-3: Introduction of the Discourse
- B.** vv. 4-14: Beginning of Tribulation
- C.** vv. 15-28: Great Tribulation
- D.** vv. 29-31: **Glorious Coming of the Son of Man**
- C'** vv. 32-35: Proximity of the End
- B'** 24:36-25:30: Unknown Day and Hour
- A'** 25:31-46: Last Judgment and conclusion

⁴⁰ DUPONT, *Trois*, pp. 50, 53-92, 92-95

Dupont points out that since 24:29-31 describes the παρουσία itself it constitutes the central message around which other sections revolve. Moreover, as the figures indicate, the two parts nearest to the centre form a parallel dealing with the tribulation which will immediately precede the Son of Man's coming. Further away from the centre the text shows the initial time of the church which is the actual time of Matthew's community. Two observations can be made regarding this structure. First, by considering the pericope on judgment (25:31-46) as the end of the discourse, Dupont has inherited the same problem of the lack of conclusion which we saw in Lambrecht's structure. The reason is that since the introduction (24:1-3) is in a narrative-dialogue form, the last judgment which falls within the speech section cannot constitute the end of the whole discourse. Rather, before the end the process of communication has to revert to the dialogue form in order to complete the process. Secondly, the symmetrical arrangement of this discourse denies the judgment scene its eminent position within the discourse. In fact 25:31-46 resumes and completes the story of the Coming Son of Man which was stopped prematurely in 24:31. Therefore both pericopes 24:29-31 and 25:31-46 constitute the message of the παρουσία of the Son of Man which is central to the whole discourse.

In our opinion, Dupont's symmetrical reading of Matthew's eschatological discourse has yielded good results by indicating the centrality of the idea of παρουσία of the Son of Man (24:29-31) and also of the parallels between the sections placed before and after the story of the παρουσία. But the symmetrical structure shows the same weakness that we have observed in other commentaries on the structure of Matthew's discourse. It fails to indicate the link between the pericope in 24:29-31 and the scene of Judgment (25:31-46) which gives a more complete picture of the παρουσία of the Son of Man. Furthermore, Dupont's structure regards the judgment scene as the final pericope, thus depriving the eschatological discourse of its proper ending. In order to have a more complete response to the disciples' question in 24:3, a pericope other than 25:31-46 should serve as a conclusion of Matthew's eschatological discourse.

Finally, we examine the organisation of material in the Greek edition of the New Testament. Our position is that in some cases the titles attributed to various parts of the text do not fairly represent the content of the discourse. The titles in question are: "The Destruction of the Temple

Foretold" (Matt 24:1-2), "The Beginning of Woes" (24:3-14), "the Great Tribulation" and "The Plot to Kill Jesus."⁴¹

To begin with, the first title "The Destruction of the Temple Foretold" attributed to the pericope 24:1-2, covers a more limited scope than necessary, because the discussion on the temple extends from v. 1 when Jesus left the temple until 4a when he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, and the disciples' raised the question: "when will these things be,....?" (v. 3). This question refers to Jesus' oracle of doom against the temple in v. 2d. Moreover, the saying about the impending destruction of the temple appears in the context of Jesus' departure from it (v. 1a). Consequently, there is a parallel between 24:1-4a and the pericope dealing with the appearance of the desolating sacrilege "... in the holy place" (v. 15), and the subsequent exhortations to flee from the environment of the sacrilege to take refuge on the mountains (vv. 15-20). Thus, the element of "destruction" in relation to the temple appears in more than one pericope. It goes hand in hand with the movements indicating the need to distance oneself from the impending disaster.

Similarly, the two titles "The Beginning of Woes" (vv. 3-14) and "The Great Tribulation" (vv. 15-28) do not fairly represent the content of the pericopes to which they are attributed.⁴² First, vv. 3-14 contains phrases which deal both with the beginning (vv. 3c, 6c, 8) and with the end of tribulation (vv. 3, 14b). It may be that the term "beginning" is a fitting description of the pericope (vv. 4b-7) which precedes the metaphorical saying "all this is the beginning of birth-pangs" (v. 8). Undoubtedly the expressions "...and the fulfillment of the age" (v. 3c) and "...the end will come" (v. 14b) describe the end. Then, the beginning of the end is reflected in the ambiguous expression, "...the beginning of birth-pangs" (v. 8). Secondly, the title "The Great Tribulation" should also cover the material in vv. 9-12 where we find the description of a full-scale persecution, and where community disorder and lawlessness have reached their peak.

Furthermore, it is obvious at first sight that the title "The Plot to Kill Jesus"⁴³ does not incorporate the material in 26:1-2 which deals with the conclusion of Jesus' long speech and the information regarding his imminent crucifixion on the feast of the Passover. Rather the story about

⁴¹ ALAND, *Greek*, pp. 92-100.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 92-94.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

the plot begins only at 26:3. Nevertheless apart from Bacon's proposal of the structure of Matthew's gospel, no other commentator whom I have read has extended the ending of Matthew's eschatological discourse beyond 25:46. If the discourse had begun at 24:4b which is the beginning of the speech, then the ending in 25:46 would be appropriate (see Lambrecht's structure) since this particular verse concludes the speech begun at 24:4b. Most scholars, however, agree that the eschatological discourse begins in 24:1-2 which has a narrative and dialogue content concerning Jesus' exit from the temple. In this case, it would be logical for this discourse to end in another short narrative dialogue (26:1-2), in the same way as it began, so that the two small sections (24:1-4a and 26:1-2) would form an inclusion.

Consequently, we propose to revisit the cutting of Matthew's eschatological discourse with the intention of overcoming the difficulties which we have observed in the traditional cutting.

4. A New Delimitation of Matthew's Eschatological Discourse:

As far as the *cutting* of this text is concerned, we take the surface of the text as our launching pad. We bear in mind that the cutting of any text always consists of making a hypothesis based on the changes of elements which are observable on the surface of the text. Hence, we shall examine rather closely the position of the figures and their changes as they appear at first sight by our consideration of actors, spaces, time and some refrains.

(i) Actors:

Under this category we use the "principle of extraction"⁴⁴ as our guideline. This principle consists in the excision of a segment of a text to be analysed from its immediate context. Extraction presupposes two segments, each of them containing peculiar figures which indicate that they are independent, yet intertwined, units of discourse. In this case, the first segment is interrupted before it comes to an end, then a second segment characterised by the figures peculiar to it appears inserted into the first one. When the second segment comes to an end then the portion of the first

⁴⁴ *Extraction* occurs when a segment to be analysed is inserted between two parts of a larger section, and is identifiable through the changes of the actors, spaces or time. But, the *cutting* consists of making a hypothesis of the delimitation of a segment to be analysed by identifying the elements which are peculiar to it. See GIROUD, *Sémiotique*, p. 33.

segment re-emerges showing the same figures which had occurred earlier in the first portion. In this instance, the first segment which was interrupted is now resumed and brought to an end.

Regarding Matthew's eschatological discourse, we observe that on the surface of chapters 23 and 26 a remarkable change of actors takes place. We have already seen that Matt 23 describes a context in which Jesus addresses the crowds and his disciples. In the address he rebukes a particular group of actors, "the scribes and the Pharisees" (23:1-36). This event takes place in the city of Jerusalem over which he laments and predicts doom (vv. 37-39). Both the actors and the space in which these events take place disappear as soon as the new chapter begins (Matt 24:1). At this stage new actors appear, Jesus is going out of the temple and is sojourning on the Mount of Olives accompanied only by his disciples (vv. 1-3). We note that throughout the events described in 24:1-26:2 the topographic setting and the actors remain the same, except for the speech section of the text where the main actors, Jesus and the disciples, assume new roles as "the speaker" and "the hearers" (24:4b-25:46) respectively. Then in 26:1-2 the original actors reappear in their former roles as "Jesus" and "his disciples" as they were in 24:1-4a. This indicates that 26:1-2 is a continuation as well as the conclusion of the narrative dialogue section which was interrupted in 24:4a.

However, from 26:3 the scene changes as Jesus and his disciples disappear altogether, thus giving way to a new scene characterised by the new space which is "the palace of the high priest" (26:3). Likewise new actors appear, "Caiaphas," "the chief priests," and "the elders of the people" (26:3-5).

The examination of the variation of the actors shows clearly that Matt 24:1--26:2 constitutes a unit of discourse because of the sameness of its content. In fact it appears as if the eschatological text were inserted between two portions of the same narrative about the events which took place in the temple in Jerusalem (Matt 23:1-39) and in the high priest's palace (26:3-5).

(ii) Topography:

The topographic evidence confirms beyond any doubt that the delimitation of the text suggested above is correct. The Mount of Olives (Matt 24:3) is the space on which Jesus' discourse with his disciples takes place right up to 26:2. Immediately before he reached the Mount of Olives, Jesus' movement is captured by the narrator on the temple precinct while he is on his way out of the temple, "Jesus left the temple and was going away,..." (24:1a). From the spatial point of view, 24:1-4a form the introductory part of this eschatological discourse, because these verses describe the temple precinct as a passage to the Mount of Olives and to the dialogue which took place between Jesus and his disciples.

On the other hand, the spaces of the city of Jerusalem and the temple (21:10--23:39) belong to the preceding text, while the court of the high priest Caiaphas (26:3) is a spatial indication of the new narrative after the eschatological discourse has taken place. The contrasts that distinguish these three spaces are remarkable. While the previous space (Jerusalem and the temple) was characterized by Jesus' triumphant entry into the city, commotion, bitter controversies with Jewish leaders, and curses (Matt 21:1--23:39), Jesus' passage from the temple environs (24:1-2) and his sojourning on the Mount of Olives (v.3) have the atmosphere of tranquility and openness leading to new insights and learning (24:3--26:2). This is reminiscent of the changes in Jesus' teaching ministry in the entire gospel. It all began with the exclusive attention paid to the heirs of the messianic promise, i.e. "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (10:6; 15:23-24). But after the rejection of Jesus' message as the Messiah by Israel, the crowds were instructed only in parables (13:1-39), while in private Jesus explains the parables to the disciples (vv. 10-17, 18-23). Furthermore, we notice that as soon as the eschatological discourse comes to an end in 26:2, a new spatial setting indicates the beginning of the new section. Behind the closed doors of the high priest's palace, intrigues and scheming in resentful conspiratorial tones against Jesus become the order of the day (26:3-5).

Hence, on the surface of the text the spaces indicate more clearly than any other element that Matthew's eschatological discourse begins from Matt 24:1 and ends in 26:2.

(iii) Time:

The temporal factor is only implicit at the beginning of this text, thus it is not as easily explained as the spaces. However, the context created by the combination of other factors, such as the actors and the spaces, as well as the grammatical context⁴⁵ of the circumstantial participles (vv. 1a, 3a), can help us to determine the time more accurately. Hence, Jesus' exit from the temple (24:1a) and his sojourning on the Mount of Olives (v. 3a) mark the beginning of a new time in relation to the previous time of Jesus' ministry in the temple (23:1-39).

The temporal indication of the ending of this text is expressed more explicitly than the time of the beginning. The actors and the spaces have shown clearly that our text ends in Matt 26:2 rather than in 25:46. Likewise, from the temporal perspective, it suffices to point out that the stereotyped formula "And when Jesus had finished all these sayings..."⁴⁶ (Matt 26:1), refers to the concluding time of the discourse. In terms of the narrative sequence of the deep structures, this is known as the *sanction* or a recognition that the transformation of states has taken place. There is also the temporal adverb "Then..." (26:3) which marks a new time and consequently the beginning of a new story. This assertion is confirmed by the context, viz., the temporal adverb appears together with the new actors: "Caiaphas," "the chief priests" and "the elders of the people" (v. 3). These facts about the text provide further evidence that the ending of Matthew's eschatological discourse is 26:2 rather than 25:46.

⁴⁵ Herbert Weir SMYTH, Greek Grammar (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), par. 2061, pp. 457-58.

⁴⁶ See also Matt. 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; and 19:1, and Jack Dean KINGSBURY, Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), pp. 2-3.

B. A FURTHER DELIMITATION OF THE TEXT INTO MICROTTEXTS:

1. Preliminary Remarks:

Now that the text of Matthew's eschatological discourse has been delimited, our analysis will be restricted within the parameters drawn by this delimitation. Since the proposed text (Matt 24:1-26:2) is a macrotext, our second step will be to subdivide it into microtexts on the basis of surface indicators. These will comprise changes in the appearance of actors, temporal expressions, topography, as well as some refrains and inclusions.

2. The Cutting of the Microtexts and Literary Units⁴⁷:

For the detailed demarcations of various microtexts and their corresponding literary units, we shall establish the beginning and the ending in each case, and then back up our claims with appropriate literary arguments based on the rules of the demarcation of texts. Therefore, it suffices here only to make postulates of those portions of the text which constitute various microtexts, with their units.

Microtext One (Matt 24:1-4a)

Καὶ ἐξελθὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀπὸ τοῦ ἱεροῦ ἐπορεύετο,
..... καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς,

Our hypothesis in the cutting of all microtexts and their literary units is based on the changes of various elements or figures observable on the surface of the text: actors, spaces and time. As we read and as the text unfolds, certain figures appear and disappear, giving way to new figures. It is these constant changes of the figures which will enable us to determine the various scenes.

Two questions guide the whole of our investigation. Where does the microtext begin? Where does it end? We have noted that the distinguishing features marking a text from the preceding one (23:1-39) are the actors: i.e. "Jesus" who is on his way out of the temple to the

⁴⁷ Further cutting of the microtexts into literary units will be done. While during the analysis some units will be explicitly used as a starting point, in other cases they will only be assumed.

Mount of Olives is joined by “his disciples” (24:1, 3). In this instance the same actors mark also the beginning of the first microtext. These two actors appear as far as v. 4a, and from v. 4b onward new figures appear who play the role of the speaker and the hearers (see the cutting of the second microtext below). Thus, the first microtext stretches from 24:1 up to v. 4a.

In order to distinguish between the first and the second literary units, we notice that the changes of the spaces are important. First, the passage of Jesus from the temple (24:1-2) to the Mount of Olives indicates a change from one space, the temple exit, to another space, the Mount of Olives. The two spaces thus become a natural demarcation between two literary units: vv. 1-2 and vv. 3-4a. Secondly, new figures appear on the Mount of Olives which determine the changing of the scenes. There is “the privacy” as an indication of the space (v. 3a). It shows the atmosphere of the discussion and learning about “the sign of the παρουσία of Jesus” and “the fulfillment of the age” (v. 3c) peculiar to the second literary unit.

Microtext Two: (Vv. 4b-14)

Βλέπετε μή τις ὑμᾶς πλανήσῃ· καὶ τότε ἔξει τὸ τέλος.

Starting from v. 4b onward a remarkable change of thematic roles occurs: from Jesus and his disciples to the speaker and the hearers who often appear in the first person “I” and second personal plural “you.” Another characteristic feature is that the actors are qualified by adjectives expressing the majority: viz., “many...” (vv. 5a, b, 10, 11, 12); and “all...” (vv. 8, 9b, 14a). Temporal expressions also play an important role. The expressions in vv. 6d, 8 indicate the beginning as summaries of what is preceding (vv. 4b-7), and a temporal phrase, “and then the end will come” (v. 14), indicates the climax of the activity described since v. 4b.

Concerning smaller literary units, we notice that the first unit is marked by new actors: “anyone” (v. 4b), “many” (messianic pretenders), the disputed messianic title “the Christ,” and “many” who will be deceived (v. 5). Furthermore, there will be a propagation of “news about wars” (v. 6), “the warring nations,” “the warring kingdoms,” “famines” and “earthquakes” (v. 7a); and these will take place in “various places” (v. 7). Finally, “all these things” (v. 8) is reiterated (see also v. 2b), and

it is associated with the temporal indication which concludes this unit, "...the beginning of birth-pangs" (v. 8). Therefore, the first literary unit begins in v. 4b and ends in v. 8.

"Then..." (v. 9a) marks the beginning of the second literary unit. In this case also the change of actors is evident. Apart from the current actors (the speaker and the hearers) there are also "the persecutors" who are implied in the 3rd person plural, "they will betray you..." (v. 9a). In the same unit we also find figures such as the speaker's name "...in my name" (v. 9b) and "all the nations" (v. 9b).

At this juncture, we postulate that the series of temporal indications "Then..." (v. 9a), "And then..." (v. 10), "And then..." (v. 14b) constitute a refrain. These expressions describe a series of consecutive events which belong to the same scene. This particular unit ends naturally with the expression, "...and the end will come" (v. 14b).

Microtext Three (vv. 15-22)

15 Ὅταν οὖν ἴδητε τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως....
κολοβωθήσονται αἱ ἡμέραι ἐκεῖναι.

Due to the introductory temporal expression "When you see..." (v. 15), and the rapid variations of the spatial and actantial figures, the third microtext and its literary units lend themselves to an easy delimitation. V. 15 marks the new time and the beginning of the microtext, whereas the expression, "... in those days" (v. 22c) indicates the end. Also present are spatial phrases such as, "the holy place" (v. 15) and "the mountains" (v. 16).

Likewise, v. 15 indicates the beginning of the first smaller unit. It shows a particular organisation of elements such as the actors, "the desolating sacrilege," "the prophet Daniel" and "the reader."

Subsequently, "Then..." (v. 16) indicates the beginning of a new unit. We also note that spaces such as "the holy place," "the mountains," "the field" and "the housetops" (vv. 16-20) belong to this unit.

The third literary unit is introduced by the temporal indication "For then there will be great

tribulation such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be" (v. 21). This indication of time is associated with the new actor, "the great tribulation." There are other actors peculiar to this unit such as "all the flesh" (v. 22a) and "the elect," including the implied actor in the aorist and future passive verbs (v. 22b).

Microtext Four (Vv. 23-28)

τότε ἐάν τις ὑμῖν εἶπη,
ἐκεῖ συναχθήσονται οἱ ἀετοί.

In this case, the organisation of the new spaces into two poles is a major factor in determining the demarcation, " 'Lo, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' " (v. 23b-d), " 'Lo, he is in the wilderness' (v. 26b), 'Lo, he is in the inner rooms'" (v. 26c), and "from the east... as far as the west" (v. 27). We find here an organisation of the actors who do not appear anywhere else: "the false christs and the false prophets" (v. 24), "the παρουσία of the Son of Man" (v. 27), "the dead body," and "the eagles" (v. 28). These features are clear indications that vv. 23-28 constitute a new microtext.

There are also noticeable differences in the spaces of this microtext, indicating its further division into two literary units. Verses 23-26 deal with earthly spaces such as "here... there," (v. 23), "in the wilderness... in the inner-rooms" (v. 26), while v. 27 deals with a cosmic space, "...from the east as far as the west." Therefore, vv. 23-26 and 27-28 are two distinct literary units.

Microtext Five (vv. 29-31)

Εὐθέως δὲ μετὰ τὴν θλίψιν τῶν ἡμερῶν ἐκείνων....
ἐκ τῶν τεσσάρων ἀνέμων ἀπ' ἄκρων οὐρανῶν ἕως
(τῶν) ἄκρων αὐτῶν.

The beginning is indicated by the temporal phrase, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days..." (v. 29) which marks a new time. The ending however is not easy to determine. Due to

the peculiar arrangement of the elements on the surface of the text, the principle of extraction⁴⁸ will be used as a tool.

First, we notice that in vv. 30 and 31 certain figures appear which are peculiar to this section: "the Coming Son of Man," "all the tribes" (v. 30), "...with much glory," "his angels" and "...will gather" (v. 31). These actors go only as far as 24:31. From v. 32 onward a completely different group of actors appear: "the fig tree," "its branch," "the sprouting leaves," and many other groups of actors down to 25:30. However, from 25:31 onward we notice that the same figures which had appeared in 24:29-31 resurface in the story of judgment of the nations: "the Coming Son of Man," "...in his glory," "all his angels," (v. 31) "all nations" and "will be gathered" (v. 32). The disappearance of these figures in 24:31 and their reappearance in 25:31 is a clear indication that the text in between (24:32-25:30) is a section which has been inserted between the two segments of 24:29-31 and 25:31-46. In that way, the parable section interrupts abruptly the account dealing with the παρουσία of the Son of Man in 24:31. The text resumes in 25:31. Consequently, 24:32--25:30 can be extracted from the rest of the text as an independent section which we call the parable section.

From the point of view of the variation of the actors, 24:31 marks the ending of the fifth microtext which began in 24:29, while 24:32 is the beginning of a new microtext as indicated by the new actors appearing on that scene.

After the delimitation of the microtext (24:29-31), we may now determine the boundaries of its literary units. The temporal indication in v. 29a shows the beginning of the first unit. The end is in v. 29d, and it is determined by the following temporal expression "and then..." (v. 30a), which indicates the beginning of a new literary unit. However, what characterises the unit (v. 29) are the cosmic figures losing their lustre and order: the sun, the moon, the stars and the powers of the heavens. Hence, the sky or cosmos is the new location for the cosmic drama.

The temporal expression "and then..." (v. 30a), already indicated above, introduces the second literary unit. This unit has a spatial organisation peculiar to it, a rare combination of two spaces, heaven and earth. The spatial indication, "...in heaven" (v. 30a) is followed by the link

⁴⁸ See GIROUD, *Sémiotique*, p. 33. It is through the use of this principle of extraction that we shall determine the three distinct levels which constitute Matthew's eschatological discourse.

between heaven and earth (v. 30b); and from the cloud of heaven the Son of Man sends his angels to gather the elect “from the four winds...” (v. 31). Finally other figures, “the sign of the Son of Man” (v. 30a) “all tribes of the earth” and “the Coming Son of Man” (v. 30a) constitute the distinguishing features of this unit. Hence, the second unit encompasses two verses (30-31).

Microtext Six (vv. 32-35)

Ἄπο δὲ τῆς συκῆς μάθετε τὴν παραβολήν·....
οἱ δὲ λόγοι μου οὐ μὴ παρέλθωσιν.

We have already determined the beginning of the sixth microtext through the principle of extraction. It has shown that the whole section from 24:32 up to 25:30 can be excised from the rest of the text as an independent section. However, other indications suggest that a further cutting of this large section (24:32-25:30) into smaller segments would be appropriate. For instance, the temporal expression, “But concerning that day and hour no one knows” (v. 36) introduces a new scene. Therefore, v. 35 marks the ending of the sixth microtext.

Its first literary unit is characterised by the figures: “the fig tree,” “its branch” and “the sprouting leaves” (v. 32). Other elements belonging to it are the temporal expressions, “When now...” (v. 32b), “...summer is near” (v. 32c). Moreover the actors “all these things” (vv. 33b, 34) and “he the Son of Man...” (v. 33) belong to this unit. All these figures constitute a homogeneous grouping. The first unit consists then of vv. 32-33.

The new actors, “this generation” (v. 34), “heaven and earth” and “my words” (v. 35b), indicate the second literary unit of the sixth microtext. We notice here a special combination of the two spaces below and above, this world and the other world. These spaces are implied in the expression, “this generation will not pass away...” (v. 34) and “heaven and earth will pass away...” (v. 35a).

Microtext Seven (Vv. 36-44)

Περὶ δὲ τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης καὶ ὥρας οὐδεὶς οἶδεν,
ὅτι ἢ οὐ δοκεῖτε ὥρα ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἔρχεται.

The beginning is readily apparent due to the new temporal indication, “But concerning that day and hour...” (v. 36). This unit also features new actors organised into a homogeneous group, “anyone,” “the angels of heaven,” “the Son” and “the Father.” The only spatial expression appearing in this unit, “...of heaven,” indicates a new scene. Therefore, v. 36 constitutes an independent unit.

The temporal phrase, “...the days of Noah” (v. 37), marks the beginning of the second literary unit. Other distinguishing characteristics are the actors, “Noah,” “the παρουσία of the Son of Man” (vv. 37b, 39b), “Noah’s contemporaries” (v. 38), and “the flood.” There is also a space which is peculiar to this unit, “the ark.” The ending is indicated by the temporal expression “Then...” (v. 40). Hence, the unit begins with v. 37 and ends with v. 39.

The third literary unit is characterised by actors organised into pairs of the same gender, “two men” (v. 40) and “two women” (v. 41); a change is shown when one actor is removed while the other remains. The arrangement of the spaces is also peculiar to this unit, “the field” and “the mill.” The ending of this unit is indicated by the introduction of new figures, so that from v. 42 onwards a new temporal expression and new actors are found. Hence, the third unit occupies two verses (40-41).

As already indicated, the beginning of the fourth literary unit is easy to denote. A new time, “...what part of the day” (v. 42b), determines its beginning. There are also new actors, “the Lord,” “the householder,” “the thief,” “the hearers” and “the Son of Man.” The organisation of time appears in phrases such as “...part of the day” (v. 42b), “...part of the night” (v. 43a), and “the hour.” Only one space is indicated, “his house.”

Microtext Eight: (Vv. 45-51)

Τίς ἄρα ἐστὶν ὁ πιστὸς δοῦλος καὶ φρόνιμος
ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων.

New actors, “the faithful and wise slave,” “the lord,” “food,” “the fortunate slave” indicate that a new microtext begins at v. 45, and stretches up to v. 51. Several features show that this microtext is divisible into two units. Spaces peculiar to the first unit are “...over his household,” “...over all his possessions.” There is also a temporal indication, “...at the proper time” (v. 45). This unit ends in v. 47, since from v. 48 onward we find new elements.

The second unit is characterized by changed features such as the new spaces, “...in his heart” (v. 48), “...(he will) place him with the hypocrites” and “where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth” (v. 51); the new actors, “the wicked slave,” “his fellow slaves,” “the drunken,” “the hypocrites” and “his portion,” as well as the new temporal indication, “...my master is delayed” (v. 48). Therefore, this unit begins in v. 48 and ends in v. 51.

Microtext Nine (25:1-13)

Τότε ὁμοιωθήσεται ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν δέκα παρθένοις,
....ὅτι οὐκ οἶδατε τὴν ἡμέραν οὐδὲ τὴν ὥραν.

The boundaries of this microtext are not difficult to determine. There are clearly defined features, such as the introductory temporal expression “Then...” (25:1), and the concluding expression, “you know neither the day nor the hour” (v. 13b). Moreover, there is a less complex and homogeneous organisation of actors proper to this section: “the ten virgins” and “the bridegroom” occupy the whole section from v.1 up to the temporal indication in v. 13.

As far as the literary units are concerned, the first unit is introduced by the same temporal expression which marks the beginning of the microtext, “Then...” (25:1). Its ending is determined by the temporal expression, “...was delayed” (v. 5). This unit is also characterised by three figures, “the kingdom of heaven” and the two groups, “the five foolish virgins” and “the five wise virgins.”

Hence, the first unit stretches from v. 1 up to v. 5.

The beginning of the second unit is marked by a new temporal indication, “But at midnight...” (v. 6). Moreover, the appearance of the herald is implied in the phrase, “...there was a cry,” thus indicating that a new scene begins with v. 6. An impromptu dialogue takes place between the foolish and the wise virgins. This dialogue results in their division into two groups when the foolish go out to buy their own oil (v. 9b), thus marking the end of the unit. Therefore, the second unit begins in v. 6 and concludes with v. 9.

The radical change of actors in v. 10a when the foolish virgins depart and the bridegroom enters indicates the change to the third literary unit. There is another new element “the wedding hall” (v. 10b), into which both the bridegroom and the wise virgins enter, after which the door is closed. The expression “the door was closed” (v. 10b) brings a new spatial arrangement of the elements. When the foolish virgins’ request to have the door opened is refused, this results in two separate spaces: viz., the space *inside* where the wedding feast takes place, and the space *outside* where the foolish virgins are left out as strangers (v. 12). In this regard the temporal phrase in v. 13b also marks the end of the third unit.

Microtext Ten (Vv. 14-30)

Ὡσπερ γὰρ ἄνθρωπος ἀποδημῶν ἐκάλεσεν
 τοὺς ἰδίους δούλους
 ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων.

This microtext is fairly easy to cut because of the homogeneous organisation of its elements. The appearance of “the man” and “his slaves” (25:14) is a clear indication that we are entering a new scene. These actors recur consistently throughout this section (vv. 14-30). For instance, the man is about to undertake a journey (v. 14). Later on he resurfaces as “the lord” (v. 18) and as “the lord of the slaves” (v. 19). In other instances the man plays the role of the arbiter who rewards the first two slaves for the work well done (vv. 21, 23) and punishes the third one for his laziness (vv. 28, 30).

The beginning of this microtext has been established. Where does it end? In vv. 30 and 31 we observe a radical displacement of the actors when “the man” and “the slaves” are replaced by new actors, “the Son of Man,” “the angels,” “all the nations,” etc. This section is also characterised by the temporal expression “When...” (v. 31), which indicates a new time and the beginning of a new microtext. These changes indicate an alteration of scenes as well. Hence, v. 30 marks the end of the microtext which began in v. 14, while v. 31 marks the beginning of a new one.

Although the boundaries of the microtext (vv. 14-30) have been relatively easy to establish, the demarcation of its literary units presents some difficulties. In order to determine the literary units, both principles of *demarcation* and *extraction* will be used.

Naturally, “the man,” who indicated the beginning of the microtext, determines also the *first* literary unit. This actor distributed his property among the three slaves and then left the scene (v. 15e). This marks the end of the first unit (vv. 14-15e).

The same actor reappears on the day of settling the accounts in his new role as “the lord of the slaves” (v. 19). This fact shows a narrative link between v. 15e and v. 19, implying that the text of (vv. 15f-18) can be excised and treated as the second literary unit.

Later on, the mention of the actor as “the lord of the slaves” (v. 19) indicates the beginning of the third unit, with a relation of communication between him and “the slave who had five talents.” But as soon as the slave “...with two talents” appears (v. 22a) the discursive situation changes again. Hence, the *third* literary unit which begins in v. 19 comes to an end in v. 21.

The same principle of demarcation can be applied to the last two units. The *fourth* literary unit which is constituted by two actors, “the lord” and “the slave with two talents” (vv. 22-23). The *fifth* unit involves “the lord,” “the slave with one talent” as well as the re-entry of “the slave with ten talents” (vv. 24-30).

Microtext Eleven (Vv. 31-46)

“Όταν δὲ ἔλθῃ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐν τῇ δόξῃ αὐτοῦ
οἱ δὲ δίκαιοι εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον.

The boundaries of this microtext are clearly defined. The temporal expression “When...,” and actors who had left in 24:31 reappear: “the coming of the Son of Man,” “all the angels” (v. 31) and “all the nations” (v. 32).

In this case also, we have recourse to *extraction*. The return of the former actors shows that the segment dealing with the judgment of the nations (25:31-46) is the continuation of the narrative about the παρουσία of the Son of Man, interrupted by the parable section (24:32-25:30).

The cutting of the literary units of this microtext is facilitated by temporal expressions. The temporal expression “When...” (v. 31a), which indicates the beginning of the seventh microtext, also marks the beginning of the first literary unit. This unit is characterised by new actors: “the shepherd,” “the sheep” and “the goats.” A new space is peculiar to this unit: “...on his glorious throne” (v. 31b). Therefore, this unit begins at v. 31 and ends in v. 33.

The second unit begins with another temporal expression, “then...” (v. 34a). New elements are: the actors, “the King,” “the blessed,” and the space “the prepared kingdom.” This unit encompasses three verses (vv. 34-36).

The temporal expression “Then...” (v. 37a) marks the beginning of the third unit. The elements special to this unit are, “the righteous” (v. 37a), “one,” “the least,” and “these my brothers” (v. 40c). The third unit covers v. 37 up to v. 40.

Verses 41-43 form another literary unit. It too is introduced by the temporal phrase “Then...” (v. 41a). New actors peculiar to this unit are: “the cursed,” “the devil” and “his angels” (v. 41b). We also find a new space: “...into eternal fire” (v. 41b).

The last unit consists of three verses (vv. 44-46) and is also introduced by the expression “Then...” (v. 44a). We also find new spaces at this stage, “...into eternal punishment” and “...into eternal life” (v. 46b). Thus v. 46 marks both the end of the eleventh microtext as well as the end of the final unit.

Microtext Twelve (26:1-2)

Καὶ ἐγένετο ὅτε ἐτέλεσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς πάντας
 τοὺς λόγους τούτους,
 παραδίδοται εἰς τὸ σταυρωθῆναι.

Some clues will help us to determine the boundaries of the last microtext. The beginning is indicated by the temporal phrase, “And it came to pass when Jesus finished all these words”⁴⁹ (26:1a). Moreover, in this verse the main actor “Jesus” and “his disciples” found in 24:1-4a reappear at this stage (26:1-2). This indicates two things. First, the segment 26:1-2 belongs to the main body of Matthew’s eschatological discourse (24:1--26:2). Second, 24:1-4a and 26:1-2 constitute two segments of the same narrative into which a long speech (24:4b-25:46) has been inserted. For that reason it can be said that the two segments (24:1-4a, 26:1-2) have the unity of a discourse.

As this microtext is not divisible into smaller segments of literary units, it will be analysed as it stands (26:1-2).

⁴⁹ As a subordinate clause, the stereotyped formula, Καὶ ἐγένετο ὅτε ἐτέλεσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς πάντας τοὺς λόγους τούτους, is essentially linked with the independent clause, εἶπεν τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ. While the former refers to the preceding speech the latter tends forward. See, Jack Dean KINGSBURY, Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 4.

C. THE NEW STRUCTURE OF MATTHEW'S ESCHATOLOGICAL DISCOURSE.

1. Preliminary Remarks:

Our hypothesis for the new structure of the discourse is based on the new cutting. The entire text begins with Matt 24:1 and ends at 26:2. The proposed structure is also verified in the cutting of this discourse into the microtexts and literary units proposed above.

We postulate that in Matthew's eschatological discourse the *παρουσία* of the Son of Man is not about the destruction of the temple, even if the references to the disasters associated with the temple or the holy place appear more than once in this text (24:1-2, 15). Nor is the *παρουσία* only about Jesus' departure from the temple (24:1) or about his movements from place to place, although there are two important instances in this text where Jesus (Son of Man) is described as "going" and "coming" (24:30; 25:31). Furthermore, the *παρουσία* does not deal with the economic welfare or charity towards the needy, in spite of the recurrence of these ideals in certain parts of this text (24:45-46; 25:14-30, 35-40, 42-45).

On the contrary, the overwhelming majority of instances indicate that the *παρουσία* of the Son of Man has something to do with *COMMUNICATION*. Basically, we distinguish between two types of communication in this text. First, there is a dialogue involving two interlocutors, Jesus and his disciples, and this is distributed between two segments, 24:1-4a and 26:1-2. Secondly, there is also a long monologue or speech which involves the same two actors who appear in this instance as playing new roles. One is the role of the speaker in the first person "I," the other is the role of the audience in the second person plural "you" (24:4b-25:46).

Furthermore, we propose that all the elements in Matthew's eschatological discourse are organised into a **tripartite structure**. There are indeed three major levels which structure the elements so that each level appears with its own distinct character in relation to the other levels. Then, the three levels are linked or interlocked in such a way that all of them are constituent elements of the whole text, 24:1--26:2. It is as if the *second level* (24:4b-31; 25:31-46) is inserted between the two segments of the *first level* (24:1-4a; 26:1-2), while the *third level* (24:32--25:30) is also inserted between the two segments of the *second level*.

2. The Tripartite Structure in the Discursive Dimension of the Text.

The *first level* consists of the dialogue section divided into two parts situated at the extremities of the text: viz., 24:1-4a signals the introductory part, while 26:1-2 is found at the conclusion. We observe that the long speech of (24:4b--25:46) is inserted between these two parts. Thus, the first part of the dialogue is in the context of Jesus' departure from the temple and of his doom oracle against the temple buildings (24:1-2). On the Mount of Olives the dialogue is resumed through the initiative of the disciples' question concerning the time and the sign of Jesus' παρουσία and the fulfillment of the age (v. 3). But in v. 4a the first dialogue section comes abruptly to an end, thus bringing the first level to a temporal halt. From v. 4b onward the communication changes from the dialogue into a long speech delivered by the speaker to the hearers. Here in verse 4b the second level begins. Once that speech is over (25:46) we recapture the dialogue involving the same actors, Jesus and his disciples (26:1-2). In that instance, the first level is resumed and its content deals with the imminent event of the Passover feast (v. 2a) and the crucifixion of the Son of Man (v. 2b).

The *second level* occupies a part of the speech section and comprises five microtexts: 24:4b-14, 15-22, 23-28, 29-31; 25:31-46. In 24:31 however, we observe another abrupt ending of the unfinished story of the παρουσία of the Son of Man, resumed later on in 25:31-46. The space between these two parts is filled with the parable section. Thus, the second level appears also in two segments forming a framework to the third level (24:32-25:30). The first segment of the second level runs from 24:4b to v. 31, whereas the second segment is found in the last pericope of the speech which deals with the scene of the last judgment (25:31-46). The first segment consists of actors, spaces and temporal indications peculiar to it and deals specifically with the eschatological woes and the story of the παρουσία of the Son of Man. This account begun in 24:4b stops abruptly at v. 31, and from v. 32 onward a completely different section begins with new actors and spaces. Then, the story of the Coming Son of Man is resumed and includes the judgment of all the nations 25:31-46.

Finally, the *third level* is found in the second section of the speech and consists of seven parable stories from 24:32 to 25:30. The third level alone is uninterrupted. Its position in the text

and the elements peculiar to it have already been discussed in the cutting of the microtexts.

The schema of the proposed *TRIPARTITE STRUCTURE* for the whole text stands as follows:

1ST. LEVEL PART I Matt 24:1-4a

- Dialogue: From temple to Mt of Olives**
Jesus in dialogue with Disciples, i.e.,
- on the doom against the temple
- Disciples' question on παρουσία
Jesus' response incomplete

2ND. LEVEL PART I 24:4b-31

- Monologue: on Calamities
& παρουσία**
Speaker, Listeners, etc.

1ST. LEVEL PART II 26:1-2

- Dialogue: Passover & Crucifixion**
Dialogue is resumed: Jesus & Disciples
- Passover feast & Crucifixion imminent
- Jesus' response completed

2ND. LEVEL PART II 25:31-46

- Monologue: on His Coming
& Judgment**
Son of Man-Shepherd-King,
and all nations etc.

3RD. LEVEL

24:32-25:30

- Monologue: Parable section**
Master & Slaves, etc.
Rewards & Punishments

From the observation of the surface of the text we may make the following remarks. The first level (24:1-4a and 26:1-2) forms an inclusion to the whole speech (24:4b-25:46). The second level (24:4b-31 and 25:31-46) forms another inclusion to the third level which is the parable section (24:32-25:30).

We assume it to be our task to prove correct our hypothesis of the tripartite structure. It should be verified through the analysis of the discursive composition in the second chapter and through the analysis of the narrative composition in the third chapter. Within the deep structures there is a correspondence in the organisation of material on the following levels: between the two dialogue parts, 24:1-4a and 26:1-2; between the two separate accounts of the eschatological woes and the παρουσία of the Son of Man, 24:4b-31 and 25:31-46; and among the five parables, 24:32--25:30. Moreover, in the process of this argument we want to establish that the three levels

indicated above follow each other logically and that there is harmony among the various disparate elements. Consequently, the semantic as well as the thematic values discovered on the discursive level correspond to the narrative programs and the transformation of states discovered on the narrative level. At this particular stage of analysis our task will be to show how the narrative transforms the semantic values so that from both dimensions a more basic and abstract idea emerges, binding together all the elements of the text to constitute one story about the παρουσία of the Son of Man in Matthew's eschatological discourse (24:1-26:2).

3. The Tripartite Structure according to the Narrative Sequence.

The narrative sequence begins with Jesus' departure from the temple (24:1a) as he pronounces the imminent destruction of its buildings (v. 2d). Then he sojourns on the Mount of Olives where the disciples raise a question regarding the time and sign of his παρουσία and the end of the age (v. 3).

Hence, the begin state consists of Jesus' *absence* from the temple. In this regard, the narrative sequence must establish his presence or παρουσία. Moreover, the *lack* of the initial situation is reflected in the disciples' quest for knowledge, "Tell us,..." (v. 3b-c). The goal of the narrative sequence is thus to acquire that knowledge.

As a preview of our analysis, we want to show briefly how the narrative component confirms the proposed tripartite structure of the eschatological discourse, in the same way that our preview of the discursive dimension above has confirmed it. We postulate that the MAIN TRANSFORMATION occupies the dialogue sections (24:1-4a; 26:1-2) and constitutes the **first level** of the text. The begin state of the main transformation consists of several elements which indicate the *initial lack*, and its goal is to acquire the *value object*. First, Jesus' departure from the temple indicates the *lack* which must be filled. The state of Jesus' physical absence from the doomed temple (24:1) is something that must be transformed. Hence, the narrative sequence in this regard is towards Jesus' new presence described here as his παρουσία and the end-time (v. 3b-c). Secondly, at the beginning of the text the disciples appear in a state of lack of knowledge. This lack is indicated by the disciples' gesture of showing the temple building to Jesus, and the latter's rhetorical question

which indicates that the disciples' view is short-sighted, "You see all these things do you not...?" (v. 2b). Moreover, while Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples asked him for information concerning the time and the sign of Jesus' παρουσία as a further indication of the *initial lack* of knowledge, hence, another goal of the narrative sequence will be to acquire that knowledge (v. 3b-c).

Therefore, the disciples' request for information about the time and about the sign of Jesus παρουσία and the end-time, is in fact the manipulation of Jesus (subject operator) by the disciples (sender) to tell: "Tell us,..." (v. 3b-c). The latter accepts the contract through his response (v. 4a). However, at this point the main transformation is brought to a standstill as the subject operator does not perform, because he is incompetent. One or the other of the three modalities is missing on the level of competence (see, "Competence" on page 116). But which modality is missing? (The answer will be provided in the analysis of the third chapter below). It suffices at this stage to say that from this point onward several narrative programs occur as sub-stories (24:4b--25:46) in order to discover the missing modality.

Hence, instead of proceeding to its end state, the main transformation stops in v. 4a, and from v. 4b onward the second level of the discourse commences. The stoppage of the main transformation may be designated as the first *breakdown* of the narrative sequence from the first level to the second level of the eschatological discourse for the sake of recovering the missing modality. Therefore, the second level consists of sub-stories dealing with the eschatological woes and the παρουσία of the Son of Man (24:4b-31; 25:31-46). At this stage the actantial roles have changed, i.e. the speaker is the sender while the hearers are the subject operator. From the narrative perspective, these stories are called NARRATIVE PROGRAMS (NPs) as well as ANTI-NARRATIVE PROGRAMS (Anti-NPs).

On the one hand, there are Anti-NPs of the opponents in the form of eschatological woes. These anti-programs tend towards falsehood or disasters (see the more elaborate analysis below). For instance, the propaganda of the messianic pretenders is intended to mislead its audience into falsehood concerning the identity of the Messiah (24:4b-5, 11, 23-24, 26). There are also rumours of wars (v. 6), the occurrences of social violence and natural disasters (vv. 6, 7, 8), the persecutions

of the hearers, community disorders and lawlessness (vv. 9-10, 12). The aim of these anti-programs is to create anxiety, panic and despair in the general public. There is the story of the ominous presence of desolating sacrilege in the holy place (vv. 15, 19) with the resultant panic-stricken movement away from disaster. Moreover, there will be the great tribulation (vv. 21-22b) which has the potential to destroy all people (v. 22b).

On the other hand, the NPs of the speaker are opposed to the Anti-NPs outlined above. These programs consist of several persuasive operations (vv. 4b, 6b, see also vv. 15b, 16-18, 20, 23e, 26c, e). Furthermore, under these programs we notice several figures who play the role of helpers in this narrative drama, such as the power and the endurance of the speaker's words (vv. 5a, 8, 9b, 19, 25, 27-28, 30); the one who will endure up to the end and be saved (v.13); the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom (v. 14); the curtailment of the days of the tribulation (vv. 20, 22c); the symbolism of lightning; and the appearing sign of the Son of Man (v.30a). All these figures contribute towards the narrative program which may be designated as the acquisition of truth about the Son of Man and his παρουσία.

However, before the narrative sequence of the story about the παρουσία of the Son of Man reaches its end state, it comes to a standstill in v. 31. In this case, the same interruption of the narrative sequence which we saw in 24:4a occurs, due to the incompetence on the part of the subject operator (the hearers). The reason is the same. There is a missing modality (or modalities) which must be discovered.

Consequently, soon after the halt of the unfinished program dealing with the coming of the Son of Man in 24:31, there follows the third level of the narrative sequence which consists of a series of sub-stories or correlative NPs in the form of parables (24:32--25:30). The switch over from the program of the second level to the beginning of the third level may be regarded as the second *breakdown* of the narrative sequence for the purpose of discovering the missing modality, i.e. in relation to a similar breakdown in 24:4a above.

Once we are on the third level, the first program begins with the persuasive operation, "From the fig tree learn a parable..." (v. 32). Obviously, the initial lack of this program is the hearers' lack of the knowledge of the sign which will show when the Son of Man is about to come. Hence,

the aim of this program is to acquire the knowledge of both the sign and the time (v. 33b-c).

Furthermore, apart from numerous instances which describe the lack of knowledge as a negative state or a lack which the NPs seek to fill (24:36, 39a, 42b, 44, 50, 25:13, 19, 26c), there are many instances which deal with the necessity of diligence and vigilance in fulfilling one's work during the time of waiting. Consequently, there are Anti-NPs about negligence, decadence, foolishness and slothfulness. These Anti-NPs are described for the benefit of the audience as menaces or threats to be avoided in order to avoid disaster, exclusion or pain (see 24:38a-b, 39a, 43a, b, 48b-50; 25:2-3, 5, 18-19, 26b-c, 30). Conversely, there are NPs which are described as the honest and diligent execution of one's duty. Such programs are portrayed as leading towards a new state of life, security, prosperity or happiness, as the case may be (24:38c, 42, 44, 47; 25:10b, 21b-f, 23b-f, 28-29a).

As soon as the last parable comes to an end in 25:30, the third level is concluded. That is, the missing modality which resulted in the abrupt stoppage of the second level in 24:31 has been discovered. Therefore, from 25:31 the text reverts to the final segment of the second level which is the story of the coming of the Son of Man and the judgment of all the nations (25:31-46). What happens at this stage of the narrative sequence is that the text begins to fill up the gaps created by the breakdowns which have occurred. The link of 25:31-46 with 24:4b-31, therefore, will be designated as the sub-stories pertaining to the second level so that this particular narrative sequence reaches its conclusion.

Furthermore, at the end of the final judgment (25:46) the modality which was missing on the first level, and which had resulted in the halting of the main transformation in 24:4a, has now been recovered. Therefore, Jesus as subject operator is now competent to act. At this stage he can tell the disciples about the time and sign of his $\pi\alpha\rho\rho\upsilon\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$ and the end of the age.

After 25:46, we move to the final microtext (26:1-2) which is in fact the second segment of the main transformation (26:1-2). The connection of 26:1-2 with 24:1-4a as part of the narrative sequence is another *building up* of the sequence in relation to the previous connection between 25:31-46 with 24:4b-31. At this point (26:1-2) we are in a position to affirm that the transformation of states has taken place. Notably, there is a recognition on the level of sanction that after Jesus' long

speech, the state of the disciples has been transformed: “When Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said to his disciples, ‘You know...’ ” (26:1-2a). We recall that at the beginning the disciples did not know (24:2b, 3b-c), but now Jesus (sender) acknowledges that they know (26:2a). This acknowledgement is the verification that the initial state of the lack of knowledge on the part of the disciples has been transformed.

Another aspect of the initial lack was Jesus’ departure which resulted in his physical absence from the temple (24:1-2). In 26:2 we notice the close link which the text makes between the feast of Passover and the Son of Man’s crucifixion.⁵⁰ This link reveals two aspects of the same event on the level of sanction. First, there is the obvious event or the spectacle of Jesus’ death on the cross (v. 2b). Secondly, there is a hidden element indicating Jesus’ new presence. The latter element corresponds to several other elements which appeared during the speaker’s speech, such as the saying about “all these things,” the imminence of the Son of Man’s coming (24:33, 34), and the endurance of the speaker’s words above the physical things which will pass away (24:35). Thus, at the end of this text Jesus who was physically absent from the temple (24:1) is now present in a spiritual way, i.e. in the faith of the worshipping community as expressed in the liturgical celebration (26:2). This presence is a hidden reality brought out during the veridiction which falls under the sanction. At this stage of the narrative sequence, i.e. after the performance, we use the veridiction square to determine whether what *appears*, also known as the **manifestation** (*paraître*), corresponds to the reality which is *hidden* or *immanent*⁵¹ (*non-paraître*). Through this process, in 26:2 Jesus (sender) verifies that the visible event that will occur (his crucifixion on the feast of the Passover) corresponds to his spiritual presence. It is a reality that we do not see.

⁵⁰ Since the early church this great truth has always been celebrated by Christians as the Resurrection.

⁵¹ GROUPE D’ENTREVERNES, *Analyse*, pp. 41-42.

CHAPTER TWO

DISCURSIVE ANALYSIS

A. ANALYSIS OF THE ACTORS, SPACES AND TIME (Matt 24:1-26:2).**Preliminary Remarks:**

Our main concern on the discursive level may be articulated in the following questions which reflect the discursive component of the semiotic analysis:

- What are the figurative elements on the surface of this text?
- How do we determine the contexts in which the actors appear in the given time and spaces?

There are specific rules of the game to be followed in the course of the discursive analysis.

(a) First, as we read the text we come across *figures*⁵² which are the basic elements of signification, and they appear on the surface of the text. At this stage our task is to determine how those figures are organised into a network of relations around the three axes of *spaces, time* and *actors*. What are the positions of the actors (persons, animals or things) in the given time and spaces of the surface text? The reading will enable us to recognise the various *discursive situations* following in succession as the text progresses. A discursive situation is determined by a specific arrangement of spaces, time and actors. Hence, it suffices to change one or the other of these elements in order to change the whole discursive situation. On this level, our objective will not be to enumerate a list of figures, but rather to observe and recognize how these figures are organised into a specific network of relations.

As the text progresses the organisation of figures crystallizes into *figurative trails, traces* or *marks*. The figures no longer appear in isolation but are organised into a specific network of relations, constituting a particular "context." The appearance of a figure in the context enables the reader to determine what "sense" the text has selected or actualized from a variety of senses

⁵² See further description of semiotic terminology under "Excursus": *Some Technical Terms*, pp. 201-202.

attributable to it. Our task is to articulate or describe the realised sense, to determine how the figures are arranged, and to note the particular use that the text is making of these figures in each context.

(b) Secondly, we shall review the whole text again in search of specific configurations, and determine *semantic values*. This enables us to classify values into *themes*.⁵³ Throughout the analysis our reflections will be guided by the principle of the deep structures where signification is perceptible in and through difference. Our goal is to pay attention to the features of the text such as the differences, the repetitions, the parallels or the refrains manifested in the course of reading.

The importance of adhering precisely to the figurative trail cannot be overestimated, because it is our only stepping stone towards the elements which are more abstract than the figures themselves. The organisation of those abstract elements constitutes a model in which each figure finds its particular "sense" in the discourse. This is what we call the *thematic value* of the figures. However, since we are dealing with a long text, the discovery of the thematic values will occur only after a long time, that is, after numerous semantic values have been discovered and related one to the other.

Briefly stated, our procedure in the discursive analysis will assume three steps. At the beginning of the reading we will observe the organisation of figures and determine how the text has placed them in a specific trail. This is the context in which they assume a particular sense. We shall then examine the organisation of the figurative trail and determine the thematic value of all the elements concerned. Finally, we shall arrange these themes into binary oppositions.

⁵³ See GIROUD, *Sémiotique*, pp.46-50; CALLOUD, "A Few Comments...", pp. 77-81.

FIRST LEVEL PART I: DIALOGUE SECTION

Microtext One (Matt 24:1-4a)

Καὶ ἐξελθὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀπὸ τοῦ ἱεροῦ ἐπορεύετο,
καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς,

At the outset, we recall that this microtext falls under the first level part I of the tripartite structure (24:1-4a), whereas the very last microtext occupies the first level part II (26:1-2, see hypothesis above).

As we read the text, certain elements appear prominently, viz. Jesus' movement from the temple to the Mount of Olives and the communication between him and his disciples. This dialogue which deals with a *religious* matter, is about the relationship between Jesus and the temple, his absence and the prospects of his future return or presence.

To begin with the element of movement, we notice that Jesus is depicted as going out of one place to another: "Jesus left the temple and was going away" (v. 1a); and "... he sat on the Mount of Olives" (v. 3a). The two spatial indications (temple and the Mount of Olives) appear as different poles of Jesus' movement. However, this movement assumes a deeper significance when it is related to the communication in the form of the dialogue which ensues between Jesus and his disciples. On the one hand, the disciples show the temple buildings to Jesus. This gesture indicates a *narrow* perception of the temple, limited only to its physical structures. On the other hand, Jesus in his response indicates a broader perception of the temple, i.e. he calls the disciples' attention to what he terms "all these things" (v. 2b), and then he utters the oracle of doom against the temple buildings, thus revealing its fragility or destructibility: "Truly I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down" (v. 2c-d). Moreover, Jesus' utterances, introduced by a rhetorical question, bring out a sense of inclusiveness and wholeness; i.e., there is *much more* to the temple than meets the eye, "You see all these things, do you not?" (v. 2b). That is, behind the façade of the buildings there is a *broader* dimension of the temple which is less obvious than the physical dimension, and this other dimension is enduring or indestructible.

Jesus' exit from the temple assumes the sense of forsaking or abandoning the temple.

Later on the Mount of Olives, the disciples raise a question about the time and sign of his παρουσία and the end-time (v. 3b-c). In this context a return or coming back is implied. Obviously, the disciples' hopes and expectations are that at the end-time Jesus will be reunited with or rehabilitated to the temple. They want to know the concrete sign which will indicate the moment when this event is about to take place. Here on the mount of Olives the disciples' narrow perceptions and expectations resurface in their question (v. 3) which relates the eschatological event to tangible human experience: " 'Tell us, when will these things be and what will be the sign of your παρουσία and the fulfillment of the age' " (v. 3b-c).

However, in his response Jesus uses all inclusive-expressions. He invites the disciples to "... see all these things" (v. 2b). This is a vague and general response whereby Jesus leaves it to the imagination of the disciples (and the reader) to discover the meaning of "all these things." Thus, the broader reality of the temple remains elusive and non accessible to human sense perception. Though the temple which now appears to be solid will be destroyed, there is also something about it which remains unexplained and indestructible.

It is the unexplained, somewhat vague and all-inclusive expression which leaves the reader with a lingering question about what "all these things" may mean. The following microtexts (speech) deal with many more events as part of the eschatological experience. Are these events concrete examples of "all these things?"

In both instances of Jesus' movement and his dialogue with the disciples, we notice two contrasting values on a religious subject. Jesus is shown as forsaking or abandoning the temple, whereas the disciples' expectations are that he will return in order to be reunited with the temple at the appropriate time. Likewise, there are two contrary perceptions of what the temple is about. The disciples show a narrow perception based on the physical structure of the temple, while Jesus has a broad understanding of the religious significance of the temple.

Summary:

Our analysis so far has shown two contrasting trends concerning the significance of the temple. On the one hand there is the disciples' narrow perception of the temple based on its physical structure as indicated in their gesture of showing the temple buildings to Jesus (24:1b). In conformity with this perception there are the disciples' eschatological hopes or expectations that Jesus who has left the temple will come back to take possession of it at some future time. These hopes are indicated by their question regarding the time and the sign of Jesus' παρουσία and the end of the age (v. 3b-c)⁵⁴.

On the other hand, when Jesus went out of the temple and sojourned on the Mount of Olives, he uttered an oracle of doom against the temple buildings showing that the temple as it stands will not last. Then by his rhetorical question he indicated that over and above the temple's physical structures which are destructible and insecure, there is something more durable and lasting about the temple. In the first microtext (24:1-4a), Jesus' movements and utterances against the temple's physical structures indicate a situation of *departure, abandonment or forsaking*.

⁵⁴ This perception is confirmed by the immediate and broader contexts of the disciples' question: viz., Jesus exits the temple while pronouncing its imminent doom in fulfillment of the indictment against Jerusalem (23:37-39), after his unsuccessful ministry there (Chapters 21-23).

SECOND LEVEL PART I (24:4b-31): **CALAMITIES & THE ΠΑΡΟΥΣΙΑ OF
THE SON OF MAN.**

Preliminary Remarks

At this juncture, there is a turning point in the organisation of enunciation in the text. First, there is a change of the actors, i.e. from "Jesus" and "his disciples" to the speaker and the audience or listeners. These will now be designated in the first person "I" and in the second person plural "you" respectively.

Secondly, we notice that the description of reality consists of three phases which occur with enough regularity throughout the second level (24:4b-31; 25:31-46) to constitute a pattern. The pattern shows the following sequence: the *enumeration* of certain elements culminates in a *halt* or *dead end*. Out of the dead end there emerges something totally *new* in the form of *life* or *existence*.

-**Enumerations** consist of phrases dealing with a particular subject. Homogeneous or disparate elements are recounted one after the other to constitute a long *chain* of events. From time to time this chain is interrupted by the interventions of contrary phrases. However, these insertions do not stop the enumeration.

-**Halt/Dead end.** At this point a phrase surfaces which describes an end of life or existence. Here the chain-like process (enumerations) culminates with a definitive *stop* or *termination*.

-**Emergence of something new.** Pursuant to the termination there emerges something totally new, that is unlike anything else which precedes.

Two basic semantic values are envisaged in this pattern: the enumeration conveys *continuity*, while the dead end indicates a *termination*. The emergence of something new reiterates the *continuity*.

The aim of the following analysis is to prove that the three-phase pattern described above is the special characteristic of the second level (see the proposed tripartite structure in chapter one). If this analysis successfully demonstrates the presence of this pattern in the second level (24:4b-31; 25:31-46) as a distinct feature in relation to the first and third levels, our proposal of the tripartite

structure for the whole eschatological discourse will be placed on a sound footing.

Microtext Two: (Vv. 4b-14)

Βλέπετε μή τις ὑμᾶς πλανήσῃ· καὶ τότε ἔξει τὸ τέλος.

In the previous microtext two contrasts were drawn concerning Jesus. The first contrast is between Jesus' departure and resultant physical absence from the temple and the disciples' expectation of his παρουσία in the near future. The second contrast is between the disciples' and Jesus' narrow and broad perceptions of the temple and the time and sign of the παρουσία and end-time (vv. 1-4a).

In the second microtext we find a complex organisation of material with three distinct phases. An enumeration of elements (vv. 4b-12) is followed by a culminating point or dead end (v. 13) from which something new emerges (v. 14). In this case, the enumeration indicates two opposing trends. On the one hand, there is a long list of the different calamities which will precede the eschatological end-time, viz., false propaganda of the messianic pretenders, violence, and community disorders and lawlessness (24:5-12). On the other hand, there are phrases of hope uttered by the speaker in opposition to the calamities. Throughout the microtext these phrases are placed in strategic positions among the calamities. Although they appear weak at first, they nevertheless gather momentum as the text progresses.

To begin with the eschatological woes, we note that false propaganda tops the list. The expression "to lead astray" occurs three times in this section (vv. 4b, 5, 11). Because the agents of the false propaganda are numerous in each case, their deceptions have an overwhelming impact on the majority of the people, "For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray" (v. 5a). The element of deception is repeated later where the messianic pretenders are identified as "the false prophets" (v. 11). In this case too they will secure a majority following.

Furthermore, a great deal is said about violence and other disorders of the end-time. There will be a dramatic rise of violence which is described as unstoppable and utterly devastating (vv. 7-9). At the outset are the alarming reports of wars (v. 6a) which will materialize into social and political

conflicts. These will be accompanied by natural disasters such as famine and earthquakes (v. 7). The saying about the “birth-pangs” (v. 8) is logically followed by the intensification of the tribulation in the form of persecutions which will affect the listeners directly. They will be delivered to torture, killed and hated by all the nations (v. 9). Moreover, community disorders, deceptions and general lawlessness will become the order of the day (vv. 10-12). Obviously, the combined work of the messianic pretenders and the war propagandists will create a general atmosphere of confusion and panic-stricken movements for the majority of people.

Nonetheless, the enumeration phase is punctuated by several phrases of hope and encouragement in the form of strategically placed exhortations in various parts of the eschatological woes. The rationale of these phrases is to stop the atmosphere of confusion and the panic. Accordingly, the speech commences with a phrase prompting the audience to stay put or refuse to be pushed around aimlessly: “Take heed that no one leads you astray” (v. 4b). In this text the messianic title clearly belongs not to the anti-christs but to the speaker, “For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’...” (v. 5, see also v. 9b). Similarly, the speaker exhorts his audience not to be terrified by rumours of wars (v. 6a), social conflicts and natural disasters (v.7), but to stay vigilant because these events are not yet the end of the world: “See that you are not alarmed,” “...the end is not yet” (v.6b, d) and “all this is but the beginning of the birth-pangs” (v. 8).

Hence, in this enumeration phase the communication between the speaker and the false propagandists resembles a tug of war. On the one hand, the voices of “many” false christs and false prophets will win over a majority of followers: i.e., the “many” who will be led astray (vv. 5c, 11), and “all” the nations will treat the hearers as their enemies (v. 9b). On the other hand, the speaker’s voice of hope appears weak and is disadvantaged by the limited audience (i.e. the audience on the Mount of Olives). Therefore it is likely that a minority will heed the speaker’s exhortations and remain stable throughout the persecutions. The “many” led astray contrasts with the singular in “... the one who endures to the end this one will be saved” (v. 13). To the disadvantage of the solitary voice of the speaker, the propaganda of the messianic pretenders seems to gain the upper hand.

Nevertheless, a radical change occurs when the enumeration comes to a standstill in v. 12. Expressions which describe the end appear in following verses: i.e. “...to the end” (v. 13), and “...the end will come” (v. 14b). Then, in the context of the dead end something new emerges as

expressed in two instances: the salvation of the one who will persevere until the end, "...this one will be saved" (v. 13) and the universal proclamation of the gospel, "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world as a witness to all the nations" (v. 14a). That is, the small spark of hope will suddenly develop into a universal phenomenon through the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom, when all the elements which were in conflict (vv. 9b, 10-12) become harmonized and bear witness to it (v. 14a). The solitary voice of the speaker and the perseverance and salvation of only one person as an enduring reality has suddenly grown into an outstanding reality called the gospel of the kingdom. While the calamities will adversely affect many people, the gospel of the kingdom will engulf the whole world. This is the new reality which will emerge and will be established at the end-time: the "gospel of the kingdom" and its "universal proclamation" (v. 14).

At this juncture, the sequence of the temporal indications is worth noting. It shows a refrain with the appearances of the expressions: "then" (v. 9), "and then" (v. 10), "and then the end will come" (v. 14).

What is significant in this analysis is the contrast between two forces. The false propaganda of the messianic pretenders and the calamities of the end-time underline the value of /despair/. Although these elements will have an overwhelming impact on the majority of the people, they will not last but eventually *come to an end*. This despair is juxtaposed by the lone voice of /hope/ from the speaker which encourages the hearers to remain steadfast in their vigilance and stick to the right path. That is, they must resist any possible deception (v. 4a), remain calm and not panic in the face of bad news about wars (v. 6b). They must also endure the calamities until the end in order to be saved (v. 13). In that way, the speaker's voice of hope describes a religious element which *persists*, *grows stronger*, and ultimately *triumphs* into a universal message of the gospel of the kingdom. Then the end will come (v. 14).

Microtext Three (vv. 15-22)

Ὅταν οὖν ἴδητε τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως....
κολοβωθήσονται αἱ ἡμέραι ἐκεῖναι.

After the triumph of salvation in the universally communicated gospel of the kingdom (v. 14), the text connects the negative element expressed in the phrase “and the end will come” (v. 14b) with both the ominous presence of the desolating sacrilege in the holy place (v. 15) and the great tribulation (vv. 21-22). Together these elements constitute a disastrous threat to the entire human race (v. 22a-b).

A larger portion of this microtext deals with the various ways of coping with the tendency to elude the disaster at hand. There are numerous exhortations in the form of commands and prohibitions that continue the trend. The emphasis is rather placed on the need to face up to the impending crisis precipitated by the presence of the sacrilege in the holy place and the great tribulation (vv. 16-22).

To begin with, expressions in the enumeration phase encourage the attitude of standing up or facing up to the threatening disaster. These expressions describe the mental efforts recommended to the hearers in order to deal effectively with the presence of the sacrilege in the holy place. For instance, they will *see* the desolating sacrilege; the prophet Daniel has *spoken* about it (v. 15a); and one can also *read* about it and *interpret* its meaning: “let the reader understand” (v. 15b). Consequently, instead of trying to escape from the threatening presence, the text recommends that the best way to deal with it is to scrutinize it and then get to understand what it means.

Several other phrases deal with the physical ways of coping with the desolating presence in the holy place. Two speak about physical departure resembling Jesus' own exit from the temple to go to the Mount of Olives (vv. 1a, 3a): the recommended flight of the Judeans to the mountains (v. 16), and the exhortations to pray for the suitable time to flee (v. 20). Nonetheless, two other phrases prohibit any panic-stricken movement. They recommend that those individuals who will be away during the time of the disaster should stay put in their respective places: “let him who is on the

housetop not go down..." (v. 17), "and let him who is in the field not turn back..." (v. 18). In this regard, the repetition of the same instruction to persons in two different situations sends a clear message that the critical time of disaster is not a time for scuttling or panicking, but a time to remain steadfast and face the music.

The text does, however, cite examples where nothing can be done to avoid the disaster. Peculiar responsibilities such as pregnancy and suckling render those concerned vulnerable to being crushed along with their children. The speaker's lament appears to be another way of dealing with such prospects: "...woe to those who are pregnant and to those who give suck in those days!" (v. 19). It is significant that this pericope closes with the exhortation to pray for conditions which will be suitable for a successful flight (v. 20). In this regard, praying is no escape. On the contrary, it is a spiritual solution, a communication with the divine power to intervene at the appropriate time in order to render successful the human effort to cope. This is a resurfacing of the religious subject which indicates a need for the Spiritual Power to intervene. There is thus a correspondence between several verses indicating the directions of the figurative trail dealing with the temple; and now with the inclusion of the terms "the sabbath" and "prayer," the trail culminates in liturgical worship (vv. 1-3, 14, 15, 20). What is common to all these instances is that the religious element ensures the survival of some people during the period of disasters.

Finally, as the last element of enumeration, the text describes the ominous presence of the great tribulation and its potential to annihilate all human beings from the face of the earth (v. 22a-b). In spite of this potential the elect will survive, because the time of the great tribulation will be curtailed, "but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened" (v. 22c). Thus, the elect will not be removed from the face of the earth, but saved. While the tribulation will be brought to an end, something new will emerge, i.e. the continuation of life for the elect.

We see thus a contrast between two things. First, a variety of coping strategies with the ominous disaster are recommended to people in different circumstances. This indicates the *life* and the *versatility* of the human spirit in its effort to survive under threatening conditions. Secondly, the liveliness of the human spirit brings into sharp focus the *lifelessness* and the *rigidity* of the desolating sacrilege which appears standing in the holy place as an object of scrutiny. Similarly, the existence of the great tribulation appears as an event that can be curtailed, and something of greater

value survives.

Microtext Four (Vv. 23-28)

τότε εάν τις υμῖν εἶπη, ἐκεῖ συναχθήσονται
οἱ ἀετοί.

The element of communication containing the opposition between the messianic pretenders' false propaganda and the speaker's exhortations resurfaces more vigorously in this fourth microtext than in the second (vv. 4b-14). In the enumeration phase, we notice a controversy between the two utterers concerning the whereabouts of the Messiah. In this case the propaganda of the messianic pretenders is countered by the utterances of the speaker (vv. 5, 11), except that at this point the discord and polarization are more elaborate and fierce.

The messianic pretenders will point out the Messiah in various places, with the obvious intention of attracting followers. For instance, proclamations such as: " 'Lo here is the Christ!'" "There he is!" (v. 23b-d) " 'Lo, he is in the wilderness,'..." "... 'Lo, he is in the inner rooms,' " (v. 26) will inevitably result in large movements of people in varied directions. Deceptions by the messianic pretenders will be accompanied by the demonstrations of signs and wonders capable of deceiving everyone, even the elect (v. 24).

On the other hand, there are the speaker's counter-utterances in the form of curt and incisive prohibitions, which insist that the hearers should resist being lured away from the right path by the propaganda of the false christs and the false prophets. Such prohibitions appear in the following refrains: "*do not believe it*" (vv. 23e, 26e), and "*do not go out.*" (v. 26c). Moreover, in v. 25, the speaker refers to his strategy of communicating the truth to the hearers beforehand (v. 25). Thus in all these instances, the counter-information by the speaker effectively prevents participation of the listeners in the envisioned commotion or confused movements of the majority.

Having effectively opposed the idea of going with the stream or being scattered far and wide by the false propaganda, the text establishes where and how the true Messiah will come and be present (v. 27). In this verse the description of the παρουσία of the Son of Man is characterised

by a tendency to harmonize disparate elements, bringing all things together as constituent elements of a comprehensive or full experience. The individual spaces will be linked together under one universal light: "...as lightning shines from the east as far as the west" (v. 27). This unity is also found in the gathering of the elect (v. 31).

The universal dimension of the παρουσία,⁵⁵ though reminiscent of the world-wide proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom in v. 14a, is part of the enumeration phase which began in v. 23. It is immediately followed by a dead end in the saying about the corpse, "Where the body is, ..." (v. 28a). This saying implies that a life has come to an end. Moreover, we note that the description of the end in v. 28a echoes similar elements which have appeared earlier in this text, such as "the end" sayings in vv. 13a, 14b, as well as the "cutting short" (v. 22c) of the time of the great tribulation. Consequently, v. 28a deals with the element of violence which brings one life to an end. It is at this stage that death is described directly in relation to the παρουσία of the Son of Man for the first time. Then, in the second part of v. 28 a new reality emerges from the dead end "...there the eagles (vultures) will be gathered together" (v. 28b). The event of "gathering" indicates the beginning and continuation of a new life as a process issuing from that particular event of death.

In this microtext, the strong prohibitions against going out or straying from the path (vv. 23e, 26c, e) culminate in the paradoxical presence of the Son of Man. His παρουσία is portrayed as luminous by comparing it with lightning (v. 27). In this case the coming Son of Man is described as a striking presence which cannot be ignored. As a flash of lightning, He will be seen by all. However, the element of death (v. 28) in close association with the Son of Man's παρουσία, has something to do with the end of life. Yet, the dead body is also linked with the idea of continuity of existence, since it attracts the vultures (v. 28b). Thus, the text alternates the contrasting ideas of life, death and continuity of life.

⁵⁵ The term παρουσία is used throughout this dissertation with the sense of "presence" or "appearing" of Jesus as the glorified Son of Man (24:3c, 27b, 37b, 39b, see also 30b, 44b; 25:31). Albrecht OEPKE, "παρουσία," in Gerhard KITTEL, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Michigan, Eerdmans, 1964-1976), pp. 858-71. However, in Matthew's eschatological discourse the full description of the παρουσία of the Son of Man is developed in 25:31-46 where he will fully exercise his messianic authority as the Shepherd-King-Judge of all the nations.

Microtext Five (Vv. 29-31)

Εὐθέως δὲ μετὰ τὴν θλίψιν τῶν ἡμερῶν ἐκείνων
ἀπ' ἄκρων οὐρανῶν ἕως [τῶν] ἄκρων αὐτῶν.

The recurrence of the threefold pattern is characterized by a peculiar setting. There is a different arrangement of the elements from what we have seen so far. First, we notice that in v. 29 the text has combined the *enumeration* with the *dead end* in such a manner that from the outset the former becomes the gradual unfolding of the latter.

Secondly, the enumeration itself is not long nor are there interrupting phrases of hope. Instead, the recounting of the collapse of the cosmic world begins in v. 29a continues uninterrupted till v. 29d. Then follows an elaborate description of the *new reality*: the appearance of the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, as well as the experience (mourning and seeing) of all the tribes and the gathering of the elect (vv. 30-31). This new reality emerges from the dead end which is the end of the tribulation and the cosmic world order (v. 29c-d).

Verse 29

This microtext is introduced by a temporal phrase, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days...” (v. 29a). As this phrase describes the definitive end of the calamities, it echoes several instances of the dead end indicated above (vv. 13b, 14b, 22c, 28a).

Moreover, the text shows a tendency towards a gradual deterioration of the cosmic world. For instance, in the enumeration phase there is the gradual elimination of luminous bodies resulting in utter darkness: “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light” (v. 29a, b). The text concludes the dead end list with the tumbling down of the entire cosmic structure (v. 29c, d). The fall of these last elements marks the ultimate collapse. Hence, we observe that in v. 29 everything gradually falls apart until there is total disintegration.

Verses 30-31

From the ashes of both the tribulation and the collapse of the cosmic bodies there emerges “...the sign of the Son of Man in heaven” (v. 30a). From here onward the text describes the third

feature of the pattern, the new reality. The significance of the organisation of the figures in v. 30 is that it is *revelatory* or *apocalyptic*.⁵⁶ It establishes the new presence of the Son of Man using the mediation of other worldly agents: the sign from heaven (v. 30b), the angels with a loud trumpet call gathering the elect from the four winds (v. 31); and the reference to the Father's exclusive knowledge of the Son of Man's coming (v. 36). There is also a strong presence of the visionary elements. The universal appearance of the *παρουσία* of the Son of Man will flash like lightning from east to west (v. 27), all tribes of the earth will see the sign, and the revelation is for all people (v. 30b). Finally, the object of the revelation is presented as a transcendent reality "...the Son of Man who comes on the cloud of heaven with power and great glory" (v. 30b). Therefore, we find a parallel between the appearance of the sign (v. 30) and the *παρουσία* of the Son of Man (v. 27). All these are the constituent elements of the apocalyptic genre. Hence, we propose the label *apocalyptic/revelatory* for the underlying description of this particular figurative trail.

From this point in the text (vv. 27-31) we notice a change in the order of priorities. The emphasis is no longer on communication, such as the universal proclamation of the gospel (v. 14), but on how to cope with the ominous presence (vv. 15, 21-22), and the verbal confrontation between the envisioned propaganda of the messianic pretenders and the speaker's prohibitions (vv. 23-24, 26). The text now focuses on the presence of someone, i.e. the *παρουσία* of the Son of Man, as a major event which will take place. Thus, the sign of the Son of Man will be there and will have an impact on the viewers. It will provoke sadness and distress to everyone when they see the Coming Son of Man: "and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn and they will see..." (v. 30b).

Furthermore, all-inclusive expressions such as "all the tribes of the earth" and "...the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (v. 30b) reiterate the now familiar characteristic trait of universality which is associated with the Messiah's presence (vv. 14a, 27).

Hence, in v. 30b the consummate character of the *παρουσία* as the presence is

⁵⁶ See the definition of the "apocalypse," John J. COLLINS, "Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre," in *Semeia*, 14 (1979), p. 9, and the full description pp. 1-27. See also Christopher ROWLAND, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1982), pp. 14-15, 17, 19; and the description of the genre, pp. 7-72.

emphasized. In this context, we notice that the Son of Man's triumphal coming, and consequently his presence, has been anticipated in the prohibitions of confused movements caused by the false messianic propaganda. The presence (vv. 30-31) is set against the background of both the tribulation and the collapsed cosmic world order (v. 29). The close relation between verses 29 and 30 is important, since it describes the contrast between the absence and the presence.

The appearance of the sign (v. 30) is also linked with another important event the universal rehabilitation of the elect as a new reality. It is stated that the Son of Man will send his angels with a loud trumpet, and "...they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (24:31b). Therefore, the imagery of gathering is reiterated in this microtext as one of the important signs of the Son of Man's presence, just as in the previous microtext with regard to the dead body and the vultures (v. 28).

Finally, the notion of gathering in v. 31 re-echoes the sense of selection that we have seen earlier (v. 22c). It puts an emphasis on the few, "and they will gather his elect..." (v. 31b). The expression indicates the survival of a few in the midst of a wider destruction. In this way it echoes the instance where the existence of the great tribulation was curtailed in order to save the elect, thus ensuring the continuity of life (v. 22).

However, it should be emphasized that, at this stage of the text, the Son of Man is in the process of realising his messianic presence. Before his παρουσία is fully established, the account suddenly comes to a stop in 24:31, and totally new elements appear in v. 32 to indicate the start of a new section.⁵⁷

Summary:

Since v. 4b, we have noticed a turning point which consists not only of the change of roles of the main actors from "Jesus" and "disciples" to "the speaker" and "the listeners," but also of the organisation of elements into three distinct phases: the enumeration, the dead end and the emergence of something new. This organisation holds true throughout the four microtexts which

⁵⁷ See the application of the principle of extraction in the cutting of the text above, and the transition from the second level (part 1) to the third level (parable section) as described from the narrative perspective below.

constitute the second level part 1, of the tripartite structure, i.e. vv. 4b-31. The discursive analysis has shown that in each of these four microtexts the trend is to motivate the hearers not to flee, to remain steadfast in the truth, and be courageous in adversity to the end. All this so that when the end comes they may be saved (v. 13).

Thus, the manner in which the text motivates and encourages is by pointing out that, when things come to an end, it is not a definitive end, because something new always comes out of it in the form of new life or existence. For instance, in the second microtext, the loss of the majority who will be led astray (vv. 5, 11), the rampant social violence and natural disasters (vv. 6-7), the persecutions (v. 9), the community disorders and lawlessness (vv. 10, 11-12) will not last forever. These eschatological woes will be brought to an end. Those who have heeded the exhortations and endured up to the end will be saved (v. 13). In this case, salvation is described as a new reality in which the proclamation of the gospel has universal impact. Similarly, the text points out that the ominous presence of the sacrilege in the holy place and the resultant great tribulation will not last, because the hearers are capable of resisting and of prevailing over such disasters (vv. 15, 16, 17-18, 29). Even the span of the great tribulation itself will be curtailed for the sake of the elect (v. 22a-b). Thus, in this case also, the whole process culminates in a new reality which is the salvation of the elect (v. 22c).

The fourth microtext (vv. 23-28) negates any movement caused by the propaganda of the false christs and the false prophets by using a refrain of prohibitions. The speaker succeeds in exposing the falsehood of the propaganda and the machinations of the messianic pretenders. The curt and sharp prohibitions such as, "do not believe it" (vv. 23e, 26e), "do not go out" (v. 26c), and "I have told you beforehand" (v. 25) effectively oppose the words and demonstrations of the false christs and the false prophets (v. 24).

Then, in vv. 27-28 the text establishes the true παρουσία of the Son of Man. Here we notice a paradoxical content where the triumphant and sad elements combine to describe the important event of the παρουσία of the Son of Man. First, it is described as a lightning-like, luminous presence (v. 27). But, other essential characteristics of the παρουσία are the spectre of death, greed and sadness present in the symbolic saying about the "corpse," the "gathering of the

vultures" (v. 28) and the reference to the "mourning" of all the tribes (v. 30b). The word refers to the frail and vulnerable dimension of the Son of Man's *παρουσία*, indicating a termination of a life, whereas the word "gathering" describes a new existence brought about by that particular death as a continuation of life.

The termination of existence is later re-echoed with reference to the end of the tribulation and the collapse of the cosmic luminous world (v. 29). Subsequently, the appearance of the sign of the Son of Man in heaven (v. 30a) indicates the emergence of something new, the universal triumph and the glorious coming of the Son of Man (v. 30b).

Since the second level is suddenly interrupted in v. 31 by the entry of the new actors belonging to the parable section (24:23--25:30), the account of the Coming of the Son of Man will be resumed and fully discussed in part 2 of the second level (25:31-46) where the same list of actors will reappear.

THIRD LEVEL (24:32-25:30): PARABLE SECTION

Preliminary Remark

Between 24:31 and v. 32, we find another turning point in the development of the figurative trail. A transition occurs from the presence described in vv. 27-31 to the *imminence* of the one who is to come, but who is *not yet* there (from v. 32 onward).

Throughout the parable section⁵⁸ (24:32-25:30 within the third level of the tripartite

⁵⁸ Since our approach in this analysis is to discover signification through the network of organisation and eventually reach a theological commentary, our treatment of the parables will be different from the historical critical study of the parables as used by other writers. See, Robert STEIN, An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981), pp. 13-147; Jack Dean KINGSBURY, The Parables of Jesus in Matthew 13: a Study in Redaction-criticism (London: S.P.C.K., 1969), pp. 1-137; John Arthur Thomas, ROBINSON, Twelve New Testament Studies (London: SCM Press, 1962), pp. 67-93; Norman PERRIN, Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom: Symbol and Metaphor in New Testament Interpretation (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), pp. 1-13, 132-205; Jean DELORME, Parole-figure-parabole: recherches autour du discours paraboliques (Lyon: Presses universitaires de Lyon, 1987), pp. 13-392. See also Daniel PATTE, ed., Semiology and Parables: Exploration of the Possibilities Offered by Structuralism for Exegesis (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1976), pp. v-xx, 71-384.

structure), the text no longer enumerates the elements at some length before the dead end and the emergence of a new reality, as we have seen it in the second level (vv. 4b-31). Instead, the notable feature in all these microtexts is the absence of the person who is expected to come, and the fact that although his coming is assured and imminent, yet the exact time is unknown. Hence, in all the parable stories an emphasis is placed on the importance of waiting constantly and creatively so that when the παρουσία of the Son of Man occurs one is not taken by surprise but found ready.

Lastly, an atmosphere of retrospection and retribution occupies a large part of this section. At the end of each story some actors are rewarded for their diligence and faithfulness in waiting, while others are punished severely for their negligence or laziness. Consequently, in all the instances the actors concerned assume their appropriate destinies: some are rewarded by an invitation to a state of happiness and others are banished into a place of isolation and great pain.

Microtext Six: (Vv.32-35)

Ἐπὶ δὲ τῆς συκῆς μάθετε τὴν παραβολήν....
οἱ δὲ λόγοι μου οὐ μὴ παρέλθωσιν.

Verses 32-33

In this microtext we find an organisation of the material which may be termed *educational*. It is an illustration taken from the experience of vegetation (v. 32). It bears a message whose meaning is drawn from the changes in the fig tree. The branch becoming tender and the leaves sprouting (v. 32) indicates that summer is approaching. Similarly, when "all these things" occur (vv. 33b, 34), the coming of the Son of Man will be imminent. What is significant in the changes of the fig tree in v. 32b is the description of a concrete reality. The tender branch and the sprouting leaves are concrete symbols which illustrate something beyond the tangible, because it points to a reality still to come, the summer.

Similarly, the expression "all these things" (v. 33a) refers to the concrete eschatological events which will occur one after the other as indicated earlier (24:4b-31). When all these events occur they will symbolise the imminence of the One to come, "...he is near at the very gates" (v.

33b). The main characteristic of these events is that they are concrete and visible signs. But, as symbols, they need to be interpreted in order to grasp their meaning. The following phrase is significant, “when you see all these things, you know...” (v. 33b-c). Even if “all these things” refer to concrete realities, they have no significance in themselves except as signs. Their role is to point out the One who is to come (v. 33b), who is now still beyond our sense perception because he is not yet here.

Verses 34-35

Once again, certain elements are arranged into pairs of contrasts accentuating the tension between what is concrete and what is to come. The first pair of contrasts appears in the saying “this generation will not pass away till all these things take place” (v. 34). It refers both to what is visible, i.e. the present generation, and what has yet to take place and exists only in the expectation of the speaker. Similarly, the second pair contrasts one concrete element with a temporary existence, “heaven and earth will pass away,” with a spiritual and perpetually existing element, “but my words will not pass away” (v. 35). We observe that the organisation of the material in the two literary units (vv. 32-33, 34-35) shows two basic polar sets of elements. Three elements, the changes of growth in the fig tree, “this generation” and “heaven and earth,” are concrete realities with a temporary existence (vv. 34, 35a). In opposition, “summer,” “the awaited One” and “the speaker’s words” refer to the spiritual realities which are now beyond our grasp, but await future realization.

There is also a strong articulation of the temporal elements in this microtext (vv. 32-35). Some expressions indicate specific or limited durations such as: “when now its branch becomes tender... summer is near” (v. 32b), “when you see all these things,he is near at the very gates” (v. 33), and “this generation will not pass away until...” (v. 34). On the other hand, there is a phrase which describes a continuous period of time, “...but my words will not pass away” (v. 35b). Hence, there is an opposition between a limited time and a continuous period of time. Temporal indications thus correspond to the organisation of the actors in the first verses of the microtext (vv. 32-33). That is, the specific time indicates the *limitation* of time that corresponds to the changes of the fig tree, “this generation” (v. 34) and “heaven and earth” (v. 35a), whereas, the continuous time describes what *persists* as in waiting for the summer season (v. 32), for “the One to come” (v. 33) and the perpetual presence of “the speaker’s words” (v. 35b).

Microtext Seven (Vv. 36-44)

Περὶ δὲ τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης καὶ ὥρας οὐδείς οἶδεν,
ὅτι ἢ οὐ δοκεῖτε ὥρα ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἔρχεται.

Verse 36

While different elements recur in this verse, it contains something unique. A contrast is drawn between the majority of elements constituting a general rule, and then a single element stands out as an exception to that rule.

It is noteworthy that, the majority of actors do not know the hour and the exact time of the Son of Man's coming: "no one knows," neither "the angels of heaven," nor "the Son" (v. 36a-b). However, the one actor who knows is an exception to the rule, "only the Father" (v. 36c). Although the actual day and hour when the παρουσία of the Son of Man will occur is unknown to the majority, it exists already as an idea in the mind of the Father.

Verses 37-39

An organisation of elements similar to the one we have seen in the previous verse resurfaces in this unit. On account of their behaviour, Noah's contemporaries are grouped together as a majority: before the flood, they were "...eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage" (v. 38a-b). As a result, when the ominous flood came they were caught unaware and they all perished, "...until the flood came and swept them all away" (vv. 38c-39a). Noah alone is portrayed as doing something sensible during that time: "...until the day when Noah entered the ark" (v. 38c). In this way Noah appears as an exception to the general rule.

Thus, the emphasis is placed on the time before the flood came and what certain actors did and what others did not do at this time. The lack of knowledge on the part of Noah's contemporaries is not an excuse for their lack of readiness. They ignored the signs and perished as a consequence. Noah saw and understood the signs and acted appropriately.

Verses 40-41

The story of the two men and the two women illustrating the παρουσία of the Son of Man no longer shows a difference between a general rule and an exception. Instead, we find a balance between those who will perish and others who will survive. That is, there will be two men working in the field (v. 40) and two women grinding at the mill (v. 41). In each case, one actor will be removed while the other will be spared.

Verses 42-44

There is a warning to the audience to keep a strict vigil, for their Lord will come at an unexpected time (v. 42). The text refers to the story of the householder and the thief. The householder dropped his guard during the night, because he did not know the exact time when the thief would come. The thief surprised the householder by breaking into the house at an unexpected time.

Two warnings are given to the audience. Because they do not know at what time of the day or night their master is coming, they should keep a strict and constant vigil: "Watch therefore because you do not know..." (v. 42), and "Therefore, you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (v. 44).

Thus, each of the four units of this microtext has an element of *secrecy* as a constituent part of the apocalyptic or revelatory content. The value of the exceptions to the general rule rests in the hope that although the majority will be lost, a few will survive. Therefore, the listeners are encouraged to be those few by being vigilant and ready for the Son of Man.

Microtext Eight: (Vv. 45-51)

Τίς ἄρα ἐστὶν ὁ πιστὸς δούλος καὶ φρόνιμος
ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων.

The material in this microtext is different from the one preceding. Here, the element of judgment is emphasized. In the story of the slaves and their master, the slaves do not all behave in the same way. During the master's absence some slaves apply themselves diligently to their duties. When the master returns these slaves are rewarded abundantly and invited to join the master in his state of joy. Other slaves, being negligent or reckless, fail to exploit this opportunity of the master's absence to their advantage. On the day of reckoning, when the master arrives, they are punished severely and ostracised from the master's company and from the community. The listeners are exhorted to follow the example of the good slaves and to await the coming of the Lord with diligence and good works.

The Faithful & Wise Slave (verses 45-47)

The text describes the first slave as endowed with good qualities, he is a "faithful and wise slave" (v. 45). The master, having confidence in him, entrusts him with the well-being of his household, "...to provide them with food at the proper time" (v. 45). Sometime after the master's departure, this slave continues to apply himself diligently and to execute his duties as instructed, "Blessed is that slave whom his master when he comes finds him so doing" (v. 46). As a reward, the slave's endowments will be increased on the day of reckoning. Not only faithful and wise, he is blessed in acquiring more favours or possessions from the master, "...he will set him over all his possessions" (v. 47).

The material in this unit reveals interesting features. The master's absence provides this slave with an opportunity to develop his economic well-being to its highest point which may be called *economic advancement*. Moreover, the slave's advancement stems from a sound social relationship of maintained trust during the master's absence. We may designate this as *social relationship*. Hence, we notice a development in both the social and economic endowments of this

slave. The appropriate value in this regard is */abundance/*.

The Wicked Slave (verses 48-51)

Unlike his counterpart, the second slave undergoes a gradual process of reductions or eliminations of the good *social relationships* with fellow slaves and the master, even losing his very life.

As an actor, this slave enters the scene with a negative quality; he is called “the wicked slave” (v. 48). From the outset he is portrayed as someone with less than a good name. He erroneously thinks that the master’s absence will be prolonged, “...my master is delayed” (v. 48). These thoughts prompt him to engage in a violent misconduct against his fellow slaves (v. 49), after which he joins himself to the low and intemperate company, “...eats and drinks with the drunken” (v. 49b). The slave’s status and integrity, his endowments and social relationships deteriorate further. After a lengthy absence, the master returns unexpectedly and punishes the wicked slave severely by casting him out of his company and executing him. In this case the expressions used are: “...will cut him in pieces, and he will place his portion with the hypocrites...” (v. 51). The strong expressions in this verse describe the disintegration of the slave’s life as well as the deterioration of his relationship with his master.

Our analysis has shown a clear contrast between the two slaves. The first one is portrayed as gaining because his existing good qualities are increased. At the end he becomes a prosperous slave. On the contrary, the wicked slave appears to be a loser. He loses companionship with his fellow slaves and with his master. He loses his possessions through wasting (eating and drinking with the drunken), and even loses his life through execution.

We also notice here two opposed temporal indications. Some expressions indicate a specific or particular point in time such as “...at the proper time” (v. 45) and “...on a day he does not expect and at an hour he does not know” (v. 50). Other expressions refer to a continuous duration. For instance, in his imagination the wicked slave envisaged a prolonged period of the master’s absence, “my master is delayed” (v. 48b). The faithful slave who persistently performed his duties well indicates a long duration of hard work, “...when he comes will find (him) so doing” (v. 46).

The organisation of the semantic values discovered in this analysis may be designated as

follows:

	<u>Faithful & Wise Slave</u>	<u>Wicked Slave</u>
ECONOMIC ENDOWMENTS:	/Abundance/	/Disintegration/
SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS	/Advancement/	/Deterioration/

Microtext Nine: (25:1-13)

Τότε ὁμοιωθήσεται ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν
δέκα παρθένοις,
ὅτι οὐκ οἶδατε τὴν ἡμέραν οὐδὲ τὴν ὥραν.

This microtext depicts a group of ten virgins with a common purpose. They went out with burning lamps "...to meet the bridegroom" (v. 1). But, as the bridegroom was delayed in coming, the virgins became drowsy, "...they all slumbered and slept" (v. 5). At midnight a cry announcing the arrival of the bridegroom awakened the virgins, and all of them woke up and made preparations: "Then all those maidens rose and trimmed their lamps" (v. 7). In this case the text stresses the unity of the ten virgins. This bond may be designated as companionship.

Other instances in this microtext emphasize the differences between the two groups of virgins. One group is called foolish and the other wise (vv. 2-4, 8-9). Furthermore, after midnight these initial differences develop into physical separation and ultimately into two separate destinies (vv. 10-12). We shall treat each group separately.

Foolish Virgins

As far as human endowments are concerned, this group of virgins is portrayed as deprived. They enter the stage with *minus* common sense. The text gives them a negative appellation, "foolish virgins," as their distinguishing mark from the other group. True to their name, they left behind the oil which is the key element enabling them to meet the bridegroom. Only at midnight, when their lamps were going out, the foolish virgins came to their senses and realized that they needed more oil, " 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out' " (v. 8b-c). This group

appears as losers.

As a last resort the foolish virgins went out to buy oil (v. 10a). But on their return, they discovered that the opportunity of meeting the bridegroom was lost. That is, they were excluded as participants in the wedding feast, as the door attendant was to confirm later, "Truly, I say to you I do not know you" (vv. 11b-12). What had begun as a mere distinction between the two groups, because of their different personal endowments, became a fissure or a physical separation of such magnitude that it could no longer be bridged.

Furthermore, as far as communication is concerned, it becomes clear that the foolish virgins lacked the power of persuasion. During the dialogue between the two groups (vv. 8-9), the foolish virgins could not convince their wise counterparts to share the oil with them. Instead they had to listen to and follow the advice of the wise virgins, to go out and buy oil for themselves (vv. 9-10a).

It must be noted at this stage that the greater part of this drama takes place during the bridegrooms's absence, i.e. before and immediately after midnight. It is at this crucial period that the foolish virgins discovered that they had no oil, and eventually they lost everything from the good relationship with the wise virgins and the bridegroom to their personal identity.

Two semantic values emerge from this analysis: as far as human endowments are concerned it is deprivation, and concerning relationships, these virgins were excluded from the wedding feast.

Wise Virgins

The second group of virgins are achievers. They often appear as gaining or accomplishing something. At the very beginning, they are portrayed as wise, and wisdom becomes a distinguishing mark between them and their foolish counterparts (v. 2). Accordingly, the wise virgins show conscientiousness in their preparation to meet the bridegroom. They took along not only the lamps but also flasks of oil in order to be ready at all times. When the bridegroom delayed in coming, they did not run out of oil. Their consideration of what would be necessary demonstrates their resourcefulness.

Moreover, the wise virgins are persuasive communicators. To ensure that their supply of oil did not diminish beforehand, they refused to share it with the foolish virgins. In the dialogue

between the two groups, the argument which the wise virgins put forward prevailed, “ ‘Perhaps there will not be enough for us and for you’ ” (v. 9b). Their suggestion that the foolish virgins go out to buy their own oil also prevailed (vv. 9c-10a). Thus, the wise virgins showed not only sharpness of intellect in arguing but also insight in offering a solution to the problem.

For this reason, when the bridegroom eventually arrived, the wise virgins were found ready to meet him; and they had the honour to join him at the wedding feast.

Bridegroom

This figure is associated with the wedding feast, and he appears three times in the microtext, first as someone whose coming is awaited by the ten virgins (25:1b). However, he takes his time and comes only at midnight (v. 6b). The wise virgins eventually meet him and enjoy the wedding feast with him (v.10b), whereas the foolish virgins do not meet him at all. This particular aspect of the text concerning the meeting or failing to meet with the bridegroom will be described in the narrative analysis below as a conjunction or disjunction, i.e. an encounter of personages with other personages.⁵⁹

The organisation of the material dealing with the two groups of virgins allows us to rearrange the elements into registers, in order to reflect the disparity between the actions of the foolish and of the wise virgins. In the narrative analysis these differences will resurface through the language of correlativity.

	<u>Foolish Virgins</u>	<u>Wise Virgins</u>
HUMAN ENDOWMENTS:	/Deprivation/	/Preservation/
REQUIREMENTS/OIL:	/Emptiness/	/Resourcefulness/
COMMUNICATION:	/Weak arguments/	/Insightful/
RELATIONSHIPS:	/Exclusion/	/Companionship/

⁵⁹ See, “Classification of Functions,” in Jean CALLOUD, Structural Analysis of Narrative (Translated Daniel PATTE. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), pp. 17-18.

Microtext Ten (Vv. 14-30)

Ὡσπερ γὰρ ἄνθρωπος ἀποδημῶν ἐκάλεσεν
 τοὺς ἰδίους δούλους
 ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων.

This final microtext within the parable section (24:32--25:30) continues the trend dealing with the non-presence. Accordingly, the text describes the man as someone who is about to embark on a journey, and who entrusts his talents to his three slaves.

The Man

At the beginning there is a man who is about to travel, and he is described as someone who has slaves and talents. He is a man of means and appears to be an efficient organiser of his finances. In the distribution of his money among the slaves, he employs the principle of proportionality to ensure that each slave is given the right number of talents "...according to his ability" (v. 15d). After distributing the money, the man goes away. Obviously, the elements mentioned so far have something to do with economics.

Furthermore, there is a strong emphasis on relationships. Before the master's departure the relationship between him and his slaves is of a type that may be described as the "master-slave" relationship. In such cases there is a gap between the one who is on the top and gives orders, and others at the bottom who receive those orders and carry them out. As the text progresses, two developments occur. In one case the gap will be narrowed, and in another it will be increased.

It is important here to point out that the text explicitly indicates that the master's return was considerably delayed, "Now after a long time the master of those slaves came..." (v. 19). This delay determines the different reactions of the slaves. On the day of reckoning the first two slaves, who had been given five and two talents respectively, approached to submit their report. From their labours a 100% interest had accrued. The master, thoroughly pleased, warmly lauded them for the work well done, promised to entrust them with much more (vv. 21b-e, 23b-e) and invited them to enter into his own joyful state (vv. 21f, 23f). The gap which existed between the master and the two

slaves is closed as their relationship develops into a companionship. The gap of relationship between the master and the slave with one talent widens further. During his presentation, this slave reveals a different nature of his master as someone who is cold, calculating, exerting and grasping, "Lord, I knew you to be a hard man..." (v. 24c).

Moreover, this master is associated with judgment. He wields the power to arbitrate. In this regard, two contrary portraits of the man appear as someone who is given to excesses. He appears as a joyful master who is generous in rewarding his slaves for the work well done. Apart from the praises he showers upon the diligent slaves, the master undertakes to give them more talents and then he invites them into his joyful state (vv. 20-23). This man sharply reprimands the slave who had been entrusted with one talent for his failure to trade with the talent and produce interest (v. 26b-c). For that reason he severely punishes the slave whom he now regards as lazy and worthless by depriving him of the only talent he had and giving it to the one who already had ten. Then he orders that the slave be cast out into the deepest darkness, a place of acute pain (vv. 28-30). In this way, he appears as a man of justice. Thus, the widened gap in the relationship is now sealed by a complete exclusion of this slave from his master's presence.

ECONOMICS : /Efficiency/
 RELATIONSHIP: /Companionship/
 JUDGMENT : /Generosity/ and /Justice/

Slave with Five Talents

The material in relation to this slave indicates the value of economics as a recurrent concept. Of the three slaves, this one is gifted with the greatest aptitude and diligence. This is shown by the master's confidence in giving him five talents (v. 15a). Upon the master's departure this slave promptly applies himself to his work and doubles his investment (v. 16). We also notice that, since the day when this slave settled his accounts with the master (v. 19), he never looked back. His economic status grew by leaps and bounds. This economic growth soared when another talent was added to the previous ten. His profits have truly reached a point of excess as the master himself described it, "For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have abundance" (vv. 28-29a). The unlimited increase of this slave's fortune may be designated as superabundance.

The advancement of the slave's personal endowments is also perceptible. The glowing report which this slave submitted to his master (v. 20) was received with great joy, and it earned him several rewards. First, the master gives him a complimentary title, "good and faithful slave" (v. 21b-c). Secondly, he promises the slave much more than what he already had, "you have been faithful over little, I will set you over much..." (v. 21c-d). The master's promise found fulfillment when one more talent was added to the ten already in his possession. But to crown it all, this slave who had previously only taken orders to work and produce interest, is now rewarded with a greater honour. The master invites him to join in his own joyful state, "enter into the joy of your master" (v. 21f). The last phrase echoes a fulfillment of the slave's humanity.

As far as the value of relationships is concerned, the invitation to join the master in his joyful state describes a closer unity or togetherness. Hence, in this case the appropriate value may be companionship.

Slave with Two Talents

The description of the second slave reiterates all the elements which we have seen in the account of the first slave. The only exception is in number of talents given. In proportion to his ability, he received but two. Nevertheless, this slave applies himself as fully and successfully to his work as the first one. He too has increased his portion by one hundred percent, and the master promises him more, "you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much" (v. 23d-e). We may designate the economic achievement of the second slave as an abundance.

The master's absence had provided the two slaves with an opportunity for economic and personal advancements, which they exploit to the full. In both cases, the master's utterances, "you have been faithful over little, I will set you over much" (vv. 21d-e, 23d-e), emphasizes the importance of the fruitful use of the time of his absence. He provides the two slaves with an opportunity for growth and achievements.

We may summarize our analysis as follows:

	<u>Slave with Five Talents</u>	<u>Slave with Two Talents</u>
ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT :	/superabundance/	/abundance/
RELATIONSHIP :	/companionship/	/companionship/

For the rest of the semantic values such as the economic advancement and relationship, we find the same development as for the first slave.

Slave with One Talent

The third slave is portrayed as the least endowed and therefore the least capable of the three (v. 15). Accordingly, he is given only one talent. Unlike his counterparts, this slave lacks the motivation to trade with the talents and to produce interest. The enthusiasm and the vitality shown in the description of the first two slaves (vv. 15-16) is lacking here. Instead of trading with the talent, he buried it "...he went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money" (v. 18). In the slave's submission the same expression resurfaces, "... I went and hid your talent in the ground" (v. 25a). Thus, in the account of the third slave we come across economic stagnation.

Next, the text indicates how the slave's audacity in confronting the master brought the relationship between the two actors to a low ebb. This decline in relationship may be designated as a complete separation. First, there is a sharp verbal confrontation between this slave and his master on the day of settling the accounts. In his confession, the slave underlines the master's harshness, exploitation and intimidation, and how this frightened him: "I knew you to be a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, [...]so I was afraid" (vv. 24-25). The master responds with equal vehemence and firmness as he addresses the slave with demeaning names, "You wicked and slothful slave!" (v. 26b). Through the rhetorical question (v.26c) the master questions the authenticity of the slave's self-declared "knowledge."⁶⁰ If the slave had truly known what kind of man the master was, he would have banked the talent and produced interest (v. 27).

Ultimately, the personal advancement of the slave is reduced to nil when the master orders him to be thrown out, "...into the outer darkness"⁶¹ (v. 30a). This expression echoes two elements which occurred previously. First, there is a repetition of the value of darkness which appeared both

⁶⁰ The narrative analysis will be in a position to determine with more precision the slave's utterances through the veridiction of the transformed states on the level of sanction.

⁶¹ The adjectival comparison, τὸ ἐξώτερον carries a superlative sense, "farthest out," or "the extreme darkness," see BAUER, *Lexicon*, p. 280. However, σκότος in Matt refers to the future place of punishment, see Hans, CONZELMANN, "σκότος," in KITTEL, *Dictionary*, pp. 423-31, 438-41.

in the cosmic disorder (24:29) and in the extinguishing of the foolish virgins' lamps (25:7). Secondly, there is the element of pain which is associated with the place into which the slave will be cast out, "...where there is weeping and grinding of teeth" (v. 30b). This expression resurfaces at this stage. It appeared initially in connection with a similar fate to which the wicked slave was banished (24:51). In this regard, the personal advancement of the slave with one talent may be described as utter ruin.

Moreover, the economic deprivation of the slave resurfaces towards the end of the parable. In this case the slave loses everything. The master orders that the talent be taken away from him and be given to the slave who already had ten. In this way the text shows a sharp contrast between two economic extremes. On one hand, the slave who had one talent is stripped of his only talent and left empty-handed. On the other hand, the slave who had many talents is given more and more, so that his fortune accumulates to a point of excess (v. 29). The results of the two economic extremes may be designated as *excessive* accumulation for the slave who acquired eleven talents, and economic *deprivation* for the slave who lost his only talent.

A résumé of the analysis of the three slaves may be sketched as follows:

	<u>Five Talent Slave</u>	<u>Two Talent Slave</u>	<u>One Talent Slave</u>
ECONOMICS:	/superabundance/	/abundance/	/deprivation/
RELATIONSHIP:	/companionship/	/companionship/	/exclusion/pain/
LIGHT:	—————	—————	/darkness/

SECOND LEVEL PART II (25:31-46): THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN & JUDGMENT

Preliminary Remarks:

We have already noted that the judgment scene (25:31-46) resumes the account of the παρουσία of the Son of Man dealt with earlier in 24:27-31. Nevertheless, the description of judgment in 25:31-46 indicates a radical shift of emphasis from the Son of Man's παρουσία as a definitive *presence* (24:27-31) to a judgment scene as a *movement* of the elements from one status to another. Hence, the judgment scene is described as a passing phase which may be designated as a *non-stability*.

First, we notice that throughout the judgment scene the term παρουσία is nowhere to be found, except in its equivalent, "to come" (25:31). This omission is not without significance. It shows that the figure of the Son of Man sitting on the throne has a specific and temporary task to do, that is, to judge all the nations as indicated by the roles attributed to him. He acts like "the shepherd" (v. 32b-c), "the King" (v. 34a) and "the Lord" (vv. 37b, 44b). Secondly, throughout this microtext nothing is stable. Everything changes status. For instance, the gathering of all the nations before the throne of the Son of Man-Shepherd is divided into two groups, one on the right and the other on the left. The group on the right hand side is invited by the King "Come, O blessed of my Father..." (v. 34), whereas the group on the left is dismissed "Depart from me, you cursed..." (v. 41). Then, a twofold exodus is predicted, "And these (on the left) will go away to eternal punishment, and the righteous to eternal life" (v. 46). Thirdly, in the dialogue section (vv. 35-45) even the status of the Son of Man is portrayed as having changed from the state of deprivation (hunger, thirst, being a stranger, etc.) to a glorious state of the coming Son of Man (vv. 31-33).

Thus, the judgment scene in which the Son of Man and all the nations play a role is only a particular phase, the aim of which is to accomplish the specific function of separating the righteous from the wicked. This function re-echoes Matthew's other portrayal of the messianic times (13:24-30), called "the harvest time" (13:30), during which the weeds are separated from the wheat. This task is not continuous throughout the eschatological time. Rather, the separation of the two elements is delayed right up to the final moment, i.e. the harvest time. For a long time the two

elements wheat and weeds had been allowed to grow together.

Finally, in the dialogue section of this microtext, there is a recurrence of the threefold pattern characteristic of the second level of the tripartite structure (see also 24:4b-14, 15-22, 23-28, 29-31). There is the enumeration of elements in the first dialogue (25:35-36, 37-39), as well as in the second (vv. 42-43, 44). In both cases there is a standstill. That is, the enumeration stops at the point where the King confirms that what he says is true by using the solemn declaration (vv. 40, 45). Finally, something new emerges when the group on the left goes away to eternal punishment (v. 46a) while those on the right go to eternal life (v. 46b).

Microtext Eleven (Vv. 31-46)

Ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐν τῇ δόξῃ αὐτοῦ
οἱ δὲ δίκαιοι εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον.

The three actors who appear frequently in this microtext are the Son of Man-Shepherd-King, the group at his right hand and the other group at his left hand. We shall deal with each one separately.

(a) The Son of Man-Shepherd-King

25:31-33, 35-40, 42-45

At the very outset, this microtext explodes into a spectacular scenery where the Son of Man's coming is portrayed in majestic terms. He will appear with transcendent or divine attributes, accompanied by "all his angels" (v. 31a); "he will sit on his glorious throne" (v. 31b); "all the nations will be gathered before him" (v. 32a). The role of "the shepherd"⁶² (v. 32c) is also attributed to this figure. In fact, the Shepherd's role of separating the massive gathering of all the nations into two distinct groups, sheep at the right hand and goats on the left (25:32-33), reiterates the idea of

⁶² The role of shepherd fulfills the eschatological expectations in Matthew's gospel (9:36, 26:31; 28:7), especially where the Messiah's role takes on the imagery of the harvest (13:28-30). Likewise, OT hopes are fulfilled through this figure (Num 27:17; 1Kgs 22:17; Jdt 11:19; Jer 23:1-6; Zach 13:7; Ezek 34:5).

*selection*⁶³ which was found earlier. The organisation of the figures, such as “all his angels,” “the throne of glory,” and “judgment of all the nations” constitute the figurative trail which we have described above as *revelatory* or *apocalyptic*⁶⁴ (24:27-31, 36). From the discursive point of view, this figurative trail confirms the link between the two segments belonging to the second level (24:4b-31; 25:31-46).

However, a large section of the judgment scene consists of the dialogue between the Son of Man now vested with the title of “the King,”⁶⁵ and the two groups on his right and left. The subject matter of these dialogues is the *social relationships* of the King with each of these two groups. A different dimension of this figure, “the Son of Man,” emerges here. Contrary to the triumphant and glorious appearance of the Son of Man shown above (vv. 31-33), in the two dialogues the King’s speech reveals the weak and desperate human conditions in which he found himself and how he depended on the generosity of those on the right for survival. He was hungry, thirsty, a stranger, etc., and they came to his help:

- “ for I was hungry, and you gave me food,
- I was thirsty and you gave me to drink,
- I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ’ ” etc., (vv. 35-36).

In order to emphasize the King’s weakness, the text repeats the account of his need for basic human requirements. But in the second instance, he did not get the help he needed because those at his left hand would not give it to him:

- “ for I was hungry and you gave me no food
- I was thirsty and you gave me no drink
- I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, ’ ” etc., (vv. 42-43).

In these two instances, the organisation of the material points to two different *relationships* between the King and the groups at his right hand and left. Moreover, the contrast between two

⁶³ Several phrases contain messages with selective goals, i.e. to save the elect or the few (24:22c, 25, 28, 31, 42, 44; 25:13).

⁶⁴ John M. COURT, is in agreement with those authors who prefer to label Matthew’s judgment scene (25:31-46) as an “apocalyptic revelation discourse,” see his article: “Right and Left: The Implications for Matthew 25:31-46,” in *NTS* 31 (1985), p. 229.

⁶⁵ See, KINGSBURY, *Matthew*, pp. 98-99.

aspects of the same person is unimaginable. It is difficult to reconcile the powerful and triumphant Son of Man sitting on the glorious throne and judging all the nations (25:31-32) with the destitute person who lacked the most basic of human needs, such as food and drink (vv. 35-40, 42-45). Yet through the power of the Son of Man's words, the hidden dimension of the King is revealed.

The groups on the right and left express disbelief that they ever saw the King under those conditions and either offered or refused him assistance. But the King in his response, indicates more than a mere association with miserable human conditions. He in fact identifies himself with the least of the brothers, i.e. he is "the least of the brothers" (v. 40). This truth is confirmed by the King's solemn declaration which is repeated: "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to the least of these my brothers you did it to me" (vv. 40, 45). Hence, the two dialogues describe a convergence of two diverse dimensions of the Son of Man. Apart from his *transcendent* qualities (see also 24:27, 30b), the Son of Man is also an ordinary earthly being endowed with *social or human frailty*⁶⁶ as expressed in his hunger, thirst, being a stranger, etc., and his dependence on the generosity of others to survive. The latter is a hidden dimension of the Son of Man not obvious to the addressees, nor to the reader. This is quite different from the *transcendent* Son of Man described in spectacular terms which convey supernatural splendour, power and authority to judge the nations.

From our human perception these two phases are irreconcilable. From the perspective of the King's words, the two phases of lowliness and dependence on others as well as the phase of triumph and power as the coming Son of Man are indeed reconcilable. Therefore, while human perception separates, the King's words unite.

APOCALYPTIC : /transcendent being/

RELATIONSHIP : /social dependence/

JUDGMENT : /separating the nations/

⁶⁶ This figure, "Son of Man" will recur at the end of the text where he will be portrayed as vulnerable, i.e. on the occasion of the Passover feast he will be crucified (26:2b).

The Righteous at the King's Right Hand Side

Verses 34-40, 46b

In the dialogue of the judgment scene, certain *social relationships* which were not evident between the righteous and the King are revealed. For instance, the group is addressed as always having belonged to the King's household, "Come O blessed of my Father" (v. 34b). They are also invited to inherit the kingdom to which they have always been entitled, "Come ...and inherit the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world" (v. 34b-c). These two elements are associated with the group at the right when the King mentions the double inheritance of the Father's blessing and the kingdom.

As the discourse unfolds more is revealed about the past relationships between the King and those at his right hand. On several occasions in the past they have come to the King's rescue when he was in dire need of the basic requirements of life: viz., when he was hungry, thirsty, a stranger, etc. (vv. 35-36).

In their response, however, the righteous indicate that they do not recall having seen the King in such desperate conditions; nor do they remember ever helping him out of trouble.

- "When did we see you hungry and feed you,
or thirsty and give you drink?
- When did we see you a stranger and welcome you,
or naked and clothe you?" etc., (25:37-39).

In his response, the King confirms the truth of the events he has recounted. Hence, it is on the strength of the King's word that all the euphoric expressions associated with the group at the right hand are accepted as true. Accordingly, this group ultimately accepted the invitation and at the end of the story they went "...to eternal life" (v. 46b).

What emerges from this dialogue are two opposing concepts concerning the state of relationship between the two actors. On the one hand, there is a dimension visible to the naked eye about this group. They have been one of the massive groups of nations who gathered before the throne of judgment (v. 32a), were separated, and placed at the right hand of the King (vv. 32b-33). After the judgment they will assume their destiny by going to eternal life (v.46b). On the other hand, there is the hidden reality which is revealed only by the King through his utterances. First, before

this group was separated from the others, it could not be recognized distinctly. Secondly, it is not obvious to themselves that they are the blessed of the Father, and have always belonged to the kingdom. Nor are they aware of having come to the King's assistance in his time of need.

Thus, there are several phases attributed to those who are at the right hand of the King. Some phases are obvious such as: their position at the right hand, and their destiny for the eternal life. Others are not evident: for instance, their existence as a distinct group before they were separated from the other group at the left hand; that they have always belonged to the father and that the kingdom is their heritage. The latter qualities are revealed to them through the words of the King in the dialogue. Hence, this analysis as in the case of the Son of Man, shows us the same contrast between what is obvious and what is revealed only through the force of the words.

REVELATION : /assisting the king in need/

RELATIONSHIP: /blessed of King's Father/

JUDGMENT : /invitation to inherit the kingdom/

Those at the King's Left Hand Side

Verses 41-46a

The group on the left-hand side of the King are labelled "the goats" (v. 33b). Unlike their counterparts, they are removed from their former *social relationships*. At the division of the nations into two groups by the Son of Man-Shepherd (vv. 32b-33), the group at the left loses the advantage of mingling incognito with the righteous, and now they are in a position where they are recognisable.

Both the negative character and the destiny of this group are revealed by the King's command to remove themselves from his presence: "Depart from me, ..." (v. 41). They are given a bad label while being cast away to a place of pain and bad company, "...you cursed (depart) to eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (v. 41b). The negative character of the group was not obvious, but the King's utterance reveals it.

Then, with a typical courtroom drama the offences committed are enumerated before the accused. This group neglected to provide the King with the necessities of life in his time of dire need (vv. 42-43). When their turn to respond comes, the group denies ever having left the King in

such desperate conditions as hungry, thirsty, being a stranger, etc., (v. 44). Then, the King confirms the truth of what he has said through the solemn declaration, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did not to me" (v. 45). The execution of the sentence is indicated when those at the left depart to their appointed lot, "And these will go away into eternal punishment" (v. 46a).

As did their counterparts, those at the left hand have various phases associated with them. A first hidden phase was when they were part of the big crowd of all the nations and their true character could not be recognised. That is the time they did not lend a helping hand to the King (the least of the brothers). In the second phase this group loses its anonymity when they are separated from those at the right hand and placed at the left hand of the King and negatively labelled "the goats" (v. 33) and "the cursed" (v. 41b). Finally as a form of retribution, they are dismissed or banished from the King's presence and sent to eternal punishment.

These various phases of the group at the left indicate a contrast between two realities in the same way as it has been for the group at the right. Some aspects are obvious or readily accessible to the reader, because it is a spectacle. On the other hand, some things which have been hidden in the past can be brought to light only through the power of the words.

RELATIONSHIP : /the cursed ones/

JUDGMENT : /banishment to eternal fire/

REVELATION : /omitted to assist the King in need/

The most recurrent and prominent themes in the analysis of the three actors are */social relationships/* and */justice/*. Through his action and utterances the Son of Man-Shepherd-King reveals the hidden characters of both groups when he separates them into two according to past deeds. He acts justly in rewarding one group (righteous) for their good works by inviting them to participate in the kingdom. He is also just when he punishes the other group for their neglect to do good by banishing them to eternal fire.

FIRST LEVEL PART II: DIALOGUE SECTION

Microtext Twelve (26:1-2)

Καὶ ἐγένετο ὅτε ἐτέλεσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ
ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου παραδίδοται εἰς τὸ σταυρωθῆναι.

In this final microtext, the elements are organised according to two main opposing strands. First, there is the idea of *continuity, fulness or wholeness* which surfaces in relation to the utterances of Jesus. Secondly, there is the idea of *limitation or coming to an end* in relation to the Son of Man's crucifixion during the Passover feast.

Concerning the utterances, there is a link between Jesus' long speech and his dialogue with the disciples. At the outset, the temporal phrase indicates that Jesus' speech has come to an end, "When Jesus had finished all these words" (26:1a). Yet that does not stop him from talking and the dialogue is resumed, "he said to his disciples" (v. 2b). Thus, the continuity of the verbal communication is indicated. Moreover, in his utterances Jesus reminds the disciples what they already know, that after two days the Passover feast will take place (v. 2a). But since their knowledge is incomplete, there is additional information provided about the Son of Man' impending crucifixion: "and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified" (v. 2b). In both instances, Jesus conveys a sense of continuity and completeness. We may designate these semantic values as */continuity/* or */fulness/*.

On the other hand, the idea of limitation is conveyed in relation to the end of the Son of Man's life. During the Passover, he will be delivered up to be crucified. So, the Son of Man is vulnerable to death. From the point of view of movement, the Son of Man's crucifixion is a departure from this life. Therefore, in that sense the disciples' expectations of Jesus' παρουσία (i.e. his physical presence) are shattered. Such expectations were expressed in the question which was raised on the Mount of Olives concerning the time and sign of Jesus' παρουσία (24:3).

Nevertheless, it is significant that what Jesus says links the crucifixion with the Passover

feast,⁶⁷ and in that way the faith of the worshipping community associates Jesus' death with the prospects of new life. Hence, Jesus' death does not mean an absolute end; rather it implies a different form of life which was expressed earlier such as the gospel or the enduring words (see also 24:14, 25, 28, 35). The mention of a liturgical feast reiterates the figurative trail of the *religious relationship* which we have seen in the first and second levels above (24:1-3, 14, 15, 20).

Moreover, during the discussion of the judgment scene, a reference was made to the two phases describing the different dimensions of the Son of Man. There is the show of the *triumphant* and *glorious* Son of Man (25:31-33) contrasted with a state of *lowliness* in lacking the most basic things of life (vv. 35-36, 40, 42-43, 45). Now, in this microtext a third dimension of the Son of Man is revealed. He is also *vulnerable*. On the feast of the Passover "...[he] will be delivered up to be crucified" (26:2). Hence, there are two dimensions to the Son of Man. Something about him is triumphant and enduring, but he is also frail and can be killed. The actor Jesus (Son of Man) who initially went out of the temple (24:1) and was expected by the disciples to return soon or be reunited (παρουσία 24:3) with the temple, reappears at this stage (26:1-2) as the Son of Man who will depart from this earthly life (26:2). Thus, the Passover feast two days hence is the time, and the cross becomes the sign of Jesus' παρουσία and the end of the age (see also 24:30).

Summary of the Discursive Analysis.

We have examined the whole text using the discursive analysis showing a network of relationships among various figures. In the course of this analysis we were guided by the three axes of actors, spaces and time.

This discursive analysis has given us only one aspect of the form of content of Matthew's eschatological discourse. We provide here a résumé of the main elements discovered.

⁶⁷ Early Christians observed the Passover as an Easter vigil in prayer and fasting until dawn when Jesus' παρουσία would be celebrated; see, J. JEREMIAS, "πάσχα," in KITTEL *Dictionary*, pp. 896-904. Hence, in 26:2 Jesus' crucifixion is associated with the idea of new life. See also Jn 2:18-22 where Jesus' crucifixion is directly associated with his resurrection.

Actors.

The organisation of the actors in this text is moulded along the tripartite structure. In the first level part I (24:1-4a), the actor Jesus is pictured as *departing* from the temple in the company of his disciples (24:1) and sojourning on the Mount of Olives (v. 3). In the dialogue which transpires between Jesus and the disciples, a possibility of his future return and reunion with the temple is raised when the disciples question the time and sign of his *παρουσία* and the end-time (v. 3b-c). Then, from v. 4b onward the dialogue is interrupted by a long speech (24:4b--25:46). However, when the dialogue between the two actors resumes in part II of the first level (26:1-2), Jesus' utterance indicates that the opposite will happen. The Son of Man will depart from this life, crucified on the feast of the Passover (v. 2). In both cases, we notice a *separation* of Jesus from other elements, Jesus' separation from a particular space (temple) and from a particular life (his own).

The second level in the speech (24:4b-31; 25:31-46) is characterised by a complex organisation of actors. On the one hand, the text emphasizes the *separation* or *division* of actors. For instance, the previous actor (Jesus) resurfaces in the new role of speaker, and he is involved in a verbal confrontation with several other actors: the messianic pretenders (vv. 5, 11, 23-24, 26), and the reports of violence (v. 6). Then, there is a violent conflict between nations and kingdoms as well as natural disasters (v. 7). There is also enmity between the audience and all the nations (v. 9). Furthermore, there is a general chaotic atmosphere or disunity between various elements in the form of mutual hatred, betrayals and lawlessness (vv. 10, 12). There is a separation between the desolating sacrilege installed in the holy place and certain actors who have to flee from Judea to the mountains (v. 16), to refrain from coming back to their residential areas (vv. 17-19) or to make sure that their flight takes place unhindered (v. 20). Certain structures fall apart. There is a saying about "the dead body..." (v.28), and then the collapse of the cosmic bodies (v. 29). Finally, the judgment scene indicates the division of the massive gathering of the nations into two groups to the left and right of the King (25:32-33), as well as the dismissal of those who are at the left hand into eternal fire (vv. 41, 46a).

In contrast to the separation, the text describes a *link* or a situation of *unity* among disparate elements. For instance, the actor (disciples) assumes the role of the listeners exhorted to remain

where they are conjoined with the true Messiah (vv. 4b-5, 6b-d, 8, 13, 15, 17-18, 20, 23, 25, 26). Even some elements which were in conflict later appear as *united* or *reconciled*. In this case certain actors become a rallying point and they attract other elements: the gospel of the kingdom will attract to itself all the nations (v. 14), the sign of the Son of Man will cause all the tribes of the earth to mourn and to see the coming Son of Man (v. 30), and, on the scene of judgment there will be a general gathering of all the angels and all the nations before the Son of Man sitting on his glorious throne (25:31-32a). In other cases only partial unity and reconciliation are expressed: the salvation of only one or a few (vv. 13, 22c, 24c-25), the gathering of the elect (24:31), and the invitation of the group on the right hand to join the King in his kingdom and in eternal life (25:34, 46b).

On the third level, the organisation of the actors assumes a different pattern. First, the relation of communication continues between the speaker and the audience (v. 32a). Then, certain concrete elements appear as signs of what is still to come. The “tender branch” and the “sprouting leaves” (v. 32b) signify the approach of summer, and “all these things” refers to the events described in 24:4b-29 signifying the imminence of the One to come (v. 33). Certain other elements will cease to exist: “this generation” and “heaven and earth,” while others will continue to exist, “all these things” and “the speaker’s words” (vv. 34-35).

Another contrast is the relationship between the majority representing a *general rule*, and the *exception* to that rule, namely, the general lack of knowledge of the exact day and hour appears in contrast to the Father’s knowledge (v. 36). Noah’s contemporaries busy themselves with self-indulgence and they perish in the flood, while Noah remains alert and enters the ark before the flood (vv. 38-39). There is a warning for the listener to keep a strict vigil, unlike the negligent householder who relaxes the watch and allows the thief to break in (vv. 42-44).

Moreover, the following three parables show a relation of *separation* as well as *unity* between the actors. On the one hand, there is a relation of *unity* between those actors who wait creatively for their master. Their hard work bears fruit, and when the master comes he rewards them abundantly and invites them to join him in his joyful state: the faithful and wise slave (24:45-47), the five wise virgins (25:2, 4, 9-10), the slave with five talents and the other one with two (vv. 15, 16-17, 20-23), as well as the group at the right hand of the King in the judgment scene (vv. 32b, 34-40). On the other hand, there are actors who are *separated* from their master. These are the slaves who

squander their opportunities while waiting for the master. They get involved in mischievous deeds and are unproductive. When the master comes he punishes them severely by depriving them of everything and then casting them away to a place of great pain. This happens to the wicked slave (24:48-51), the five foolish virgins (25:2-3, 8, 10a, 11-12), the slave who had one talent (vv. 15c, 18, 24-28, 30) and the group at the left hand of the King in the judgment scene (vv. 41-45).

Time.

In addition to the actors, the organisation of temporal indications is also fairly elaborate in this text, and the various characteristics may be reduced to three main categories.

Limits.

-*Begin-time* is expressed in phrases such as: the time when Jesus' παρουσία will take place (24:3c); "When you see..." (v. 15); "but the end is not yet" (v. 6c-d); "...the beginning of birth-pangs" (v. 8).

-*End-time* is indicated in the following phrases: "...the sign of the fulfillment of the age" (v. 3c); "But he who endures to the end..." (v. 13); "and then the end will come" (v. 14b); "Immediately after the tribulation..." (v. 29a); "this generation will not pass away till..." (v. 34); "heaven and earth will pass away" (v. 35a).

Periods.

-*Short successive periods* which build up into a climax appear in the following sequence: "Then they will deliver you up..." (v. 9); "And then many will fall away..." (v. 10); "and then the end will come" (v. 14b).

-*Long duration of time* is also indicated: "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be" (24:21); "but my words will not pass away:" (v. 35b); "... 'My master is delayed' "(v. 48b); "as bridegroom delayed" (25:5); "Now after a long time..." (v. 19); "inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (v. 34c); "Depart from me, you cursed into eternal fire" (v. 41); "...into eternal punishment ...into eternal life" (v. 46).

Precise or Exact Time.

Certain phrases indicate a particular moment when an important event occurs.

- “Concerning *that day and hour*” (24:36); “until *the day* Noah went into the ark” (v. 38c); “...*on what day* your Lord is coming” (v. 42); “for the Son of Man is coming *at an hour* you do not expect” (v. 44b); “to give them food at *the proper time*” (v. 45); “But *at midnight* there was a cry” (25:6); “...*after two days* the Passover is coming” (26:2a).

Spaces.

Spatial indications are less developed in this text than those of actors or time. Nevertheless, there are some outstanding spatial organisations which appear frequently.

Two Poles.

- Jesus' movement occurs between the temple and the Mount of Olives (24:1, 3).
- There is an exhortation to flee from Judea to the mountains (v. 16).
- Several prohibitions occur: the first one is against descending from the housetops into the house (v. 17), the second is against coming back from the field (v. 18), and the third is against following the false propaganda (vv. 23-26).
- The master leaves on a journey and he comes back after a long while (24:42, 44, 50; 25:5, 6, 10a, 14, 15e, 19, 31).
- Certain actors are welcomed or invited into the kingdom, while others are either cast out with hypocrites (24:51), excluded from the feast (25:11-12) or thrown into the outer darkness (v.30) and into the eternal fire (vv. 41, 46a).

Contrast between Spaces Above and Below.

Certain phrases indicate a movement between the cosmic and the earthly spaces:

- “Where the body is, there the vultures will be gathered together” (24:28); stars fall from the heavens (v. 29c); the sign of the Son of Man appears in heaven, provokes sadness and facilitates vision to all the tribes of the earth (v. 30).
- When the Son of Man comes and sits on his throne of glory, and all the nations are gathered before him (25:31-32).

Specific Spaces and the Whole Space.

-The following examples indicate *specific spaces*: viz., "...there will be earthquakes in various places" (24:7); "Noah entered the ark" (v. 38c); "men in the field" (v. 40) and "women at the mill" (v. 41); " 'Lo, here is the Christ!' ... 'There he is!' " (v. 23); " 'in the wilderness... in the inner-rooms' " (v. 26).

-However, the *whole space* is indicated in the following phrases:

"...this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world" (v. 14a); "from east as far as the west" (v. 27); "...from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (v. 31); and then the cosmic and earthly spaces appear together to express the entire space, "heaven and earth will pass away" (v. 35a).

B. THE SEARCH FOR THEMATIC ROLES & BINARY OPPOSITIONS

Preliminary Remarks

Our discursive analysis has shown that this text (Matt 24:1-26:2) is organised in three levels, and that each level incorporates several microtexts. These microtexts are distinct from each other, yet the organisation of elements exhibits a common trend binding them together as the most basic thematic value. Later in the fourth chapter we will show how the basic thematic value gives harmony to the disparate elements held together as one text.

Here at the end of chapter two, our aim is to describe the figurative trail shown in the discursive analysis. We shall point out the main contrasting trends which have emerged, and then indicate how these trends crystallize into binary oppositions responsible for the signification in the text.

Separation vs. Reunion; Limitations vs. Wholeness

In the first level of the tripartite structure, we investigate the correspondence and parallels in parts I (24:1-4a) and II (26:1-2), since these two segments are part of the same level.

The significance of Jesus' movement out of the temple (24:1a) and his sojourning on the Mount of Olives (v. 3a) is revealed in the solemn declaration that the temple will be utterly destroyed, "Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down" (v.2d). Hence, Jesus' exit from the temple bears the sense of */forsaking/*, */deserting/* or */separation/*. This notion is opposed to the disciples' eschatological expectations and hopes that at some time in the future Jesus will be reunited with his temple.⁶⁸ They want to know the time and the sign of his παρουσία or new presence, "... what is the time and the sign of your παρουσία and the fulfillment of the age?" (v. 3c). We may designate this opposing value as */reunion/* or */presence/*.

⁶⁸ This notion is based on Jesus' utterance at the end of chapter 23 concerning the desertion of the temple and his conditional return: "Behold, your house is forsaken and desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord' " (23:38-39).

But, Jesus' definitive response to the disciples' question occurs only at the end of the text in 26:2 where he informs them that the Son of Man will be crucified on the feast of Passover. The crucifixion describes the Son of Man's death, i.e. his physical departure from this life. There is a correspondence between Jesus' departure from the temple (24:1a) and the Son of Man's crucifixion (26:2b). The basic concept which is common to both movements is */absence/* or */separation/*.

In the dialogue, the disciples' gesture of showing the temple buildings indicates a perception limited to the temple's physical structure. Significantly, in 24:1b the disciples merely showed the temple buildings without saying a word, whereas Jesus' response is characterised by an all inclusive expression, "all these things," to indicate that there is much more to the temple than its physical structure. The text clearly distinguishes between the material or visible dimension of the temple, i.e. "the buildings of the temple" (v. 1b) or "the stones" (v. 2d), and the spiritual dimension conveyed in Jesus' words which point out the broad and all inclusive aspect of the temple, i.e. "all these things". The rhetorical question in 24:2b implies the spiritual aspect or the non-physical dimension.

The material aspect of the temple is characterised by *fragility* or *limitation*. That is, the temple buildings will not last (24:1b-2). Everything which constitutes the structures of the temple will be torn down. Furthermore, the disciples' expectations about Jesus' imminent return in his physical body are shattered by the information concerning the Son of Man's upcoming ordeal and crucifixion (26:2). Thus, Jesus' physical life is *vulnerable*, it will be violently brought to an end.

In these two instances, two physical objects, the temple buildings and Jesus' body, show something in common. Both are destructible and will come to an end. Just as the temple buildings are fragile and their constituent elements (stones) will be strewn asunder (24:2), similarly the body of the Son of Man is vulnerable in that it will be tortured and killed (26:2).

In contrast to these physical structures, the text makes reference to Jesus' words (24:2a-c) and also to the Passover feast (26:2a) which is a liturgical celebration. In both cases there is a tendency to be *inclusive* and to bring things together. Hence, the words and the liturgy describe a broad reality, the dimension of */wholeness/*.

Steadfastness of Hope vs. Commotion of Despair

At the second level, the text has shown a particular trend consisting of numerous exhortations for the audience to stay put and not to panic or flee in the face of the calamities which will occur: the false propaganda of the messianic pretenders (24:4b-5, 11, 23-25), violence (vv. 6-9), community disorders (vv. 10, 12), the presence of the desolating sacrilege in the holy place and the great tribulation (vv. 15-22).

It all begins with Jesus' response to the disciples' question about the time and sign of his παρουσία and the eschatological end-time (v. 3). From v. 4b up to v. 14 a verbal confrontation occurs involving two utterances. False propagandists and other eschatological calamities will create chaotic movement, fear and instability. On the other hand, there is the persuasive speech inspiring the listeners to hold fast and not to let themselves be swayed to and fro by the false propaganda and the calamities of the end-time. In this regard, there is a recurrence of the phrases warning against any confused or panic-stricken movements: "Take heed that no one leads you astray" (v. 4b), "see that you are not alarmed" (v. 6b), "But the one who endures to the end, this one will be saved" (v. 13).

Elements of despair prevail in this microtext. As the majority will follow the messianic pretenders' propaganda and stray from the right path (vv. 5, 11), they will be subjected to terrifying news and violence (vv. 6-7), and experience numerous community disorders (vv. 10, 12). In contrast, only a few will heed the speaker's exhortations by enduring to the end and these will be rewarded with salvation (v. 13). But, the solitary voice of the speaker will suddenly develop into the universal proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom. Then, the elements which were in conflict (v. 7) and had sown the seeds of hatred (v. 9b) will be harmonised when they all bear witness to the gospel (v. 14).

The third microtext (vv. 15-22) continues the trend of halting the panic-motivated movements or the tendency to escape. It opens with the ominous presence of the desolating sacrilege in the holy place (v. 15) and is complemented by the presence of the great tribulation which if prolonged has the potential to annihilate the whole human race (v. 22a-b).

In order to assist the listeners, the text first refers to their ability to study the ominous presence and thereby come to grips with it. They will see that about which Daniel prophesied, and be able to interpret and understand its meaning (v. 15). Moreover, we observe that while only one exhortation urges the Judeans to flee to the mountains (v. 16), many more other exhortations prohibit the movement altogether but encourage the listeners to stay put and face up to the looming disaster. For instance, there are phrases which urge certain individuals who will be outside to remain where they are during the time of disaster, “let the one on the housetop not go down ...” (v. 17), “and let the one in the field not turn back ...” (v. 18).

Concerning those who are encumbered with children either through pregnancy or suckling, there is no prospect of escape. Instead, the speaker resorts to lamentation (v. 19). Even the exhortation to pray recommends that the listeners appeal to divine power. Certainly, prayer for suitable conditions for flight does not mean a passive escape from disaster. It is rather a creative recourse to the spiritual power to render human effort successful. Finally, the menacing presence of the great tribulation (v. 21) will pose no insoluble problem, because the duration of the tribulation will be curtailed for the sake of the elect (v. 22).

In the first literary unit of the fourth microtext (vv. 23-26) we find incisive and curt prohibitions of movements that might be caused by the propaganda of the false christs and the false prophets. The speaker simulates how the propaganda will be formulated, and then in each case counters with a terse phrase of prohibition. He recommends an appropriate response for each occasion. For instance there are specific places to which the audience will be urged to go in order to meet the Messiah. In all those cases the speaker's prohibitions are unambiguous and definitive: “do not believe it” (vv. 23e, 26e), and “do not go out” (v. 26c). Then against the spectacular shows of the false christs and the false prophets, the speaker employs his authority in the first person, “I” in order to counter such propaganda: “I have told you beforehand” (v. 25).

Thus, throughout this microtext the message is clear: whatever propaganda the listeners hear or see, they must not be swayed to and fro.

When all three microtexts (vv. 4b-14, 15-22, 23-26) are examined, a trend emerges which permeates them and keeps them together. That trend has something to do with two contrasting voices: the many voices of the messianic pretenders and the calamities will lead people to places

where the Messiah is falsely alleged to be. These voices are characterised by a lack of agreement. Some will say “Here is the Christ!” and others will say, “There he is!” etc. (vv. 23-24, 26). Consequently, these voices are bound to cause /despair/ and /commotion/ in the form of disorderly movements. On the other hand, the voice of the speaker conveys /hope/. This voice evokes steadfastness and calmness in the midst of turmoil. It urges the audience *not to stray*, but to remain stable on the right path.

Universality of Presence & Limitations of Physical Experience

From the second literary unit of the fourth microtext (24:27-28), a sudden transition is evident. The text departs from the trend which we described as a resistance against any movement caused by deceptions or violence, together with the emphasis to stay put on the right path (24:4b-26), and shows a new trend which presents the παρουσία of the Son of Man as a definitive *presence* established once and for all (vv. 27-28). The simile of lightning indicates a presence that is universal, “For as lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the παρουσία of the Son of Man” (v. 27). However, the phrase which describes the dead body and the gathering of the vultures (v. 28) introduces a negative element: a life has come to an end and from this results a new reality, the gathering of vultures. Hence, the παρουσία of the Son of Man is essentially composed of two contrary dimensions: there is a physical life which has come to an end through death, and a new existence emerges in the gathering of the vultures around the body. These two unlike elements of the παρουσία of the Son of Man create a *paradoxical presence*.

There is then a parallel between the content of vv. 27-28 and the content of the following microtext (vv. 29-31). In both instances two dimensions are attributed to the παρουσία of the Son of Man (v. 30), one negative and the other positive. On the negative side, several elements deal with the physical aspect that comes to an end. For instance, there is the end of the tribulation and the collapse of the cosmic bodies (v. 29). A reference is made to the sign of the Son of Man as something which provokes sadness, regret or shock, “and all the tribes of earth will mourn and they will see the Son of Man coming...” (v. 30b). These two instances describe a disastrous situation

associated with the Son of Man's coming. In this way vv. 29 and 30b reiterate the sombre atmosphere which we saw earlier about the dead body and the gathering of the vultures (v. 28a).

Therefore, all these three instances about the physical dimension of the Son of Man associate his παρουσία with what is perishable, weak, and can be shattered. Hence, they convey a semantic value of */fragility/* or */limitation/*.

On the positive side, there are several phrases which describe something new appearing or coming to life. For instance, we notice a positive dimension of the παρουσία in the description of the appearance of the sign of the Son of Man in heaven (v. 30). In this case the Son of Man's coming is portrayed as a *universal* experience: his sign will appear "...from heaven" (v.30a) and it will inspire awe on all the tribes of the earth, "and then all tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming ..." (v. 30b). The Son of Man has divine qualities, he has the angels under his command, "and he (Son of Man) will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather the elect from the four winds, ..." (v. 31). Moreover, the Son of Man will come on the clouds of heaven, with glory and power (v. 30b). These features re-echo the universal and spectacular dimension of the παρουσία in v. 27. Hence, in these instances, an apocalyptic sense is emphasized in relation to the παρουσία of the Son of Man.

While the negative dimension of the παρουσία of the Son of Man refers to what is limited or perishable (vv. 28, 29), the positive dimension indicates the universal and the supernatural. The latter is so imbued in symbolism and metaphor that it defies human expression, and the combination of the two contrary dimensions underscores the paradoxical reality of the παρουσία⁶⁹ which *eludes* our sense experience.

⁶⁹ These two concepts will be better articulated in the narrative analysis below through the expressions: *manifestation* (paraître) and *immanence* (non-paraître).

Stability vs. Mutability

Our analysis of the third level (24:32-25:30) has revealed a tension between the tangible, visible and mutable signs and the One whose coming is unknown yet assured by the speaker's words. Until the appointed time, the latter remains elusive and out of reach. Tension is caused by waiting for the invisible to become visible, and for unfulfilled expectations to become fulfilled. Consequently, all the microtexts belonging to this level deal with how to handle the period of waiting.

In microtext six (24:32-35), the organisation of the figures was designated as *educational* in content, and its message is conveyed through the burgeoning fig tree and the speaker's words. We have noticed here an opposition between what is changeable and what is stable. The text discusses certain elements which are changeable because by their very nature they come and go. An example is the fig tree: "its branch becomes tender, and the leaves sprout" (v. 32a). Moreover, according to the laws of nature the speaker's generation will come to an end. But, before that happens all those things (signs) which precede the coming of the Son of Man will have taken place: "this generation will not pass away until..." (v. 34). Similarly, heaven and earth are also portrayed as mutable elements which will come to an end one day, "Heaven and earth will pass away,..." (v. 35a).

In contrast with this instability, the text refers to elements which are stable or firmly established. From the parable of the fig tree the speaker infers that "all these things" (v. 33) are sure and reliable signs that the Son of Man is close at hand. The solemn declaration in v. 34 provides a firm guarantee that "all these things" will take place during the lifetime of the listeners' generation. Finally, the speaker refers to the stability and permanence of his very own words, "... but my words will not pass away" (v. 35b). In these cases, the endurance of the speaker's words is emphasized in contrast to the mutable things.

Hence, in this microtext an opposition is drawn between visible, mutable signs and the stable message. The appropriate oppositions between the thematic values may be arranged thus: */Mutability of Signs/ vs. /Stability of Words/*.

However, from 24:36 onward, a different organisation of elements emphasizes the secrecy, which we have termed *revelatory/apocalyptic*. In this case, a vast majority of elements belong to a

particular category which we called a general rule. These elements appear in contrast to one element which stands out as an exception to that rule.

For instance, in the heavenly court the general rule is that no one, neither the angels of heaven nor the Son, knows the exact day and hour of the coming of the Son of Man (v. 36a-b). Nevertheless, there is only one who knows, the Father (v. 36c). He is the exception to the rule. The exact day and hour when the Son of Man comes is assured because the Father's knowledge is stable and reliable. Thus, two contrary values occur in this verse. There is */waving/* or */uncertainty/* and */stability/* or */reliability/*.

Furthermore, in Noah's day the general rule is reflected in that the vast majority of people were so preoccupied with self-indulgence that they became reckless and oblivious of the looming disaster. So when the flood came, it caught them unawares and destroyed them, "...they did not know and the flood came and swept them all away" (v. 39). But Noah, who had entered the ark on the day right before the flood, is an exception to the general rule. The opposing fates of Noah and his contemporaries illustrate what will happen at the *παρουσία* of the Son of Man. Specifically, of two men working in the field one is taken and one left, and of two women grinding at the mill, one is taken and one left (vv. 40-41). These two instances show the contrary values of */insecurity/* of life caused by the lack of knowledge of the time of the flood, and the */security/* of the ark as a refuge.

Likewise, there is the parable of the householder and the thief. The householder's lack of knowledge of the time when the thief would come results in the house being broken into at an unexpected time of night. When all is quiet the tendency is to relax vigilance. But the warning to keep vigil constantly, "Watch therefore, for you do not know on what day..." (v.42) is intended to set the audience apart from the rest as an exception. The lack of knowledge in this example is used as an incentive to encourage the audience to keep watch because they do not know the exact time when their Lord is coming.

Among the semantic values which appear in these literary units, we find parallels with various oppositions. These parallels enable us to reach a more basic concept which binds all of them together. On the one hand, the value of */waving/* in connection with the angels' and the Son's lack of knowledge (v. 36) corresponds to the latter value of */insecurity/* in relation to the indulgent

behaviour of Noah's contemporaries which resulted in the flood disaster (vv. 38-39), and the householder's negligence (v. 43). All these instances refer to a state of insecurity ending in destruction. Therefore, the appropriate semantic expression for these instances is */limitation/*. On the other hand, there is a correspondence between the reliability of the Father's knowledge of the day and the hour (v. 36), the security of Noah's steps to enter the ark before the flood came and the exhortation to the listeners to keep a constant watch because they do not know the exact time of the Son of Man's coming (vv. 42, 44). All these cases convey a sense of */stability/*, because everything is under control and nothing is left to chance.

Therefore we may designate the basic opposition in this section thus: */Stability/* vs. */Mutability/*.

Lifeless Separation vs. Prosperous Companionship

Our analysis of the last three microtexts in the third level has shown several registers under which various elements are grouped. We can be sure that only two of these registers have been selected by the text because they recur in all three microtexts: It is the */ECONOMICS/* and */SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS/* which carry on the figurative trail and guide our present search for the basic thematic value of this section and its binary opposition.

The three microtexts parallel strongly with three parable stories (24:45-51; 25:1-13, 14-30). Three parables have the characteristic of time of waiting for someone (either the master or the bridegroom) who is away and could come back at any time. In this regard, the elements in the three stories are divisible into two opposing sides. There are actors who fill the period of waiting with diligence and wisdom, so that when the master returns he shows satisfaction with their work and rewards them. On the other hand, there is a category of actors who abuse the time of waiting by negligence or slothfulness. When the master comes back unexpectedly, he punishes them severely.

We will begin with the positive side of the three parables and search for the basic thematic value which binds them together. At first, there is the case of the slave who is initially qualified as "faithful and wise" (24:45). This slave seizes the opportunity created by the master's absence to

prove his worth by executing his duties with efficiency, i.e. by providing food at the right time for the master's household (vv. 45-46). Consequently, the text comments on the gains or achievements made by this slave. He receives an additional quality by being called a "blessed slave" (v. 46). Accordingly, he will be promoted from partial (v. 45) to total responsibility "...he will set him over all his possessions" (v. 47).

The second case is the story of the five wise virgins, who receive a positive qualification early in the story. They are called "wise virgins" (25:2, 4) for their foresight in taking with them both the flasks of oil and the lamps on their way to meet the bridegroom. Moreover, in order to preserve their oil the wise virgins refused to share oil with their foolish counterparts. Instead, they suggested how the foolish virgins might acquire their own oil, "go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves" (v. 9). In that way, the wise virgins ensured their readiness to meet the bridegroom when he came even as late as midnight (v. 6) and were rewarded with the privilege of joining the bridegroom in the wedding feast (v. 10b).

The parable of the talents shows a rapid accumulation of fortune by two slaves. One slave had originally been given five talents and another two (25:15). During the master's absence, both slaves worked hard in trading with the talents, and they gained a 100% increase (vv. 15f-16). Consequently, on the day of reckoning the master rewarded them generously: "you have been faithful over little, I will set you over much" (vv. 21d-e, 23d-e). This was partially fulfilled for the slave who had ten talents, when the master awarded him an extra talent taken from the third slave: "For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have abundance" (v. 28). To crown it all, the two diligent slaves are invited to a closer and more joyful relationship with their master: "enter into the joy of your master" (vv. 21f, 23f).

Hence, in the three parables stories, the accumulation of immense fortune (24:45-47; 25:14-23, 28-29) and the display of great wisdom (25:1-10) have something in common. The slaves concerned acquire prosperity and a very close relationship with their master. Hence, the appropriate thematic value in this case may be called: */Prosperous Companionship/*.

On the negative side, however, the three parables show several actors who mismanage the period of time available to them by the delay of the master or bridegroom. For instance, the slave who is labelled "wicked" (24:48) spends his time beating up his fellow slaves and engaging in self-

indulgent behaviour (v. 49). We observe a deterioration of this slave's well-being and his relationships. When the master returns unexpectedly, he will punish him severely. That is, he will cut the slave in pieces, and throw his portion away with the hypocrites in a place of great pain. This phrase describes a definitive end to any relationship which might have existed between the two actors.

Concerning foolishness, we notice that the foolish virgins failed in their mission to meet the bridegroom by leaving the oil behind, and after an unsuccessful attempt to have a share in the oil of their wise counterparts, they had to go out at a late hour to buy oil. While they were away, the bridegroom arrived and entered into the wedding hall with those who were ready. Thus, the foolish virgins were excluded from the wedding feast, and in the process they even lost their identity, as the lord of the feast refused them entry, saying: "Truly I say to you, I do not know you" (25:12b-c).

Moreover, the slave with one talent (25:15c, 18-30) failed to use it advantageously. In spite of the fact that his responsibility was light and he had enough time at his disposal, this slave decided to bury the talent in the ground (vv. 18, 25b). On his return, the master punished him severely. From then on the slave's situation worsened until he lost everything. He lost his good name: the master called him, "wicked and slothful" (v. 26), and then a "worthless slave" (v. 30a). Then his only talent was taken away from him, leaving him utterly impoverished: "but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away" (v. 29b). Worst of all, this slave was banished from the master's company, "And cast the worthless slave into the outer darkness, ..." (v. 30).

Thus, all three actors on the negative side show something in common: the wicked slave, the five foolish virgins and the slave who had one talent do not exploit the time of waiting to their advantage. Consequently, when the master/bridegroom arrives they are punished by being stripped of all good things (economics). At the end they lose even their lives when they are cast out of the master's life (relationships). The thematic role appropriate for all these elements is: */Lifeless Separation/*. Hence, the basic thematic opposition for this section of the parables is */Prosperous Companionship/ vs. /Lifeless Separation/*.

Disparities of Spectacle vs. Unity of Words

Our analysis of the judgment scene (25:31-46) dealt separately with the three actors: the Son of Man-Shepherd-King, the group at the right and the group at the left. In each of these cases, the analysis demonstrated two distinct and at first sight irreconcilable stages of the Son of Man's life. Nevertheless, these different stages are harmonised by the thematic roles attributed to the same actor. First, he appears on the scene of judgment resplendent with grandeur and power judging all the nations (35:31-33; see also 24:27, 30). Secondly, the Son of Man is portrayed as the least of the brothers desperately in need of the basic things of life, food, drink, welcome, etc. (25:35-36, 40, 42, 45), and this lowliness will be confirmed by his most vulnerable state when he is crucified on the feast of the Passover (26:2, see also 24:30b, 28).

In the first instance, the text describes the Son of Man's coming as a spectacular event. All around him are grandeur and splendour: he will come "...in his glory and all the angels with him" (25:31a); he will take his seat "...in his glorious throne" (v. 31b, see also 24:27, 30 above). Then all the nations will be gathered before him; and then wielding his authority of "the shepherd," he will separate them into two groups at his right and left (vv. 32b-33; see also 24:27-28 above). This description confirms the *apocalyptic* and *transcendental* dimension associated with the actor, the Son of Man.

Secondly, a completely different picture of the Son of Man is revealed in the course of his dialogue with the righteous. The King was once hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick and in prison. He was rescued from these desperate situations by the generosity of this group (vv. 35-36). We noted the detailed enumeration which makes the *social* conditions of utter want both vivid and convincing. However, in their response the righteous deny that they have ever seen the King in such desperate conditions; nor do they recall providing him with assistance (vv. 37-39). From the physical evidence, the triumphant state of the coming Son of Man seems irreconcilable with the miserable conditions previously associated with him (vv. 35-36, 37-39). However, using a solemn declaration, the King insists that these two different conditions are reconcilable, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of my brothers you did it to me." (v. 40).

Significantly, when the King addresses those at his left, the same revelation of his lowly past

is repeated with the same painstaking enumeration of the specific needs. But this time the group is accused of having turned a deaf ear (vv. 42-43). Just like their counterparts, this group expresses surprise at hearing about these accusations, because they have never seen the King under those desperate conditions, nor do they remember refusing him any help (v. 44). Thereupon, the King uses the solemn declaration to confirm that what they did not do to the least they did not do to him (v. 45).

The sheer power of resonance and forthrightness of the words succeeds through repetitions and the recurrence of the solemn declarations to achieve what appears to be impossible. The words establish beyond any doubt the solidarity between the *transcendental* state of the Son of Man which is shown as a spectacle (vv. 31-33) and the *social* conditions of utter want for the basic things of life, associated with the least (vv. 35-36, 40, 42-44, 45). But the persistent denial by the two groups that they have ever seen the King in desperate need, represents the ordinary human point of view which perceives an unbridgeable gap between the two states. Hence, our binary opposition for this microtext may be designated as: */Disparity of Spectacle/* vs. */Unity of Words/*.

Summary on Oppositions:

Our discussion of the basic oppositions has shown the main trends of the discursive component of the text (Matt 24:1--26:2). However, since the discourse is only one dimension of the semiotic content, the results of the discursive analysis must be interpreted in conjunction with the narrative component of the text. The fourth chapter, therefore, will examine the results of these binary oppositions in relation to the narrative content (chapter three) in order to determine how the disparate elements of the text come together.

CHAPTER THREE

NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

A. PRELIMINARY REMARKS

At this stage, our task is to go over the whole text (Matt 24:1-26:2) and analyse its content from the point of view of its narrative composition. We are dealing here with two basic elements of the narrativity: the succession of the *states* and their *transformation*.

In this analysis we shall determine the main transformation of the states which lead to the acquisition of the value object. We shall indicate in a schema below the various stages and phases of the main transformation of the states.⁷⁰ It suffices here to say that there is a distinction between the main transformation and the narrative programs (NPs), also known as sub-stories.⁷¹ The narrative programs surface in the text when the main transformation comes to a standstill due to a lack of competence. This occurs when one or the other of the three modalities necessary for the performance is missing, such as the desire to act or the duty to act (*vouloir-faire/devoir-faire*), the know-how to act (*savoir-faire*), and the ability to act (*pouvoir-faire*). The aim of the sub-stories, therefore, is to recover the missing modality through the acquisition of the modal object.

In this particular text there are numerous NPs, and very often they appear in correlated pairs. Hence, our second task will be to discover the narrative programs (NPs), and then to show how they are set in opposition to the correlative narrative programs (Anti-NPs).

While the ultimate aim of the discursive analysis was to discover the *thematic values* and their *oppositions*, the goal of the narrative analysis is to lead us to the discovery of the *actantial roles* and the oppositions which they entail. In spite of the two chapters dealing separately with the discursive and narrative components of the text, it is necessary to emphasize that the content of signification can be discovered only when the two components are linked together. Consequently,

⁷⁰ See GROUPE D'ENTREVERNES, Analyse, pp. 13-19. See also GIROUD, Sémiotique, pp. 50-53.

⁷¹ See VOGELS Reading, p. 52.

the semiotic analysis of this particular text will require that both the discursive and the narrative components be conjoined in order to achieve signification.⁷² For that reason, at various stages of the narrative analysis we shall endeavour to relate our findings with the discoveries made during the discursive analysis. This will enable us to adjust and readjust our original hypothesis concerning the organisation of content in Matthew's eschatological discourse.

B. THE NARRATIVE SEQUENCES IN MATT 24:1-26:2

To discover the narrative sequence of the whole text, we shall be guided by the basic principle of narrativity which deals with the transformation of states. That is, there is a sequence which comprises various phases of the transformation from the begin state to the end state. In the course of such a transformation four phases succeed one another: manipulation, competence, performance and sanction.

Since we are dealing with a text that has numerous narrative programs and correlative or anti-narrative programs, we shall distinguish clearly between the sequence of the main transformation and the sequences of the narrative programs or sub-stories.

In this analysis we shall, as far as possible, assume the cutting of the text into microtexts and literary units to be as previously proposed.

24:1-4a **Καὶ ἐξελθὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀπὸ τοῦ ἱεροῦ ἐπορεύετο....
καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς,**

BEGIN STATE:

24:1-2

The text opens with the **initial situation** described by the verbs of the type *to do*. For instance, there are verbs of movement, "going out" (v. 1a), "to sit down" (v. 3a), "to approach" (vv. 1, 3) and "to throw down" (v. 2). There are verbs of communication, such as "to show" (v. 1b), "to

⁷² See Louis PANIER, "L'analyse sémiotique d'un texte," in *Sémiotique & bible*, 81 (1996), pp. 5-18; GIROUD, *Sémiotique*, p. 20.

respond,” “to say,” “to see” etc. (vv. 2-4a) which also belong to the same category of doing. However, none of these operations are verbs of the main transformation. Rather, they describe Jesus as the subject of state who has separated from the temple and moved to the Mount of Olives, indicating that he is disjoined from the temple. Consequently, the initial **lack** may be described as Jesus’ state of absence from the temple, and may be reduced to the category of *departure*.

The situation of lack is further developed in the description of the disciples’ role as subjects of state who *do not know* (vv. 1b, 3a). Through their gesture of pointing out the temple buildings, the disciples indicate their lack of deeper understanding of what the temple is about. Jesus’ remark, “ ‘You see all these things, do you not?’ ” (v. 2b), confirms this lack. The disciples’ state of lack of knowledge is further demonstrated on the Mount of Olives when they ask Jesus to tell them about the time and the sign of his *παρουσία*. In these instances, the disciples appear as the subject who is disjoined from the object *knowledge*.

TRANSFORMATION:

Manipulation:

Vv.3-4a

On the Mount of Olives the text starts to move. Now that Jesus has left the temple, the disciples who are aware of their present state of ignorance assume two roles: one role is that of the sender of the manipulation, i.e. they persuade Jesus to inform them about the time and the sign of his *παρουσία* and the eschatological end-time, “ ‘Tell us, ...’ ” (v. 3b-c); and the second role is that of the subject of state (ignorance) whose state must be changed (knowledge).

The disciples’ request for information indicates that the knowledge of the time and sign of Jesus’ *παρουσία* and the end-time constitute the value object of the main transformation, “ ‘when will these things be what will be the sign of your *παρουσία* and the fulfillment of the age?’ ” (v. 3c). On the other hand, Jesus’ positive response to the first request indicates his acceptance of the contract to speak, “And Jesus answered them,” (v. 4a).

Competence:

In v. 4a the main transformation comes to a standstill. The reason for this is that Jesus as subject operator is incompetent to perform. Starting from v. 4b onward he does not communicate the information according to the contract stated above (vv. 3-4a). Thus, a modality is missing in the area of competence. This raises the question: Which of the three modalities is missing? We note that Jesus' response in v. 4a indicates the presence of the modality of the "desire to act or duty to act" (*vouloir-faire/devoir-faire*) which belongs to the category called the *modalities of virtuality*.⁷³ Moreover, Jesus' knowledge or *know how to act* (*savoir faire*) which belongs to the *modalities of actuality* is not in question in this instance. This leaves us with one modality that is missing, and it is Jesus' lack of the *ability to act* (*pouvoir faire*). More light is shed on this as the text unfolds.

Main Transformation = acquiring knowledge of Jesus' παρουσία:

i.e. interrelation of movements, departure vs. return

Sender & Subj of State = disciples

Subject operator = Jesus

Value object = knowledge of new presence (παρουσία).

Since everything has come to a standstill in v. 4a, the sequence of the main transformation is interrupted. Hence, at this stage there is no performance, and the value object is not attained. Consequently, some NPs or sub-stories must occur in order to discover the missing modality. Only then will the sequence of the main transformation continue.

24:4b-14 Βλέπετε μή τις ὑμᾶς πλανήσῃ:....

καὶ τότε ἤξει τὸ τέλος.

When the text reaches the second level of the tripartite structure, a turning point in the narrative sequence is indicated by several elements. First, we notice a change of the actantial roles which corresponds to the change of thematic roles as indicated in the discursive analysis above. Jesus, who played the role of subject operator in the main transformation, has now as the speaker assumed the new role of the sender, whereas the disciples, now turned hearers, have become

⁷³ For the classification of the various modalities of operation, see GROUPE D'ENTREVERNES, *Analyse*, pp. 34-36.

receivers of the manipulation.

Secondly, in v. 4b some difficulties arise in the area of competence. Instead of responding directly to the question raised in v. 3b-c of the main transformation concerning the time and the sign of the *παρουσία*, the speaker delivers a long speech consisting of sub-stories in the form of NPs and Anti-NPs. Due to Jesus' incompetence to perform, the sub-stories appear at this stage in search of the missing modality which we have already identified as "the ability to act."

How did Jesus become incompetent in the main transformation? As a response, we note that from v. 4b onward the text shows several hindrances which the speaker has to overcome. He is hindered by numerous **opponents** who are manifested in various forms, such as the messianic pretenders (vv. 4b-5, 11), the rumours about violence, social violence and natural disasters (vv. 6-7); there are also the persecutions of the hearers which will take the form of torture, killings and hatred by all the nations (v. 9); then there will be community disorders and lawlessness (vv. 10, 12). The role of these opponents is to launch an anti-narrative program (Anti-NP) in order to disjoin the audience from the true Messiah and salvation. We may designate this Anti-NP as a sequence towards deception or loss of life, i.e. *disjunction from life*.

But, the NP launched by the speaker is aimed at dissuading the listeners from following the propaganda of the messianic pretenders and succumbing to the shocking events of violence and disorder of the eschatological times. On the contrary, the listeners must stay put on the right path in order to be saved. In this instance, a correlation of confrontation⁷⁴ is indicated between two actors: the opponents and the speaker. In contrast to the propaganda which will lure people away from the truth, the speaker launches dissuasive operations at the level of manipulation in order to restrain the listeners from going astray or getting alarmed. They must remain conjoined with the truth about the Messiah and the eschatological woes. Hence, there are exhortations such as "Take heed that no one leads you astray" (v. 4b), "see that you are not alarmed" (v. 6b), "but all this is the beginning of birth-pangs" (v. 8), and "But the one who endures to the end, this one will be saved" (v. 13). Moreover, in other cases the utterances and actions of the opponents are evaluated negatively by the speaker at the level of manipulation, or as a menace to be avoided, e.g., "and they will lead many

⁷⁴ Jean CALLOUD, *Structural Analysis of Narrative* (Translated by Daniel PATTE. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), p. 18.

astray” (vv. 5c, 11), “And you will hear of wars...” (v. 6a), “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you” (v. 9a).

In all these cases, the speaker assumes the role of sender of the manipulation. He seeks to have the audience do or believe (*faire faire, faire croire*). Finally, the narrative sequence will materialize into a performance: “And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world, as a testimony ...” (v. 14a). Here, the speaker makes two evaluations on the level of sanction: first, there is a positive evaluation describing the proclamation of the gospel as becoming a testimony to all the nations; secondly, there is negative evaluation describing how the entire process will end: “and then the end will come” (v. 14b). Hence, we may call this a program towards *conjunction with the truth and life*. Its modal object may be designated as *truth and life*.

This analysis shows a clear correlation between two programs. There is the anti-program of the opponents bringing about the disjunction from truth and life, which we designated as *the deception and loss of life*, and there is the program of the speaker which is a persuasion of the audience to stay on the right path, i.e. *conjunction with life*. Hence, the summary of the sequence is as follows:

Anti-NP = disjunction from truth/life (deception and loss of life)	NP = conjunction with truth/life (remaining in the truth/life)
Anti-sender = opponents	Sender = speaker
Subject operator = many followers & audience	Subject operator = audience
Modal object = lie and death	Modal object = truth and life

Vv. 15-22 Ὅταν οὖν ἴδητε τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως...
κολοβωθήσονται αἱ ἡμέραι ἐκεῖναι.

The last phrase of the previous microtext, “and the end will come” (v. 14b), is a negative evaluation of the end state of the previous narrative program (vv. 4b-14a). However, it is not uncommon in narrativity that the interpretation which appears in the final state of the previous program is communicated as a persuasive operation (manipulation) of the next program.⁷⁵ Likewise, the phrase about “the end” in v. 14b describes the lack of the initial situation at the

⁷⁵ See GROUPE D'ENTREVERNES, *Analyse*, pp. 56-57.

beginning of the new program (vv. 15-22). In this case the lack is the *end of life*. Moreover, the desolating sacrilege is the subject of state whose presence in the holy place is a *threat to life*. Therefore, in this instance the sacrilege plays the same role of opponent as did the messianic pretenders and the calamities of the end-time above. That is, due to the presence of the desolating sacrilege, the holy place has lost its worth. In fact, the sacrilegious presence gives rise to a great tribulation which threatens human life (v. 22). The threat is an Anti-NP towards the *disjunction between people and life*.

However, unlike the case of the temple abandoned by Jesus who then sojourned on the Mount of Olives (we designated that movement as *departure* 24:1-3), here the text discourages abandonment. It prohibits certain movements and recommends certain ways of coping with the impending disaster.

Accordingly, from the first verse emerges the actantial role of the **helper** in the person of Daniel. The presence of the desolating sacrilege in the holy place has already been placed under scrutiny: it has been "... spoken of by the prophet Daniel" (v. 15a). This phrase indicates the world of values belonging to the area of manipulation. According to these values the presence of the desolating sacrilege in the holy place is seen as a menace to life or existence. In this instance, the prophetic authority is used by the speaker as a launching pad towards a NP whose aim is to rescue the audience from the upcoming disaster. Consequently, we find persuasive cognitive operations encouraging the listeners to come to grips with the sacrilege by their mental faculties such as, "When you see..." (v. 15a), "... spoken by the prophet Daniel" (v. 15a), and "let the reader understand" (v. 15b).

Moreover, with the exception of v. 16 which talks about the flight to the mountains, the majority of persuasive operations discourage the listeners from fleeing. Rather, they must face up to the tribulation, "let him who is on the housetop not go down..." (v.17), "and let him who is in the field not turn back ..." (v. 18). However, there is an outburst of anguish, "Woe to those who are pregnant and suckling..." (v. 19), which appears as an interpretative operation presupposing an Anti-NP in which certain actants (those responsible for the care of infants) will surely perish. Nevertheless, even in these desperate circumstances, survival is possible through the intervention of spiritual force. In this regard we note a negation made by the text indicating certain crucial time when escape

should not take place, "Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a sabbath" (v. 20).

Moreover, the insertion of the negative element, which is a cry of distress (v. 19), in the middle of hopeful elements gives character to the speaker's program in this microtext. The cherished hope is not without its dark side. In the midst of many possible ways to deal with the looming disaster (vv. 15-18, 20), there will be occasions when disaster cannot be avoided.

In all these instances, the sequence of the NP does not go further than the cognitive operations on the manipulative level. There is no performance as yet. Nevertheless, the emphasis made by the text through the proposed NP, characterised by repetitions of the negative commands, is very clear: there should be no panic-stricken movements. Hence, we may designate the program as *non disjunction from security*.

In the following literary unit (vv. 21-22), two correlative programs appear and in this case the sequence reaches performance. There is an Anti-NP of the **opponent**, i.e. great tribulation whose prolonged existence will result in the destruction of all human life, "...no human being will be saved" (v. 22a-b). On the contrary, there is another NP consisting of cutting short the time span of the great tribulation. This program is realised by an unspecified actor as a **helper** who will cut short the duration of the great tribulation so that the elect will be saved from disaster (v. 22c). The object acquired in this program may be called *the preservation of life*.

Therefore, there is a correspondence in the three literary units (vv. 15, 16-20 and 21-22). In all these cases there is a threatening presence, i.e. the desolating sacrilege in the holy place and the great tribulation. That is, the two Anti-NPs threaten to disjoin all human beings from life, whereas the NPs are intended for the salvation of a few, even if others will perish. Ultimately, the latter program achieves its goal which is the security of the life of the elect. Therefore, there is a clear opposition between the Anti-NPs which may be called *elimination of all life* and the NPs which may be designated as *preservation of life*.

Anti-NPs = elimination of all life

Sender = desolating sacrilege/ great tribulation

Subject operator = all human beings

NPs = preservation of life

Sender = speaker

S. operator/of state = various actants
(i.e. reader, fugitives, listeners, elect)

Object = life.

Vv. 23-28 τότε εάν τις υμιν ειπη, 'Ιδου ωδε ο Χριστός, ...
 εκεί συναχθήσονται οι αετοί.

It is only at this juncture that the story of the παρουσία of the Son of Man begins in earnest with two correlative programs. This section is characterised by the re-emergence of previous opponents, the false christs and the false prophets. These actants are pictured as locked in a fierce confrontation with the speaker.

On the one hand, persuasive operations are envisioned in which the messianic pretenders play the role of the sender towards an Anti-NP. These operations consist of the propaganda which will induce its audience to move to different directions where the Messiah will be alleged to be, "... 'here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' " (vv. 23, 26). Moreover, in this case, the cognitive persuasive process will be accompanied by demonstrations showing certain values (signs and wonders) as a form of enticement (v. 24). These operations tend towards an anti-program with the capacity to distance or disjoin all people (including the elect v. 24) from the true Messiah. Since this anti-program aims at the movement of peoples in a large scale, it may be designated as *a massive disjunction from the true Messiah*.

On the other hand, there is the NP of the speaker which counteracts the propaganda of the messianic pretenders. This is characterised by dissuasive cognitive operations to prevent misguided movements caused by the false propaganda: "...do not believe it" (vv. 23e, 26e), "... do not go out" (v. 26c). We also note that the false propaganda is presented as a threat to the audience, "to lead astray, if possible, even the elect" (v. 24).

Next, the text jumps from the dissuasive cognitive operation to the recognition on the level of sanction (by the speaker as sender) that the state of the audience has been transformed. Now the listeners know because they have been informed, and are thus conjoined with the object (knowledge of the truth), "I have told you beforehand" (v. 25). In this case the sequence moves from one cognitive operation (dissuasive vv. 23, 26) to another cognitive interpretative operation (v. 25). The jump from one cognitive operation to another is typical of the didactic texts where competence and performance are assumed. That is, the speaker has communicated the object

truth, and as the receiver the audience now shares in that object. This operation involves a participative type of object falling under the category of *spiritual objects*.⁷⁶ In this case, one subject (speaker) shares the object with another subject (audience) without losing it. Hence, we may call this NP, *conjunction with truth*.

Furthermore, there is a combination of the second unit of the fourth microtext (vv. 27-28) with the fifth microtext (vv. 29-31) to describe the initial situation of the new narrative sequence, i.e. the *παρουσία* of the Son of Man. In v. 27 the Son of Man assumes the role of the object to be acquired; and this object is characterised by the values typically associated with the coming Messiah. Thus, the text uses the similitude of lightning as a modalisation⁷⁷ of this particular object whose values are drawn from the manipulation phase. In this case, two contrasting values are associated with the *παρουσία* of the Son of Man. First, we notice positive values intended to entice or strike the receiver with awe and wonder: swiftness, universal outreach and brilliance, “For as lightning comes ...so will be the *παρουσία* of the Son of Man” (v. 27). Secondly, there are negative values which refer to the sombre dimension of the *παρουσία*, and which provoke sadness or regret on the part of the receiver, to convince him to accept the contract: “Wherever the body is, there the vultures will be gathered” (v. 28). On the level of the speech, the modalising subject is the speaker who modifies the relation between the audience (receiver) and the *παρουσία* of the Son of Man (object).

As we shall see below, the phrase about death in v. 28 corresponds to another modalising phrase in the following microtext, “and all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see...” (v. 30b). For the time being it suffices to say that in v. 28 the phrase refers to the hidden anti-values, i.e. the vulnerability and greed which are associated with the *παρουσία* of the Son of Man.

Thus, the modalising phrases at this juncture (24:27-28) articulate the begin state for the following program in the microtext (vv. 29-31; 25:31-46). That is, the program of the Son of Man's *παρουσία* which bears a double sense: the *revelation of the true Messiah* and the *revelation of the wounds*, the conjunction between the audience (subject) and the *παρουσία* of the Son of

⁷⁶ See GROUPE D'ENTREVERNES, *Analyse*, pp. 28-29; VOGELS, *Reading*, pp. 53-54.

⁷⁷ GROUPE D'ENTREVERNES, *Analyse*, pp. 55-56.

Man (object). Thus, the enigmatic παρουσία of the Son of Man is an event with two senses.

A brief presentation of the sequence is as follows:

Anti-NP = massive loss (disjunction from truth)	NP = revelation of true Messiah (conjunction with Messiah).	= revel. of wounds (disjunction from life)
Sender= messianic pretenders	-self manipulation?	-unspecified
S. of state = all human beings	-Coming Son of Man	1st S. of state = Son of Man disjunction from life 2nd S. of state = vultures conjunction with greed -death & life game.
----- Object = true Messiah		

Vv. 29-31 Εὐθέως δὲ μετὰ τὴν θλίψιν τῶν ἡμερῶν ἐκείνων...
ἐκ τῶν τεσσάρων ἀνέμων ἀπ' ἄκρων οὐρανῶν
ἕως [τῶν] ἄκρων αὐτῶν.

At this stage, we bear in mind that the negative evaluation of the end state of the previous program which was described as vulnerability and greed (v. 28) is carried forward to the new program. The demarcating phrase, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days..." (v. 29) implies that the vulnerability and greed are part of the *lack* of the initial situation. Subsequently, the description of the collapse of the cosmic bodies (v. 29) is the extension of that initial lack. Hence, we postulate that the verbs which appear in v. 29 describing darkness and disorder such as "to be darkened," "not to give light," "to fall" and "to be shaken" (v. 29) are not verbs of the transformation, rather they belong to the categories of *having/being* and *doing*. All these verbs contribute to the description of the extended initial situation. Therefore, the narrative program of the παρουσία of the Son of Man aims at filling up this lack.

Furthermore, there is a verb of operation "to appear" with reference to the sign of the Son of Man (v.30a), and in the reaction of mourning and seeing the Son of Man by all the tribes of the earth. In this case too, the verb "to appear" (v. 30a) does not indicate the transformation in the program of the παρουσία of the Son of Man. It does however describe part of the events which will occur in the initial situation before the text actually starts to move. Hence, the sign is the sender of the

manipulation, the Son of Man is the object while all the tribes of the earth are the receiver. The mourning and seeing are the modalisation of the relation between all tribes of the earth (subject) and the sign of the Son of Man⁷⁸ (object). The quality of this relation is indicated in terms which convey a sense of sadness, regret and awe on the part of the receiver: "...[they] will mourn and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (v. 30b).

Interestingly, the object of mourning is not specified, whereas the object of sight is clearly indicated as the Son of Man's "...coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (v. 30b). Nevertheless, we can state with certainty that there is a parallel between the notion of death associated with the παρουσία of the Son of Man (v. 28) and the reaction of mourning provoked by the sign of the Son of Man (v. 30). So even at this stage, the modalisation is in fact an evaluation of the object (the Son of Man) as something worth seeing or acquiring on the level of manipulation.

However, the narrative sequence about the sign of the coming Son of Man which began in v. 29 suddenly comes to a standstill in v. 31b. Instead of continuing with the program concerning the coming (παρουσία) of the Son of Man, the text describes his new actantial role as sender and the angels as subject operator, while the elect who are to be gathered are the object (v. 31). The problem of competence on the part of the Son of Man is recurring at this stage. The question is: Which modality is missing which renders the Son of Man incompetent to perform?

Several elements present themselves here as a clue to this question. First, vv. 28 and 31 speak of the gatherings of smaller groups for different reasons. That is, in both instances we are dealing with selective gatherings of the vultures (v. 28b) or the elect (v. 31b). The action of gathering only occurs in half measures. Yet, in the following pericope which is a sub-story (vv. 32-35), the text insists that all the necessary elements must take place as a prerequisite for the coming of the Son of Man: "when you see all these things, you know that he is near..." (v. 33b-c), and "...this generation will no pass away until all these things have taken place" (v. 34).

Consequently, vv. 29-31 present an incomplete sequence towards the παρουσία, precisely because not all the necessary elements have been acquired yet. Thus, the problem of the half measures is well tackled in the narrative programs which come next under the parable section

⁷⁸ At this juncture the text does not tell us explicitly what the sign is, but describes the feelings it provokes on those who see it.

(third level). In this regard, the parables provide a wide range of examples from life experience indicating how the παρουσία of the Son of Man will take place. Certainly, it is these stories which will ultimately knit together a complete portrait of the coming Son of Man as the hero (subject operator) who will judge all the nations (25:31-46). That is, only in the scene of judgement will the authority of the Son of Man as the Messiah be fully established. He will then be competent to perform. Therefore, at this moment (24:30-31) the Son of Man lacks *the ability to act*.

At this point our hypothesis is confirmed that the 2nd level of the narrative sequence is interrupted prematurely in v. 31 due to a lack of the modality of “the power or ability to act” on the part of the Son of Man. Subsequently, a series of new sub-stories in the form of parables occur (24:32--25:30). Their aim is to discover the missing modality.

Thus, verbs of initial situation are:

“sign is appearing” (v.30a)	-NP = conjunction with Son of Man
“to mourn, to see” (v.30b)	(interrupted sequence, v.31)
“to gather elect with a loud trumpet” (v.31).	Sender = auto-manipulation
	S. operator. = Son of Man
	Competence= lack of ability to act

Vv. 32-35 Ἄπο δὲ τῆς συκῆς μάθετε τὴν παραβολήν· ...
οἱ δὲ λόγοι μου οὐ μὴ παρέλθωσιν.

After the NP of the παρουσία has come to a standstill, the exhortation to learn reminds us that we are dealing with the communication (speech) which is currently going on between the speaker (sender of the manipulation) and the audience (receiver of the manipulation), “...from the fig tree learn a parable” (v. 32a, see also the parallel in v. 25).

The narrative sequence is introduced by verbs of the type *to do* belonging to the initial situation: “...its branch becomes tender” and “the leaves sprout” (v. 32b). There are also verbs of the type *to be* indicating the proximity of summer and the One to come as the subjects of state: such as, “...then summer is near,” “...you know that he is near, at the very gates” (vv. 32b, 33). All these verbs describe the begin state. The lack which must be fulfilled in this instance is the absence

of the One to come. Just as the budding fig tree indicates the imminence of summer, similarly when the listeners see “all these things...” (v. 33) it will be a sign of the proximity of the One to come.

The following verses (34-35) indicate a persuasive operation in which the speaker uses a solemn declaration as a manipulative device. By projecting his authority in the first person, he implies that he is to be relied upon. That is, we can rest assured that all the signs indicating the imminence of the One to come will occur soon because he has said so, “Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things happen” (v. 34). Moreover, there is an evaluation on the level of sanction verifying that what has been communicated is valid. That is, in contrast to the material things which come and go, the speaker’s words have an enduring quality: “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away” (v. 35). Thus, the performance due to this particular program is also predicted to take place in the near future. For the time being there is no transformation of states.

Consequently, both literary units (vv. 32-33 and 34-35) reiterate our statement concerning the missing modality in v. 31, viz., that there is a lack of completeness in the things necessary for the coming of the Son of Man. Then, through the power of the speaker’s words in vv. 34-35, there is a guarantee beyond any doubt that a full transformation of states of the speaker will certainly take place, and this truth is valid for all time. We may designate this program, the *tension of παρουσία*, i.e. *the imminent but not yet*.

NP = tension of παρουσία, imminent but not yet

Sender = speaker

S. operator = listeners

Object = truthful words

Hence, it is the enduring power of communication (the speaker’s words) which restores the modality of “the ability to act” which was missing in the previous program (vv. 30-31). The Son of Man lacked the ability to perform as the Messiah of the whole world, except for minor programs with limited results, such as the gathering of the vultures (v. 28) and the gathering of the elect (v. 31).

However, we note that vv. 32-35 constitute only one step in the long process of rediscovering the missing modality. There is also the case of the listeners who, as receivers of the

manipulation, must acquire the modalities necessary to render them competent to act. Thus, the following parable stories play their part in this process by focusing on the modality “the duty to act” in relation to the listeners.

Vv. 36-44 Περὶ δὲ τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης καὶ ὥρας οὐδεὶς οἶδεν,
... ὅτι ἢ οὐ δοκεῖτε ὥρα ὃ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἔρχεται.

This microtext shows a *general lack* of knowledge of the exact time of the Son of Man's coming: “But concerning that day and hour no one knows” (v. 36). Such knowledge is the prerogative of the Father. Thus, v. 36 gives the setting for the following section on the parables (24:37-25:30).

It becomes clear that the lack of knowledge goes hand in hand with the necessity to keep constant vigil. In this section two modalities are missing and must be acquired so that the performance may take place, i.e. “the know-how to act” and “the duty or obligation to act.” Consequently, the speaker uses the lack of knowledge as a persuasive device on the level of manipulation, i.e. it is a threat or menace to urge the hearers to be constantly vigilant.

To convey this message, the text presents two correlative programs. There is the Anti-NP which results in the transformation of states for Noah's contemporaries: they were destroyed by the flood or disjoined from life. Then, on the level of sanction, the text interprets the tragedy by stating that Noah's contemporaries busied themselves with self-indulgence right up to the day when Noah entered the ark (v.38): “and they did not know...” (v. 39a). This program may thus be designated as *disjunction from life*. In contrast there is the NP of Noah's survival. Unlike his contemporaries, Noah took the necessary precautions and entered the ark at the right time to ensure his safety. Thus, Noah's state was also changed but in a different way: he was *conjoined with life*.

The following story (vv. 40-41) shows two sets of correlative programs which serve as an example of how the παρουσία of the Son of Man will take place. In one case, two men, as subjects of state, are working in the field, and their states are transformed in different ways: one is disjoined from life while the other is conjoined with life. In the second case two women grinding at

the mill undergo the same fate. In these two cases no detailed explanation is given regarding the various phases of the transformations or the subject operator, i.e. such phases are presupposed. However, the transformation of states is clearly stated as *conjunction with life* and *disjunction from life*.

The subsequent story is much more explicit in determining the modality on the area of competence. A conditional clause implies an initial lack of knowledge: "if the householder had known..." (v. 43). In this case, ignorance resulted in the negligence of duty on the part of the householder, i.e. to keep a constant watch. The negligence resulted in his house being broken into by the thief. The speaker uses the householder's tragic experience as a persuasive device on the level of manipulation. The lack of knowledge is used as an incentive for the hearers to keep a constant vigilance: "Watch therefore, for you do not know..." (v. 42), "...you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (v. 44).

Obviously, in the three parables above, it is not merely the *know how to act* which the receiver of the manipulation (audience) must acquire in order to be competent to perform. There is also the sense of *obligation* in the execution of their task: they must remain vigilant and ready at all times for the $\pi\alpha\rho\rho\upsilon\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$ of the Son of Man. The narrative sequence in this case does not go further than the manipulation phase where the *lack of knowledge becomes a motivation for constant vigilance*.

Moreover, as we shall see, the narrative sequences of the three parables (24:45-51; 25:1-13, and vv. 14-30) show the same goal as the preceding parables (of the fig tree and Noah). Although each parable has its own particular element which helps to render the listeners competent, all of the parables deal with the same modality, the duty or obligation to act (24:42, 44; 25:13).

When briefly stated the sequence is as follows:

-Anti- NP	-NP	Anti-NP	NP
disjunction from life	conjunction with life	disj. fr. security	ignorance as motivation
Sender = flood	-----	thief	speaker
Subj oper. = Noah's contemporaries	Noah	householder	listeners
Object = death	life	damaged house	coming Messiah.

Vv. 45-51 Τίς ἄρα ἐστὶν ὁ πιστὸς δούλος καὶ φρόνιμος ...
ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων.

This microtext shows two correlative narrative programs. In the first NP the initial situation is indicated by the verb of the type *to be* or *to have* which appears in the rhetorical question where the slave is described as someone who has faithfulness and wisdom (v. 45). The master proposes a contract to this slave, and the terms of the contract are clearly spelled out: "... to give them (the master's household) their food at the proper time" (v. 45). The text does not tell us whether he accepts the contract or is competent to act. Instead, more attention is given to the sanction indicating the continual execution of duty by the slave. It is in this phase of sanction that the values and rewards for diligence are expressed. We learn that the master has been absent for a considerable period of time and his return unpredictable: "Blessed is that slave whom his master when he comes will find so doing" (v. 46). There is also a retribution on the pragmatic level, "...he (master) will place him over all his possessions" (v. 47). This program which is a continual execution of duty irrespective of the master's absence may be designated as the *conjunction with full life*.

Thus, we notice a change in the state of the slave, from the natural qualities of faithfulness and wisdom at the beginning, to the new state of blessedness or good fortune which he acquires, and also from a partial to a full responsibility. Moreover, the slave who was initially described as faithful and wise is endowed at the end state with more qualities: he is also "blessed" (v. 46). Hence, this slave is conjoined with the object, i.e. *blessedness* or *fullness of life*.

Secondly, there is the Anti-NP of the wicked slave. The description "wicked slave" (v. 48a) indicates a negative begin state of this program. Interestingly, the text gives us a typical case of automanipulation. The slave mandates himself towards a program of misdemeanour; he says to himself " 'My master is delayed' " (v. 48b). Then, he begins to beat his fellow slaves, to eat and drink with the drunken (v. 49). This performance brings about a sanction in two dimensions. On the cognitive level, the master arrives on a day the slave does not expect and at the hour he does not know (v. 50). Then, on the pragmatic level, a retribution follows: the master executes the slave and casts his remains outside with the hypocrites (v. 51a). The state of the slave is transformed. He is

disjoined from the life of his master, and at the same time he is conjoined with a life of pain, “where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth” (v. 51b). Therefore, the anti-program of the wicked slave is a deterioration to slothfulness, i.e. *a disjunction from life*.

NP = conjunction with full life
(continual diligence)

Sender = master

S. operator = faithful and wise slave

Object = fullness life

Anti-NP = disjunction from life

(deterioration into slothfulness)

automanipulation

wicked slave

shattered life

25:1-13 Τότε ὁμοιωθήσεται ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν
δέκα παρθένοις, ... ὅτι οὐκ οἶδατε τὴν ἡμέραν
οὐδὲ τὴν ὥραν.

In the sub-story of the ten virgins, we observe that the begin state is characterised by a separation (disjunction) of two subjects, the ten virgins and the bridegroom. Consequently, the purpose of this NP is to transform this state by conjoining the ten virgins with the bridegroom as it is stated: “...they went out to meet the bridegroom” (v. 1b).

Certain verbs describe the initial situation. Some verbs belong to the category *to be* and *to have*, “shall be like,” “five were foolish “ and “five were wise” (v.2). Other verbs are classifiable under the category *to do*: “they did not take...,” “they took...” (vv. 3-4), “to delay...,” “to feel drowsy” and “to sleep” (v. 5).

The text begins to move at midnight, when the new actant implied in the shout assumes the role of sender: “ ‘Behold the bridegroom! ...’ ” (v. 6), and he proposes a contract to the virgins: “Come out and meet him” (v. 6). The virgins’ immediate reaction, “waking up” and “trimming their lamps” (v. 7), shows their acceptance of this contract. Now the question is: are they competent to perform?

It is at this moment that the five foolish virgins discover that they are incompetent and inform their counterparts: “ ‘...our lamps are going out’ ” (v. 8c). They desire to act, and also know how to act, but they lack the oil to keep their lamps burning (v. 3). It is this fact which points out the missing

modality of the ability to act. Consequently, the first program (to meet the bridegroom) which we shall designate as NP1, comes to a standstill in v. 7. Then, from v. 8 NP2 is initiated by the foolish virgins who beg the wise virgins to share their oil with them, "Give us some of your oil," (v. 8b). This program, however, fails to get off the ground, because the wise virgins refuse the contract of transferring oil to the foolish virgins. If they shared their oil, this would amount to losing it. Moreover, the suggestion to share the oil raises a strong possibility that neither of the two groups will have enough to be competent to perform: "Perhaps there will not be enough for us and for you" (v. 9b). Thus, they reject the contract, and in that way they wisely maintain their competence to meet the bridegroom.

Having refused to be manipulated towards NP2, the wise virgins now assume the role of sender and persuade their foolish counterparts toward NP3 which entails an exchange between two different objects of equal value, the exchange between oil and money: "go rather to the dealers and buy yourself some" (v. 9c). This manipulation is successful, for the foolish virgins perform the proposed program: "And while they went to buy..." (v. 10a).

Having maintained their competence, the wise virgins perform NP1 which was stopped in v. 7 and is resumed in v. 10: "and those who were ready went in with him (bridegroom) to the marriage feast..." (v. 10b). This performance is evaluated in the expression "marriage feast" (v. 10b) which describes the value of the person to be encountered. Moreover, the next phrase, "...and the door was closed" (v. 10b), is a recognition that the two subjects have been conjoined, and that the feast is exclusive to them. Thus, a change in the state of the two subjects is noticeable: initially the wise virgins and the bridegroom were apart (vv. 1, 6), now they are together or conjoined (v. 10b). We may call the object of this narrative sequence as the *wedding feast with the bridegroom* (v. 10b).

However, NP 3 is not over since the foolish virgins return later. Just then, when they have discovered the modality which was missing, the oil, another hindrance occurs. The door is closed. Hence, another modality is missing, the *ability to enter*. Thus, a new program (NP 4) becomes necessary to overcome this new hurdle. Accordingly, a persuasive operation is made by these virgins as sender: "Lord, lord, open to us" (v. 11). But the subject operator evaluates negatively the proposed contract on the ground that the virgins do not belong to the wedding party: "Truly, I say to you I do not know you," (v. 12). We note that the solemn declaration is a negative evaluation of the

contract, that is, the pleading voice may sound genuine, but in reality the foolish virgins are not party to the feast. What appears, and is not, is a lie. In this manner, the last program of the foolish virgins also fails, and their state is not transformed, they remain disjoined from both the bridegroom and the feast.

The narrative sequence in this section may be summarised thus:

NP1 = conj. with the bridegroom (interrupted) NP2 = to share oil of wise virgins (unsuccessful) NP3 = to go out, buy own oil

Sender = midnight herald	5 foolish virgins	5 wise virgins
S. operator = ten virgins	5 wise virgins	5 foolish virgins
Object = wedding feast	—————	acquired own oil

NP4 = conj. of foolish with bridegroom
(unsuccessful)

Sender = foolish virgins
subject operator = lord or gate-usher
Object = remains disjoined from bridegroom and feast

At the end of the parable, there resurfaces the speaker's persuasive operation on the level of the main transformation, "Watch therefore, ..." (v. 13). This is a manipulation of the listeners towards a NP of the παρουσία of the Son of Man based on the modality of the duty to act, i.e. to be wise and vigilant while waiting for his coming.

**Vv. 14-30 Ὡσπερ γὰρ ἄνθρωπος ἀποδημῶν ἐκάλεσεν
τοὺς ἰδίους δούλους ... ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς
καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων.**

The final sub-story is characterised by a large section of sanction (vv. 19-30), so that the preceding phases of manipulation, competence and performance occupy a smaller part of the microtext (vv. 14-18). The initial situation depicts the man and the slaves with different abilities (v. 15d). The lack is that up to this point none of the three slaves had ever traded with talents in order to

produce interest. Therefore, the following phrases indicate the proposal of the contract with clearly defined goals, “he called his own slaves...” (v. 14) and “he entrusted his property... to each according to his ability” (v. 15). That is, the slaves are expected to work (trading) to the best of their abilities. The first two slaves proved themselves to be competent, because they performed and produced the desired interest. But the third slave was incompetent to perform according to the proposed contract: he performed in a different program, burying the talent in the ground. The text does not tell who the sender was. It may have been an automanipulation. Nevertheless, our question is: Which modality was missing in the third instance?

It is in the area of sanction that the response to this question is gradually unfolding. The temporal phrase “Now after a long time the master of those slaves came...” (v. 19) is a recognition that the long duration of the master’s absence allowed enough time to work on the talents and produce interest. The first two slaves, who had been given five and two talents respectively, recognise that their states have been transformed: the few talents that had been given to them have doubled (vv. 20b-d, 22c-d). For his part the master evaluates positively the veridiction of the transformed states, “ ‘Well done, good and faithful slave...’ ” (vv. 21b-c, 23b-c). In terms of the veridiction square what appears is what is, and it is true. Finally, reward is promised to the diligent slaves for having performed according to the initial contract, “ ‘you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much’ ” (vv. 21d-e, 23d-e). In this case we see how the sanction becomes a manipulation towards a future NP: thus, “ ‘...enter into the joy of your master’ ” (vv. 21-22). The new program proposed is a relation of conjunction between the two subjects, the slave and the master; and the modification of joy⁷⁹ indicates the value acquired in that encounter. We may call this NP a *conjunction with joy (object)*.

But the sanction of the performance of the slave who had been given one talent takes a different turn. In this case we are dealing with an Anti-NP in which the slave recognises that his original state (lack of interest) has not changed. Digging into the ground and hiding the talent (vv. 18, 25), he has not performed according to the proposed contract. Therefore, the first program did not go any further than the phase of competence. Concerning the modality that is missing in this

⁷⁹ The acquisition of “joy” (v.21f) reiterates the entry into the bridegroom’s marriage feast in the case of the five wise virgins (v.10b), in both cases the new state is characterised by a joyful atmosphere.

case, we note several factors. First, the slave admits that he knew what he was expected to do, “ ‘Master I knew you to be a hard man...’ ” (v. 24b-d). Secondly, the text confirms that he had ability to dig, “...(he) went and dug in the ground and hid his master’s money” (v. 18). The altercation between him and his master (vv. 24b-27) indicates that he was paralysed by fear, “ ‘so I was afraid’ ” (v. 25a). However, the slave’s comment as he returned the talent manifested his dislike of the system, “ ‘Here you have what is yours’ ” (v. 25b). He lacked *the desire to act* (*vouloir faire*). The master pointed out the alternative, that if the third slave had not wanted to perform the initial contract, he ought to have done it as an obligation, “ ‘You knew that I reap where I have not sowed, ...? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers...’ ” (vv.26-27). For the program of hiding the talent, the slave has manipulated himself.

Consequently, the slave who had only one talent lacked the modality of the duty to act (*devoir faire*), and this is at the core of his incompetence. There is no transformation for this slave, he remains disjoined from the object, that is, the interest. Furthermore, there is an evaluation on the cognitive level where the slave is branded as a “wicked and slothful slave” (v. 26b-c) by his master. Moreover, there is a retribution on the pragmatic level, “ ‘So, take the talent from him and give it to one with ten talents, ... And cast the worthless slave into outer darkness’ ” (vv. 29-30).

The retribution is also a manipulation towards the following two correlative programs which lead to two extreme positions. The beleaguered slave is stripped of the only talent he ever had, and he is cast out into a place of great pain. Thus, he remains *disjoined not only from the interest but also from the joyful state with the master*. We may call this program the *deprivation and exclusion*. On the other hand, the slave who had already accumulated ten talents is given the extra talent so that his state is transformed into that of the richest of the three slaves.⁸⁰ Hence, the latter program is the reward of *abundance* .

Hence, the narrative sequence in brief is:

NPs = conjunction with joy	Anti-NP = disjunction from joy	NP = abundance
	(deprivation and exclusion)	
Sender = master	master	master
S. operator =slaves with 5 and 2 talents	attendant	attendant

⁸⁰ The sharp contrast between the first and third slave is well articulated above in the discursive analysis.

S. of state = _____
 Object = joyful unity

slave with 1 talent
 separation

slave with 10 talents
 abundant riches

Summary

At this juncture between 25:30 and v. 31, the modality of *the duty to act* which was missing on the part of the receivers of the manipulation (the audience) has been recovered through the parable stories (24:32--25:30). Certain speech devices are prevalent in the parable section, indicating the speaker's persuasive cognitive operations: the exhortations (24:32, 33b, 42, 44; 25:13), and the solemn declarations of 24:34, 47, and 25:12. Apart from their appearance in the parables, these forms of speech recur elsewhere in the broader picture of the whole text for the same purpose.

Moreover, the modality of *the power to act* which was missing on the part of the Son of Man as the expected Messiah of all the nations (vv. 28, 30-31) has been discovered in the course of these parable stories. It is particularly through the actantial roles of sending, reckoning, arbitrating, rewarding or punishing that the Son of Man's role in its rich diversity⁸¹ is anticipated and articulated. In other words, the modality of the ability to act, which was lacking at the interruption of the second level (24:31), has now been recovered. Therefore, the narrative program of the παρουσία of the Son of Man, halted in 24:31 due to the lack of this particular modality, is resumed in the following microtext (25:31-46) where the story of the Son of Man's coming is fully realised. In the role of Son of Man, of Shepherd and of King, he will judge all the nations.

Vv. 31-46 Ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ...
 οἱ δὲ δίκαιοι εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον.

Confirming that this microtext is a continuation of the narrative sequence begun in 24:29 and halted in v. 31, we notice the same actants: the Son of Man, the angels and the nations (tribes 24:30) appear as subjects of state. Furthermore, the development of the narrative sequence from

⁸¹ This actantial role will be more fully articulated in the figure of the Son of Man-Shepherd-King in the following microtext on the judgment scene (25:31-46).

one segment (vv. 29-31) to the other (25:31-46) is obvious. In the latter segment, the Son of Man's incompetence to perform has been rectified, now that the missing modality has been discovered. By judging all the nations (vv. 34-45), the Son of Man assumes the role of sender: he plays his role as the Messiah of all the nations.

At the outset of the narrative sequence, we notice the elements of the begin state. First, we discover typical verbs of *having/being* expressed in the following idioms: "...all his angels (are) with him" (v. 31a), "then he will sit on his throne of glory" (v. 31b), and "all nations will be gathered before him" (v. 32a). Secondly, there are verbs of *doing*: "and he will separate them one from another..." (v. 32b), "and he will place the sheep at his right hand, ..." (v. 33).

None of the operations indicated in the first three verses (25:31-33) describe the narrative sequence yet. They rather articulate the extension of the initial situation: how things will be before the actual judgment takes place. We notice here two distinct groups of nations, some are placed at the right and others are at the left of the Son of Man. These three actants appear as subjects of state who stand in the same arena, poised for the great judgment to take place.

The narrative sequence starts to move with v. 34 where the Son of Man assumes his new role as the King (sender) who invites those at his right hand to be the receivers of manipulation: " 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom...' " (v. 34). The invitation is a typical persuasive operation with the complimentary and enticing features proper to it, i.e. all positive values are attributed to this group at the right hand. First, the king qualifies them as "the blessed" of his Father. Secondly, the object to be acquired is described as valuable and worthwhile: it is "the kingdom" which has been "...prepared for you since the foundation of the world" (v. 34c). Furthermore, as part of the manipulation, those at the right hand (subject operator) are described as capable of performing since they have done well in the past: " 'I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me,' " etc. (vv. 35-36). However, the values described in vv. 35-40 refer to the programs of the past which the group at the right hand have performed. These values are used in this instance to entice or flatter this particular group to accept the contract for the new program on the level of manipulation.

Subsequently, it is interesting to note typical folk-tale elements in which the Son of Man-King is portrayed as the *hero* whose setbacks of the past (hunger, thirst, being a stranger,

nakedness, being sick or in prison) are recounted as traces or marks of the heroic struggles against all odds of life, in the same way that narratives would describe the wounds or hurts sustained by the hero during heroic battles⁸² against his enemies. In this regard, those at the right hand played the role of *helpers* who enabled the King's state to be transformed, or conjoined with life.

While continuing with the manipulative aspect of the text, we note that before accepting the contract, those on the right hand (subject operator) verify the value that is associated with them, concerning the inheritance of the kingdom, in order to ascertain whether they are worthwhile or not.

- "When did we see you hungry and gave you food or thirsty and gave you drink?
- When did we see you a stranger and welcomed you or naked and clothed you?" etc., (vv. 37-39).

In this section we see an extended manipulation phase. In this regard the question is: Do the least whom they helped correspond to the person of the King himself? In his response the King confirms his utterances by using the solemn declaration that the values he referred to are true and valid: "Truly I say to you, as you did it to the least of these my brothers you did it to me" (v. 40). The least of the brothers may have appeared insignificant (manifestation), but in reality they represented the Lord himself (immanence). According to the rule of the veridiction square, what is and is not appearing is a SECRET. While these elements correspond to the sanction of the past programs, it is being used in this instance as a manipulation towards a new program which we may designate as the *inheritance of new life*. But, this program is not realized straight away; it will take place at the very end (v. 46b).

In the following unit (vv. 41-45) we deal with a NP in relation to the preceding program. In a persuasive operation the King dismisses those at his left hand: "Depart from me, you cursed, into eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (v. 41b). This is a manipulation towards a correlative program in which those on the left hand are disjoined from the King's company. At the same time, they are conjoined with the devil and his angels (v. 41b). The description of "eternal fire" refers to the object which may be described as perpetual damnation with its associated anti-values such as *isolation and pain*.

⁸² GIROUD, *Sémiotique*, p. 22.

From the world of values in the phase of manipulation, the sender is able to distinguish between what is valuable and is not. For example: “not to give food” to someone hungry, “not to give drink” to someone thirsty, “not to welcome a stranger” etc. (vv. 42-43), are considered in a negative light as a negligence of the obligation towards the least. It is worth remarking that, by recalling the heroic wounds of the past in this instance, the text reiterates vv. 35-36 as an indication that those wounds have become indelible marks.

Moreover, if those on the left were incompetent to perform in the past because they lacked the modality of “the duty to act,” they are now considered incapable of performing on the program of inheriting the kingdom. Therefore, as punishment, they are persuaded to perform in a correlative program: to go into eternal fire which is a place for the devil and his angels (v. 41b). We designate this program as the *dismissal to eternal damnation*.

Accordingly, the microtext concludes with two performances of the two subject operators: those at the left “...will go to eternal punishment,” while the righteous “...will go to eternal life” (v. 46). However, the expressions, “eternal punishment” and “eternal life” (v. 46) are a recognition that the states of the two groups are transformed. Those at the left hand will be disjoined from life, and we call this program *damnation*, whereas the righteous will be conjoined with the object *fullness of life*.

The results of the two sequences may be summarised thus:

NP = inheritance of new life	Anti-NP = dismissal to eternal damnation
Sender = King	= King
Subj. operator = those at the right hand	= those at the left
Object = fullness of life	= damnation

26:1-2 Καὶ ἐγένετο ὅτε ἐτέλεσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ...

ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου παραδίδοται εἰς τὸ σταυρωθῆναι.

Performance

It is at this stage that the text reaches the performance of the main transformation which was halted in 24:4a during the phase of competence, due to the missing modality which was identified as *the ability to act*. In this microtext, the first verse (26:1a) indicates that all the sub-stories narrated in the speech since 24:4b up to 25:46 have rendered Jesus (subject operator) competent to perform,⁸³ because he has acquired the missing modality, the ability to tell the disciples about the time and the sign of his παρουσία and the end-time (24:3). Accordingly, in conformity with the initial contract (24:3-4a) Jesus performs when he communicates to his disciples the precise date and the exact sign of his παρουσία, “ ‘...after two days the Passover feast will come, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified’ ” (v. 2).

The disciples' question in 24:3 is divisible into two parts. We can indicate the correspondence between the disciples' question and Jesus' answer thus: the first part of the question about time “ ‘when will these things be...?’ ” (v. 3c) is answered in Jesus' response that after two days the Passover will take place (26:2a), and the second part about the sign: “ ‘and what will be the sign of your παρουσία and the fulfillment of the age?’ ” (24:3c) finds its answer in Jesus' utterance that the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified (26:2b). Thus, the passion and cross constitute the sign of the Son of Man's παρουσία and the end of the age.

⁸³ At this point, Jesus is also competent to undergo the passion as a transformation of his state which will take place in the next NP (i.e. the passion-resurrection story which is not part of our text).

END STATE

Sanction

It is noted in 26:1a that Jesus, the sender of the manipulation, has spoken all the words belonging to the sub-stories, i.e. the NPs and Anti-NPs (24:4b-25:46) which were intended as means to recover the missing modality, "When Jesus had finished all these words" (v. 1a). That is, in this text Jesus plays two actantial roles. First, as subject operator, he had been incompetent to perform the main transformation, because of the missing modality, *the ability to act*, caused by the intervention of opponents who disseminate falsehood regarding the Messiah. Secondly, as sender, Jesus delivered a long speech consisting of dissuasive operations in which the listeners must disassociate themselves from the lies of the messianic pretenders, and accept the contract to be conjoined with the true Messiah. So, these narrative sequences (sub-stories) have fully empowered Jesus as the Son of Man-King who will judge all the nations at the end of time (24:27-31; 25:31-46).

Now in 26:1a, the missing modality has been recovered and Jesus has become competent. Accordingly, as sender he recognizes that the initial state of the disciples has changed, " 'You know that...' " (v. 2a). Furthermore, he communicates to the disciples a more complete information about what is going to take place soon, i.e. the concurrence of the Passover feast with the crucifixion of the Son of Man (26:2). Thus, the disciples have become conjoined with the value object, the *full knowledge* of the eschatological events.

Moreover, Jesus' act of communicating the whole information to the disciples regarding the Passover-Crucifixion event is his performance (a cognitive operation) of the main transformation. In this way he communicates the *value object* which is the time and the sign of Jesus' *παρουσία* and the end of the age according to the initial contract (24:3b-c), "...after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified' " (26:2). Thus, he who is alive now and in the company of his disciples, will be executed after two days, i.e. he will be *disjoined from his physical life and from the disciples*:

Nevertheless, there is something of him which will not perish. By linking the Son of Man's

crucifixion with the Passover feast, the event of the Passover-Crucifixion taking place after two days will constitute a turning point in the life of the worshipping Christian community. Henceforth, it will be commemorated continually by Christians as the *παρουσία* event.⁸⁴

It is in this context that the crucifixion is a sign of Jesus' *παρουσία* (v. 2b). That is, the story of the Passover-Crucifixion event impresses an indelible value just like the marks or the wounds of the hero in a typical folk-tale mould (See parallels in 24:9a, 28, 30b above). That is, while Jesus dies on the cross, his memory as the lamb of sacrifice will forever remain engraved in the minds of the worshipping community as the story of his *παρουσία* (his new presence), which will be relived in the liturgy and be retold from generation to generation. In this manner, the speaker's utterances are vindicated: "this generation will not pass away until all these things happen" (24:34), "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (v. 35). Finally, although the new presence of the Son of Man as symbolised by the Passover-Crucifixion is not self-evident, it is nevertheless real.

The résumé of the narrative sequence of the main transformation may be presented thus:

BEGIN STATE 24:1-4a

- Main transformation = *departure/ absence*
(disjoined from temple 24:1)
- Subjs. of state = Jesus and disciples
- Initial lack = *lack of knowledge*
- Manipulation = disciples' request (v.3b-c)
- Competence = ability to act missing,
(interruption after v. 4a)
(Long speech 24:4b-25:46)

END STATE 26:1-2

- M. transf. (cont.) = *new presence*:
(conjoined w. word, liturgy)
- Comp. = ability to act acquired (26:1)
- Performance = all words spoken (26:1),
whole information given (v. 2)
- Value object = *full knowledge*

⁸⁴ The association of the christian Easter with the Jewish Passover (Ex 12) brought in the idea of Christ as the *paschal lamb* of sacrifice (1Cor 5:7). See JEREMIAS, "πάσχα," pp. 900-904, footnote 66.

C. ASSESSMENT: ACTANTIAL ROLES IN THE NARRATIVE SEQUENCES

In this narrative analysis we have observed a particular organisation of the elements of this text (Matt 24:1--26:2). Various actants and their actantial roles have surfaced: the subject of state, the sender of manipulation, the subject operator or the receiver of the manipulation, the value object and the modal objects. The time has now come to determine the narrative model of this particular text. That is, using the tools of the narrative grammar, our aim is to establish how the disparate narrative elements in this text hold together in such a way that all of them can be regarded as constituent elements of a homogeneous text.

FIRST LEVEL: (24:1-4a; 26:1-2)

MAIN TRANSFORMATION

Actants:

Jesus/Son of Man,

Disciples,

Actantial Roles:

Subject of state & Subject operator

Subject of state

- Begin state: -Jesus' physical absence from temple
 -Disciples' lack of knowledge
- Manipulation: -Request to tell time and sign of παρουσία (24:3b-c)
- Competence: -no *ability to act* (v. 4a)
 main transformation is interrupted
 -ability acquired after long speech (26:1a)
 and main transformation is resumed (v. 1b)
- Performance: -Jesus tells the time and the sign (v. 2)
- End state: -Jesus' new presence in word & liturgy, i.e. passover & crucifixion (26:2)
- Sanction: -Now the disciples know (v. 2a)
 Son of Man's new or spiritual presence (v. 2).

Jesus' disjunction from temple to his conjunction with new/spiritual life

In the first level we have discovered the main transformation which is characterised by Jesus who plays the role of the *subject of state*. In this role Jesus is depicted as going out of the temple

against which he declares an imminent doom, and then he sojourns on the Mount of Olives (24:1-3a). Thus, he is physically absent or disjoined from the temple. On the Mount of Olives Jesus is challenged by the persuasion of the disciples to assume the role of *subject operator*, “ ‘Tell us, when will these things be and what will be the sign of your παρουσία and the fulfillment of the age?’ ” (v. 3b-c). This question articulates the disciples’ expectation of Jesus: that he will be present in the temple again. In this case, the knowledge of Jesus’ presence is viewed as the value object of the main transformation. Jesus accepts the contract; and yet he does not perform. The main transformation stops in v. 4a, because something is missing in the area of competence. Jesus lacks the modality which we have identified as the *ability to act*, i.e. to tell about the sign of his παρουσία and the end-time.

However, after a long speech (24:4b-25:46) consisting of sub-stories or NPs and Anti-NPs whose aim is to recover the missing modality, the main transformation is resumed, now that the missing modality has been discovered and Jesus has become competent to act (26:1a): he reminds the disciples that after two days the Passover feast will take place (v. 2a), and he tells them that the crucifixion of the Son of Man will take place at the same time (v. 2b). Moreover, we have noticed that the state of the disciples has been transformed, i.e. now they know: “ ‘You know that after two days...’ ” (v. 2a). Similarly, Jesus first appearing as subject of state sitting on the Mount of Olives (24:3), is now designated as “the Son of Man” who will be crucified on the feast of the Passover (26:2). His state has been transformed. As subject operator whose task is to tell the disciples about the time and sign of his παρουσία and the end-time (24:3b-c, 4a), Jesus becomes competent and he performs in 26:2.

Our argument is that the crucifixion in the context of the Passover (πάσχα) is the sign of Jesus’ new presence or his παρουσία. Hence, although the Son of Man’s body will be crucified, he will be present in a new way through the power of the word, as indicated in the key areas of the speech, such as the universal proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom (24:14), the strategic communication of the truth by the speaker (v. 25), and the solemn declarations confirming the validity of the speaker’s utterances (vv.34-35, 47; 25:13, 40, 45). Finally, the Son of Man’s presence will be perpetuated in the celebrations of the Passover-crucifixion of the Christian

community (26:2).

SECOND LEVEL: (24:4b-31; 25:31-46)

-24:4b-14

	NP		Vs.	ANTI-NP	
Actants:	<u>Speaker & Audience</u>			<u>Opponents & Majority</u>	
				messianic pretenders, violence, disorder, sacrilege and tribulation	
Actantial Roles:	<i>Sender</i>	<i>Receiver</i>		<i>Sender</i>	<i>Receiver</i>
Initial lack:	- <i>ability to act</i> missing				
Manipulation	-to reveal the true Messiah			-to deceive, harass, and kill	
Competence	-presupposed			-presupposed	
Performance	-salvation and proclamation			-many deceived and lost	
Sanction	-recognition: truth revealed			-majority lost	

It transpires in the course of the speech which occurs in the second level of the tripartite structure (24:4b-31; 25:31-46), that Jesus' incompetence is due to the intervention of the *opponents* who mount a propaganda of deception and fear. These actants appear in various forms such as messianic pretenders (24:4b-5, 11, 23-24, 26), social violence, natural disasters, persecutions, community disorders (vv. 6-7, 9-12), the desolating sacrilege and the great tribulation (vv. 15, 21-22). Hence, the missing modality in this case is the power or ability to act. In order to recover the missing modality, the speaker launches correlative programs whose goal is to keep the listeners stable on the right path. In the course of these programs, several elements appear as *helpers*: the gospel of the kingdom (v. 14), the prophet Daniel (v. 15a) and the subject who is implied in the phrases about prayer and the curtailment of the tribulation (vv. 20, 22c).

The first pair of the correlative programs (vv. 4b-14) consists of the speaker as the sender and the listeners as the receiver of the manipulation towards the NP we designated as *remaining stable in the truth and life*. This is in opposition to the Anti-NP which is initiated by the opponents; and we designated those programs as *deception and loss*.

-Vv. 15-22

Actants:	Actantial roles:
<u>Speaker</u>	<i>Sender</i>
<u>Listeners,</u>	<i>Receiver</i>
<u>Sacrilege & Tribulation</u>	<i>Sender</i>
<u>Elect</u>	<i>Subject of state</i>
<u>All human beings</u>	<i>Subject of state</i>

	NP	Anti-NP
Manipulation:	-remain in truth, curb tribulation	-annihilate all human beings
Competence:	-know how to act, ability to act	-lack of ability to act
Performance:	-endurance, salvation, conj. with life	_____

The second microtext in the second level (vv. 15-22) consists of the desolating sacrilege and the great tribulation as the sender of the Anti-NP which we called a *threat to life*, while a vast majority of people appear as the receiver (v. 22a-b). The NP of the speaker, however, encourages the audience to cope with or face up to the threat. In this case the subject operators appear in many forms: the listeners, the reader (vv. 4b, 13, 15), the fugitives (v. 16), the resisters (vv. 17-20) and the elect (v. 22c). We called this program, the *preservation of life*.

-Vv. 23-28

Actants:	<u>Speaker & Audience</u>	<u>Messianic pretenders & Audience</u>
Actantial roles:	<i>Sender & Receiver</i>	<i>Sender & Receiver</i>
	NP	Anti-NP
Manipulation:	-resist false propoganda about Messiah	-disseminate false propoganda
Sanction:	-verification of true information given beforehand (v. 25)	_____

The third couple of correlative programs (vv. 23-28) is the re-echo of the confrontation between two senders. On the one hand, there are messianic pretenders who will launch a correlative program in word and deed (vv. 23-26), with the possibility of misleading all people. We designated this program as a *disjunction from truth*. On the other hand, there is the speaker who appears in a dissuasive role which culminates in a two-dimensional program (vv. 27-28): the

triumphal presence of the true Messiah, and the revelation of wounds and greed.

-24:29-31; 25:31-46

Actants & Actantial roles: = -Coming Son of Man as *subj. operator/ sender*

-All tribes of the earth as *subj. of state*,

-Angels as *subj. operator, elect subj. of state*

Initial situation: -sign of Son of Man provokes feelings of sadness of all tribes (24:30a)

Manipulation: -coming Son of Man's automanipulation (v. 30b)

Competence: -no ability to act (authority not fully established)

Then, on the judgment scene we find the following sequence:

Actants:	<u>Son of Man/Shepherd/King;</u>	<u>Righteous (at right) & Others (at left)</u>
Actantial roles:	<i>Subj. of State /Sender</i>	<i>Subj. of State /Subj. Operator</i>
	<u>Righteous</u> : NP	<u>Others</u> : ANTI-NP
Manipulation:	- invitation to eternal life (v.34).	-damnation to eternal fire
Competence:	-based on past kindness	-lack of desire/knowledge in the past
Performance & Sanction:	-reward: conjunction with life	-retribution: disjunction from life
	Conjunction with life	vs. Disjunction from life

There is an overlapping of the literary unit of the fourth microtext (24:27-28) with the whole of the fifth and the eleventh microtexts (24:29-31; 25:31-46). All of them deal with the sub-story of the παρουσία of the Son of Man. The narrative sequence in this case is characterised by an extended initial situation which incorporates several elements. In the initial situation, the παρουσία of the Son of Man is described as similar to lightning and the dead body (24:27-28), the end of the tribulation and the collapse of the cosmic world order (v. 29). There is also the appearance of the sign of the Son of Man (v. 30a), the manipulation of all the tribes of the earth and the gathering of the elect (vv. 30-31). Then, in the judgment scene we discover that the glorious coming Son of Man (24:30b; 25:31), the gathering of all the nations and their division into two groups at the right and left of the Messiah-Shepherd (25:32-33) are also part of the initial situation.

With v. 34, two correlative narrative programs occur. We called the program of the righteous *the inheritance of the new life* (vv. 35-40, 46b), while the anti-program of those at the left hand was

called *the dismissal to eternal punishment* (vv. 41-46a).

THIRD LEVEL: (24:32--25:30)

In the parable stories, the actants and their actantial roles are numerous and complex. They may be arranged as follows:

-24:32--25:30

<i>Actants</i>	<i>Actantial roles</i>	<u>NPs</u>	vs.	<u>Anti-NPs</u>
<u>Sender</u>	<u>Subj. operator</u>			
speaker	audience:	enduring words		limited reality
automanipulation	Noah & contemporaries:	preservation of life		loss of life
master	listeners & householder:	meet w. S. of Man		broken house
master	wise slave & wicked slave:	full responsibility		shattered Life
automanipulation	wise virgins & foolish virgins:	inclusion		exclusion
master	5, 2 tal. slaves & 1 tal. slave:	fortune & joy		depriv. & exclus.
		conj. w. life	vs.	disj. from. life

When all the narrative elements in the third level are incorporated, we discover that the basic actantial roles are the subject operators who perform in two correlative programs: they are either conjoined with or disjoined from the object.

Hence, they are described as **Conjunction with life vs. Disjunction from life.**

CHAPTER FOUR

A. COHERENCE

SEARCH FOR PROFOUND STRUCTURES & SEMIOTIC SQUARE**Preliminary Remarks:**

So far in our semiotic analysis, we have assumed the surface of the text (Matt 24:1-26:2) as our starting point for the cutting of the text into microtexts and literary units (chapter one). From there, we began to examine the deep structures by employing the discursive analysis (chapter two). As a result, numerous figures appeared together with their disposition into figurative trails. It is on the level of the deep structures that we discovered the network of semantic values, and then determined the thematic roles and their oppositions. Then, as we delved deeper into the profound structures through the narrative analysis (chapter three), we noted the arrangement of the various elements into the main transformation of states and the sub-stories which appeared as narrative programs and anti-narrative programs.

From the discoveries made in these two analyses, we now move forward to further elaborate the network of the minimal units of signification and of the operations. Our aim here is ultimately to determine the *coherence* of the relations and operations into one basic constant which binds together all the disparate elements, in order to show that all of them contribute to the constitution of a continuous text, Matt 24:1--26:2.

1. TOWARDS MINIMAL UNITS OF SIGNIFICATION:

Having discovered the semantic values and classified them into oppositions in the discursive analysis (chapter two), we now plan to reduce certain thematic values which have something in common into more basic constants or *isotopies*.⁸⁵ These isotopies are also called *registers* through which the text of Matthew's eschatological discourse can be read. Even at this stage we may note that the various registers can be organised according to the three levels of the tripartite structure proposed in the hypothesis as the characteristic feature of this particular discourse.

At the very beginning, we note the presence of a register which has something to do with religious worship, i.e. Jesus' exit from the temple. This particular movement is related to the temple where religious activities take place. Then, at the very end of the text, the event of the crucifixion is mentioned in the context of the Passover feast, which is yet another event of religious or liturgical significance. Consequently, the semantic oppositions which occur in these instances are classified under the *religious register*. In the first segment (24:1-4a) "Jesus' going out of the temple" (24:1a) bears the sense of /forsaking/, /abandoning/ or /separation/ from the temple, and it is opposed to the disciples' expectations of Jesus' /reunion/ with the temple as indicated in their question: "and what will be the sign of your παρουσία...?" (v. 3b-c). Similarly, in the second segment, we find the same sense of "going out" being reiterated in the phrase about the killing of the Son of Man on the religious festival of Passover: "and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified" (26:2b). Thus, through the crucifixion the Son of Man will be taken away or separated from this particular religious festival, instead of being present or part of the celebration.

Furthermore, falling under the same religious register we find another opposition. On the one hand, there is the disciples' narrow perception of the temple as a physical structure, "the temple buildings" (24:1b), which emphasises the idea of its /construction/ or something that is built up. There is a compatibility between this expression about construction and Jesus' broader view of the temple which is indicated in the all inclusive saying, "all these things" (v. 2b). In both cases, the

⁸⁵ Isotopy is described as, "a place where meaning harmonizes or finds cohesion." See GROUPE D'ENTREVERNES, *Analyse*, pp. 123-25; see also VOGELS, *Reading*, p. 62.

expressions are describing the building up or the combination of the constituent elements into a single whole. On the other hand, there is the idea of /destruction/ or /scattering/ of the constituent elements, as conveyed in Jesus' oracle of doom against the temple buildings, " '...no stone will be left on another that will not be thrown down' " (v. 2d). Moreover, the same idea is reiterated at the end of the text in regard to the crucifixion, "and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified' " (v. 2b). What is predicted of the temple building is also predicted of the physical body of the Son of Man: both will be destroyed or disintegrated.

There is also a parallel between the idea of separation and destruction in these instances; they all refer to the action of dividing or throwing asunder the constituent elements, whereas the reunion and construction describe the unity among disparate elements. Hence, the basic thematic value and its binary opposition may be designated thus:

/Division/ vs. /Unity/

As soon as we reach the account of the *παρουσία* of the Son of Man (24:4b-31; 25:31-46), we discover oppositions which are classifiable under the *social register*. In this case, the text indicates a resistance against going astray or separating the elements. First, the warning to the audience "...not to be led astray" (v. 4b) appears in contrast to "many who will be led astray" by the propaganda of the messianic pretenders (vv. 5c, 11). Secondly, there are phrases which emphasize a sense of continuity against the ending or termination of life. In that regard, the audience are encouraged to stay calm (v. 6b) and brace themselves for a prolonged tribulation: "but the end is not yet" (v. 6c-d), and "this is but the beginning of birth-pangs" (v. 8). Thirdly, the endurance of the one person and his salvation (v. 13) culminates in the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom. In fact, the main characteristic of the proclamation is the unification of all of the elements (v. 14a) which were hitherto in conflict, viz., the nations and the kingdoms (v. 7). Moreover, the endurance and salvation of one person appears in contrast to the majority of figures portrayed as scattered about through violence (vv. 7, 9), and to the majority of elements in a disorderly state (vv. 10, 12).

Thus, several elements in this microtext have something in common: the resistance against

straying from the right path (vv. 4b-5), the warning to stay calm (v. 6b), the sense of the continuity of the tribulation (v. 8), the perseverance to the end (v. 13) and the world-wide proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom (v. 14) convey the sense of /steadfastness/. Other elements show as opposite sense of /commotion/: the majority who will go astray, and many who will panic at the news of wars, the social violence, persecutions, and community disorders.

In vv. 15-22, there is a re-echo of the *religious register*. The text describes the limitations of the desolating sacrilege portrayed in the holy place (v. 15). In this case the desolating sacrilege appears as a cold and lifeless object characterised by /immobility/ or /stillness/. Conversely, the /vitality/ of the listeners is indicated by the innumerable possibilities at their disposal to cope with the ominous disaster. For instance, they can scrutinize the sacrilege, the prophet Daniel spoke about it, and the reader can interpret its meaning (v. 15). Moreover, in opposition to the implied panic, agitation or restlessness caused by the presence of the desolating sacrilege, the listeners are urged to stay calm and to avoid scuttling or any panic-stricken movement. Instead, they should move in an orderly fashion (v.16), and in most cases they should stay put wherever they are: "let him who is on the housetop not go down..." (v. 17), "and let him who is in the field not turn back..." (v. 18). Then, in cases of helplessness in the face of disaster (v. 19), there is a spiritual power that can be appealed to through prayer in order to escape the disaster (v. 20). Finally, instead of a wholesale annihilation of "...all human beings" (v. 22a-b) by the great tribulation, the duration of the tribulation will be reduced in order to save the elect (v. 22c). Hence, in the third microtext (vv. 15-22) the same opposition which we have seen previously is reiterated: /steadfastness/ vs. /commotion/.

Moreover, there is a resurfacing of *social relationships* in the first unit of the fourth microtext (vv. 23-26).⁸⁶ The controversy between the speaker and the envisioned propaganda of the messianic pretenders concerning the true identity of the Messiah is reiterated (see also vv. 4b-14). In this case, we find an opposition between the envisaged agitation caused by the false propaganda such as " 'Lo here is the Christ!' and 'There he is' " (v. 23), " 'Lo he is in the wilderness...' and 'Lo he is in the inner rooms' " (v. 26), and the stability or composure of the listeners as urged by the

⁸⁶ The first literary unit of the fourth microtext (vv.23-26) deals with resistance against the powerful deceptions of messianic pretenders, while the second unit (vv.27-28) deals with the *παροουσία* of the Son of Man.

speaker's prohibitions, "do not believe it, do not go out..." (vv. 23e, 26c, e).

Throughout these microtexts of the second level (vv. 4b-14, 15-22, 23-26), we observe a basic constant which is common throughout the oppositions discovered so far, and which binds them together. There is, first, a correspondence of the following figures: resistance to all forms of deceptions (v. 4b), staying calm in the midst of terror (v. 6b), endurance, salvation and universal proclamation of the gospel (vv. 13-14), scrutinizing the desolating sacrilege (v. 15), remaining steady where one is (vv. 17-18), resorting to a spiritual power if the situation gets beyond one's competence (vv. 19-20); and, then, sticking to the truth by following the speaker's warnings (vv. 23e, 25, 26c,e). All these figures indicate one basic element which was designated as */Steadfastness of Hope/*.

There is then another common element running through all the semantic values of the opposite side. For instance, there is a majority who will wander about deceived by the false propaganda (vv. 5c, 11); there is an implied agitation caused by the news of wars (v. 6), the events of social and natural violence (v. 7) and the persecutions (v. 9); the majority will also fall away, betray and hate one another due to the prevailing disorder and lawlessness (vv. 10, 12); the presence of the desolating sacrilege in the holy place entails the great tribulation, which causes the same feeling of restlessness (vv. 15, 21); the powerful propaganda carried out through words and demonstrations will also bring people far and wide to places where the Messiah will be alleged to be (vv. 23-24, 26). Hence, in these instances we find the value which we have called */Commotion of Despair/*.

Therefore, the basic constant or theme which binds all these elements together may be arranged into the following opposition which is presented in a simple way, thus:

/Steadfastness/ vs. /Commotion/.

However, the second unit of the fourth microtext (vv. 27-28) combines with the fifth microtext (vv. 29-31) to constitute a register which has both the apocalyptic and the social elements concerning the $\pi\alpha\rho\upsilon\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$ of the Son of Man. We label it *revelation-social register*, and it is characterised by a series of oppositions.

There is a contrast between two dimensions of the $\pi\alpha\rho\upsilon\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$ of the Son of Man: the

/universal/ dimension represented by the cosmic movement of lightning which traverses two poles of the whole cosmic expanse, "...[it] shines from the east as far as the west" (v. 27); and the /limitations/ of the destructible physical dimension of the παρουσία represented by "the dead body" (v. 28a) which gathers the vultures (v. 28b). Then, certain elements in vv. 29-31 correspond to the oppositions mentioned above. For instance, what is classifiable under /limitations/ are the *specific* earthly events such as the end of the tribulation, the elimination of the cosmic bodies (v. 29), the mourning and vision of the coming Son of Man by all the tribes of the earth (v. 30b). But, the *all encompassing* cosmic events fall under the /universal/ category. Examples are, the appearance of the sign of the Son of Man in heaven (v. 30a), its universal repercussions on all tribes of the earth (v. 30b), and the coming of the Son of Man on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory (v. 30b).

Furthermore, the analysis has shown that the elements which belong to the *apocalyptic-social register* resurface on the judgment scene (25:31-46). We have noticed certain radically different features attributed to the Son of Man which appear irreconcilable from the human point of view. Nevertheless, the text unified these diverse characteristics under the same actor (Son of Man) through the power of his words. For example, the Son of Man appears as an ordinary *social* being who was once /frail/ and /dependent/, "for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ..." etc. (vv. 35-36, 42-43). It is in the light of these past relationships that the Son of Man invites those who are at his right hand into the kingdom (vv. 34, 46b), and dismisses those who are at his left into eternal fire (vv. 41b, 46a). These traits fall within the category of *social relationships*.

Moreover, the Son of Man is also portrayed as a /transcendent/ or /immanent/ being, i.e., someone who will come in grandeur and splendour with divine attributes and power: he will be escorted by "all his angels," he will "sit on his throne of glory" and "all the nations will be gathered before him" for their judgment (vv. 31-33). These characteristics reiterate the register which we designated as *apocalyptic* or *revelation* (24:27, 30-31). Finally, the same actor is depicted as vulnerable: on the day of Passover, he will be tortured and executed, "...and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified" (26:2). This trait re-echoes the value of /frailty/ indicated above.

Consequently, two elements are combined in the same register which we have called *apocalyptic - social* register.

The analysis has shown certain parallels between the elements discovered in the two segments (24:27-31; 25:31-46). In both instances, there is an opposition between two dimensions of the Son of Man's παρουσία (presence): what is physical, frail and vulnerable, and what is a universal transcendental dimension of the presence with the capacity to merge all things together. We described this as the paradoxical combination of the disparate elements of the παρουσία. Hence, we consider the following to be the basic opposition incorporating the two segments:

/Universality of Presence/ vs. /Limitations of Physical Experience/.

The analysis of the microtexts in the third level of the tripartite structure (24:32-25:30) has shown figurative trails which draw a lesson from the human experience portrayed in the parable stories. We designate the organisation of elements in the sixth microtext as *educational register*.

An opposition is indicated between what changes from one state to another and what remains stable. There are figures dealing with a */transitory/* state and therefore are mutable: "...its branch becomes tender, and the leaves sprout" (v. 32), "before this generation passes away..." (v. 34) and "heaven and earth will pass away" (v. 35a). These are opposed to other figures which endure or guarantee */stability/*, the speaker's solemn declaration concerning the occurrence of "all these things" (v. 34) and the assertion, "but my words will not pass away" (v. 35b). Hence the contrasting concepts are: */stability/* vs. */mutability/*.

Moreover, the seventh microtext (24:36-44) shows the organisation of figures which we called *revelation or apocalyptic register*, because of the element of secrecy which permeates all of its literary units. All these units show the opposition between what is reliable due to the sure knowledge acquired beforehand, and what is uncertain because of the general lack of knowledge. For instance, there is a general ignorance in the heavenly household concerning the exact time of the One to come (v. 36). This is opposed to the exceptional knowledge reserved only to the Father (v. 36). Similarly, Noah's contemporaries' ignorance about the day of the flood results in the all consuming disaster (v. 39). On the contrary, Noah enters the ark on the day just before the

destroying flood came (v. 38c). Finally, the householder relaxed his vigilance due to lack of knowledge of the exact time when the thief would come, and the hearers are warned strongly to keep up their vigil precisely because they do not know the time when the Son of Man is coming (vv. 42, 44). In this case the semantic values may be designated as: /insecurity/ of the majority vs. /survival/ of the minority.

There is a parallel between the semantic values discovered in 24:32-35 and vv. 36-44. On the one hand, there are similarities between the mutability of the fig tree and the insecurity of existence caused by the general ignorance of the majority. Thus, the physical existence of certain elements comes to an end or is destroyed (vv. 39a, 40-41, 43). The basic constant for all these instances is /limitations/. On the other hand, the durability of the speaker's utterances as shown in his solemn declaration (v. 34) and his saying about the endurance of his words (v. 35) echo the sense of /continuity/ (see also vv. 36, 38c, 42 and 44). These cases show the basic oppositions of /Limitation/ vs. /Continuity/.

In the last three microtexts (24:45-51; 25:1-13, 14-30) we classify the disparate elements into the register of *economic and social relationships*. In all these cases, a series of oppositions appears between positive elements which constitute the values of /prosperity/ and /companionship/ and the negative elements concerning /separation/ and /lifelessness/.

To begin with, the faithful and wise slave is portrayed as "blessed" because he will be rewarded with "all the master's possessions" (24:46-47), whereas the other slave is designated as "wicked," and for his punishment will be excluded from the master's company, tortured and executed (v. 51).

Moreover, the five wise virgins are so called because of their astuteness. They have preserved "a sufficient supply of oil," and so they are ready to participate with the bridegroom in the wedding feast (vv. 4, 9, 10b). On the contrary, late at midnight the foolish virgins "run out of oil" (v. 8) due to their complacency or negligence (vv. 3, 10a); they are not ready to meet the bridegroom when he comes; and, consequently, they are excluded from the wedding feast (v. 12).

Finally, the two diligent slaves who traded with their talents and doubled their investment are rewarded with many more things including an invitation to join the master in his state of happiness (25:15-16, 21, 23). But the slave with the one talent was unproductive (vv. 18, 25). As a

punishment for his slothfulness, the master deprived him of his only talent and cast him out of his company into a place of torture (vv. 28, 29b-30). Hence, throughout these contrasting elements, we have discovered the basic binary opposition: */prosperous companionship/ vs. /lifeless separation/*.

However, the entire parable section with its innumerable oppositions, is reducible to a more basic constant with its binary opposition. On the one hand, there is the value of */limitation/* which refers to elements which are changeable, divisible and destructible. For example, on the day of reckoning certain actors are cast out of the master's company into a place of torture (24:51; 25:11-12, 30). On the other hand, we found the value of */continuity/* which corresponds to those elements which persist or continue to exist. In the parables there are actors who are invited to participate in the life of their master, so we designate the basic value in these cases as */continuity/* of life.

/Limitation/ vs. /Continuity/.

Thus, the classification of the various semantic values into themes and into registers throughout this eschatological discourse has resulted in the discovery of the following principal concepts and their binary oppositions:

/Division/ vs. /Unity/

/Steadfastness/ vs. /Commotion/

/Universal Presence/ vs. /Limitations of Physical Experience/

/Limitation/ vs. /Continuity/

2. TOWARDS THE MOST BASIC SEMANTIC ISOTOPY:

Given the registers discovered so far, what is the most basic constant which will ensure the compatibility of the various elements in the text? What permeates all the registers and binds them together? Such an element is the semantic isotopy, the most abstract constant with its binary opposition. It accounts for the coherence of the various registers constituting the story about the time and sign of Jesus' $\pi\alpha\rho\rho\nu\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$ and the end of the age. In that way, the isotopy is what guarantees the homogeneity of the message in Matthew's eschatological discourse as a whole (Matt 24:1-26:2).

Several registers are arranged below to indicate the oppositions occurring between them, and to demonstrate how they are reducible into more basic concepts according to the four principal oppositions which have been discovered above.

Registers:

RELIGIOUS: -/forsaking/ the temple(24:1)
 -/disintegration/ of structure
 -/vitality/, /creativity/ of listeners (v. 15)
 -/commotion/, /loss/ of life
 -/execution/ at Passover festival

/Division/

vs.

Oppositions

expectations of /reunion/ (v. 3)
 /construction/ of buildings
 /lifelessness/ of the sacrilege
 /non-movement/,
 /not panicking/ (vv. 17-18)
 expectations of union (26:2)

/Unity/

SOCIAL: -/non-straying/ of minority (24:5b, 6b, 13)
 -/continuity/ of tribulation (vv. 6c-d, 8)
 -/unification/ through gospel (v. 14a)

/stability/ and /composure/ (vv. 23e, 26c, e)

/Steadfastness/

vs.

/division/ of majority (vv. 5c, 11)
 /termination/ (vv. 13b, 14b)
 /scattering/, i.e. persecutions
 and disorders (vv. 9, 10, 12)
 /agitation/ by false propaganda

/Commotion/

REVELATION

& SOCIAL:	-/universality/ of παρουσία (24:27, 30)	/limitations/ of earthly-cosmic events (vv. 28, 29)
	-/gathering/ of all tribes, all nations (24:30b; 25:32a)	/selective gathering/, vultures and elect (24:28b, 31b)
	/immanent/ presence (25:31-33)	/frail/, /vulnerable/ (vv. 35-40, 41-45)
	-/invitation/ of those at right hand (vv. 34, 46b)	/dismissal/ of those at the left (vv. 41b, 46a)
	-/validity/ of speaker's utterance (vv. 40, 45)	

/Universality/ vs. /Limitations/

EDUCATIONAL	-/stability/ of speaker's words (24:35b)	/mutability/ of physical existence (24:32-35a)
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REVELATION

or APOCALYPTIC	/reliability/ of exceptions /continuity/ of life for few	-/insecurity/ of majority (24:36, 38c) -/limitations/ of majority life (vv.37-44)
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ECONOMIC

&-SOCIAL	-/prosperous companionship/ /continuity/ (vv.45-47)	/lifeless separation/ /limitation/ (24:51, 25:11-12, 30)
	/Continuity/ vs. /Limitations/	

Among these oppositions, we propose to retain the opposition: **/division/ vs. /unity/** as the most basic and abstract constant to which all the registers and the oppositions can be reduced.

On the one hand, there is a correspondence of certain registers and semantic values dealing with particular movements. Jesus' exit from the temple, described as a forsaking or separation at the very beginning (24:1, 3), is re-echoed in the Son of Man's crucifixion at the end of

the discourse (26:2). This has something in common with the idea of scattering or violent splitting of constituent elements which was indicated in the oracle of doom against the temple (24:2d).

Moreover, confused or panic-stricken movements of the “many who will be deceived” caused by false propaganda, fear and violence (vv. 6, 7, 9-12) will result in the loss of direction or life (vv. 5c, 11, 23-24, 26). We find a similar state of panic caused by the presence of the desolating sacrilege and the great tribulation (vv. 15, 21-22). Then, the text makes reference to the frailty of the physical body which results in the end of life (vv. 28, 30b) and the disfunctioning or tumbling down of the luminous bodies (v. 29). A similar idea of weakness is echoed in the scene of judgment where the Son of Man recalls his past desperate conditions of hunger, thirst, being a stranger, etc. (25:35-40, 41-45). We also notice that the idea of selection often recurs (24:22c, 28b, 31b), and is re-echoed on the judgment day in the invitation of those at the right hand (v. 34).

A similar idea of change, separation or selection is reiterated in the changing features of the fig tree and the coming to an end of certain physical realities such as this generation and heaven and earth (vv. 32-35b). The lack of knowledge of the exact time results in negligence and eventually in the destruction of certain elements (vv. 39a, 40-41, 43). Finally, the idea of selection or separation resurfaces in the last three parable stories where the actors who were lazy and negligent during the master’s absence are cast out and excluded from the master’s joyful company. Moreover, on the day of judgment, selection is reiterated in the case of the division of the all the nations into two groups (25:32-33), together with the dismissal of those at the left hand from the King’s company (25:41, 46a). In all these instances, we note that the semantic values of selection, separation, straying from the right path, being eliminated or destroyed, being excluded from other elements, etc., have something in common running through all these terms and binding them together: the state of being divisible. Hence, the most basic constant that can be retained for all of them is **/division/**.

On the other hand, we observe that the text shows a series of semantic values which appear in contrast to those already stated as an indication of the binary opposition to the constant discovered above. To begin with, in contrast to Jesus’ exit from the temple and his sojourn on the Mount of Olives, the disciples raise a question regarding Jesus’ $\pi\alpha\rho\upsilon\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$ and the end of the

age, thus indicating their expectation of his reunion with the temple in the future (24:3b-c). The disciples' demonstration of the temple buildings to Jesus (v. 1b) underlines the state of its construction, i.e. the compact or built up state of its constituent elements.

Furthermore, there is a series of exhortations urging the listeners to remain focused: neither straying from the truth, being alarmed nor giving up in spite of persecutions (vv. 4b, 6b, 13). This is followed by the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom which will reach out across the whole world and then unify or bring together all conflicting nations and kingdoms (vv. 7, 14). Then, in order to cope with the envisioned disaster caused by the ominous presence of the sacrilege in the holy place and the great tribulation, the exhortations suggest a holistic approach which puts together various ways of coping, ranging from the mental effort of studying the sacrilege (v. 15), to recommending an orderly movement (v. 16), prohibiting certain physical movements which may result in loss of life (vv. 17-18). Then, the text resorts to emotional outbursts (v. 19) and finally urges spiritual discipline of prayer on the part of the listeners (v. 20). There are also recurring exhortations prohibiting any acceptance of the false propaganda or going out in compliance with the misleading directions of the messianic pretenders (vv. 23-24, 26). Thus, the listeners are urged to remain in union with the true faith.

Concerning the *παρουσία* of the Son of Man, the text describes a universal movement which links together different spaces into one cosmic expanse (v. 27). In the face of death and at the call of the trumpet, the text describes several gatherings in order to save certain elements, and in order to give a group character to individual elements, i.e. the elect (vv. 22c, 31b) and the vultures (v. 28b). Then, the appearance of the sign and the coming of the Son of Man has a unifying impact: the sign will affect all tribes of the earth (v. 30b), the glory and power of the coming Son of Man has universal outreach (24:30b; 25:31-32), and the Son of Man-King wields authority to judge all the nations (v. 32a), and then he invites those at his right to join him in the kingdom and in the eternal life (vv. 34, 46b).

Moreover, the values of continuity of life and inclusion of certain elements through invitation are predominant in the parable section. First, there is the stability or validity of the speaker's words as indicated in the solemn declarations and sayings (24:34, 35b, 47; 25:12b, 40b, 45b; 26:1). This

echoes previous instances (24:2c, 14a). Secondly, there is a description of the continuity of existence for certain actors in spite of catastrophic situations (vv. 38c, 40-41, 42, 44). Finally, there are several other instances where the text describes the strengthening of bonds between actors. For instance, there is a development of trust between the faithful and wise slave and his master (24:46-47); the wise virgins ultimately meet the bridegroom and share with him in the wedding feast (25:10b); and on the day of reckoning the two diligent slaves who had traded with their talents and produced interest are invited by the master to have a share in his joyful state (vv. 21-22, 23-24); the invitation also implies the continuity of life with the master while their counterparts are cast away. Throughout these instances, we notice a common thread which runs through and binds everything under the basic thematic value of /unity/.

Therefore, we have gathered the semantic values which show the different characteristics in this text, and we have regrouped them under the most basic constant and its binary opposition: /division/ vs. /unity/.

The semiotic square below will further provide us with the relational model which is a representation of the circulation of sense throughout this eschatological discourse. First, by showing how the different terms are related to each other either by contrariety, contradiction or implication it will enable us to determine more precisely the differences in the network of relations between the various semantic values.

However, the signification in the deep structures is not only indicated by a network of relations, but also by the transformation of states, since the text is also a network of operations. Therefore, we shall search for the correspondence between these two dimensions, the semantic oppositions discovered during the discursive analysis and the narrative programs which were discovered during the narrative analysis.

3. THE MOVEMENT OF SENSE IN THE SEMIOTIC SQUARE

The merging of the two dimensions of the discursive and the narrative components of the text occurs in the semiotic square, and it is based on the principle that the narrative operations move the semantic values. Our aim here is to show how this movement of sense occurs in this particular eschatological discourse.

Through the network of operations, sense circulates throughout the text in a particular way.

1. /division/ → /non-division/:

First, the text begins with */division/* which is the corner of the square where Jesus goes out of the temple predicting its imminent doom (24:1-2); and then he sojourns on the Mount of Olives where the disciples express their expectation of his future παρουσία, his coming or presence at the end of the age (v. 3). In this regard, there is an interrelation of movements: “departure” vs. “return”.

Secondly, the text moves directly to */non-division/* which is the negation (contradiction) of division. This negation corresponds to several exhortations against movements which may bring about separation or division of elements: viz., the listeners are urged “not to go astray,” “not to be alarmed,” and there is also a recommendation for “endurance until the end” (vv. 4b, 6b, 13). Then in the face of the desolating sacrilege in the holy place, the text encourages an orderly or planned flight from Judea to the mountains (v. 16). But any scuttling or panic-stricken movement by those who will be outside during that period, such as entering their houses or returning home from the field, is strictly forbidden (vv. 17-18). Then, the listeners are exhorted to pray that their flight should not take place on particular occasions (in winter or on a sabbath) when it might be inhibited (v. 20). Furthermore, there are strong prohibitions against accepting and following the directions of the messianic pretenders concerning the whereabouts of the Messiah: “do not believe it” (vv. 23e, 26e) and “do not go out” (v. 26c). All these instances correspond to several narrative operations which we have designated as: non-disjunction from the true Messiah, *conjunction with truth* and *prevention of loss of life*.

2. /non-division/ → /unity/:

As soon as the text begins to recount the story of the παρουσία of the Son of Man from 24:27, the movement reaches the /unity/ which is a value contrary to /division/. At this point the παρουσία of the Son of Man is described as a striking, powerful and luminous presence which will have universal repercussions uniting various elements: just like lightning which "...shines from the east as far as the west" (v. 27), and the impact of the sign from heaven on "all tribes of the earth will mourn and they will see..." (24:30); there is also the gathering of all the nations before the Son of Man (25:32a). Moreover, the dimension of death is associated with the παρουσία of the Son of Man, and it is depicted in the gathering of the vultures around a dead body (v. 28) and in the element of "mourning..." associated with all the tribes of the earth (v. 30b). From the narrative perspective this presence is seen as an encounter between the coming Son of Man and all the nations, and its NP has been called, *revelation of true Messiah, and conjunction with Son of Man*.

3. /unity/ → /non-unity/:

The text then moves from /unity/ towards /non-unity/ which corresponds to several programs of disjunction between the Son of Man and those who are waiting for his coming. Hence, there are expressions which convey the notion that the Son of Man is not yet there: "...summer is near," "...he is at the very gate" (vv. 32c, 33c). No one knows the exact time (of his coming) except the Father, just as Noah's contemporaries did not know the day when the flood would come (v. 39); nor did the householder know the precise time of the night when the thief would come (v. 43). Likewise the listeners do not know at what part of the day the Son of Man is coming, therefore, they must keep vigilant (vv. 42, 44).

Moreover, the wicked slave imagined that his master was delayed. This expressed the gulf which existed between the two actors (v. 48). The bridegroom delayed in coming until midnight, and in the meantime the ten virgins had become drowsy and fell asleep (25:5-6). Similarly, the master of the slaves with talents delayed for a long time before he came to settle the accounts with his slaves (v. 19).

Finally, the text shows numerous instances of exclusion from the master's company and of separation of one person from a group or of one group from another. For instance, on the day of

reckoning, the wicked slave is cut in two (executed) and his portion thrown away with the hypocrites (24:51): in that way he is separated from his fellow slaves, from his master and life itself. Moreover, the door to the wedding hall remained shut, thus excluding the foolish virgins from the wedding feast (25:10-12). The slave who had one talent is deprived of the only talent he had, and he is banished from life by being thrown into outer darkness and pain (25:28, 30). Finally, on the day of judgment, all the nations are divided into two groups, and the righteous are invited into the kingdom and to eternal life (vv. 34, 46b), while those at the left hand are dismissed into eternal fire (vv. 41, 46a). Hence, those who are at the left hand are not only excluded from the kingdom of the Son of Man, they are also separated from their counterparts who are at the right hand.

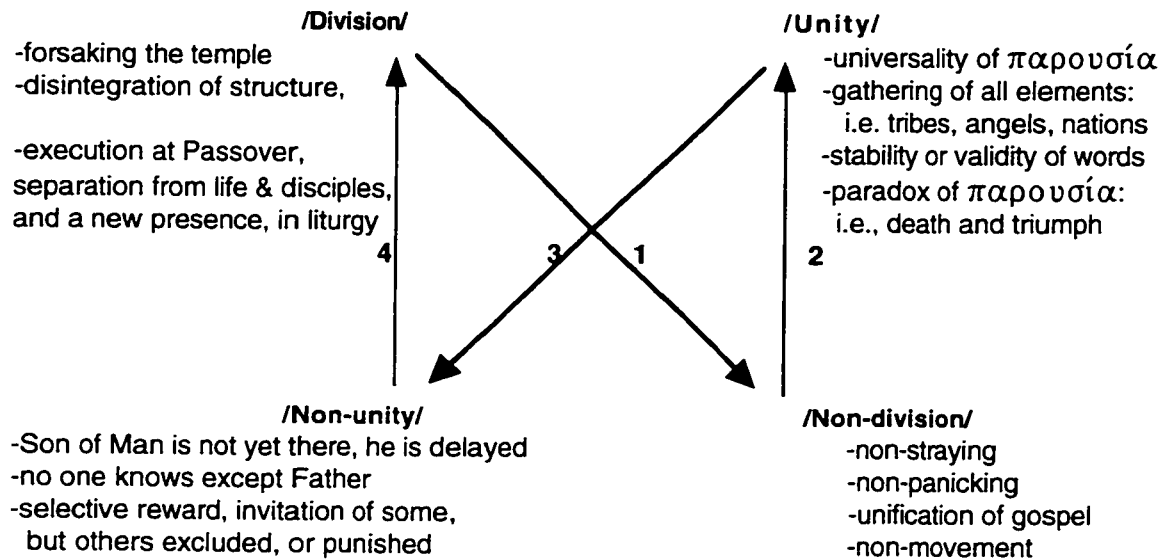
In all these cases the negation of /unity/ implies the selection of the value of /division/, and it corresponds to the Anti-NPs which have been designated as *disjunction or exclusion from life*.

4. /non-unity/ → /division/:

Ultimately, the text reverts to where it started, i.e., /division/. After delivering his long speech, Jesus informs the disciples that after two days, on the day of the Passover feast, there will be a definitive separation of the Son of Man from his physical life as well as from his disciples: he will be tortured and executed (26:2b). These last phrases correspond to the narrative program of *disjunction from life and from the disciples*.

At this stage, however, disjunction from physical life implies a conjunction with a new life: a life of faith in the Son of Man who is alive and present in his words and in the Christian worship.

Thus, the semantic values discovered in the discursive analysis are moved by the operations of the narrative sequence as outlined above. This movement indicates the circulation of sense in the text, and it may be indicated in the four corners of the semiotic square as follows:



The movement of the values from numbers 1 to 2 tends towards the NP which has been designated as the *revelation of true Messiah* (24:4b-31; 25:31-46). The movement from 3 to 4 tends towards the program of the Son of Man's *disjunction from life* (24:32-25:30; 26:2b), and, at the same time, it is the program of *conjunction with knowledge*, and the *new presence of Son of Man in the liturgy* (26:1-2a). Hence, while the movement towards the παρουσία of the Son of Man describes *hope*, the movement towards death on the cross and acquisition of knowledge describes a paradox where death and new life co-exist. Thus, our commentary below is an effort to come to grips with the theological significance of the movement of the values in this eschatological discourse.

B. THEOLOGICAL COMMENTARY

The theological meaning of this text appears as a result of the combination of elements discovered during the discursive analysis (network of relations) and the narrative analysis (network of operations). In this way, meaning crystallizes through the circulation of sense around the four corners of the square; and, in this way, the text distinguishes between the values of *hope and life* inspired by the speaker's words and the anti-values of *despair* brought about by the calamities of the end-time, such as confusion, fear, panic and death.

The Physical Must Yield to the Spiritual

In the first level of the tripartite structure (24:1-4a; 26:1-2), we have seen how the text starts with the religious register where Jesus' exit from the temple conveys the notion of forsaking or physical separation. Then as he goes out, he utters the words which indicate that the physical structures (temple buildings) do not last; they will be destroyed (v. 2d). What is important are "all these things" to which the disciples must pay attention (v. 2a-b). After that, the religious register resurfaces in the conclusion where the text describes the Son of Man's crucifixion on the feast of Passover (26:2). Thus, the movement of values ultimately reverts to where it started, i.e. the disintegration of the Son of Man's body or his physical separation from life and from the disciples. We have classified these two instances under the same basic thematic value of /division/. If the Son of Man ultimately dies on the cross, in what way is the notion or hope of his *παρουσία* indicated in this text?

The significance of Jesus' movement from the temple, and the ominous force conveyed by the expression "going out of the temple" (24:1), cannot be fully grasped without paying attention to what had transpired in that temple in the preceding text (Matt 21-23).⁸⁷ This is no ordinary exit: Jesus is forsaking or deserting the temple in fulfillment of his lament over Jerusalem and the indictment of the Jerusalemites for their stubbornness. God's chastisement of the holy city:

⁸⁷ Jesus' messianic entry into Jerusalem had been aborted due to the bitter controversy which had occurred between him and the temple authorities (chapters 21-23). This will culminate in Jesus' murder (crucifixion) as it happened before to other prophets (23:37-39).

“Behold, your house is forsaken and desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord’ ” (Matt 23:38-39) begins to take place in 24:1.

However, Jesus is forsaking the temple buildings or the physical structure of the temple rather than the religious idea represented by the temple as a place of worship. This distinction is indicated in the dialogue between him and his disciples. In response to the disciples’ preoccupation with the temple’s physical structures (24:1b), Jesus pointed out that there was much more to the temple than its physical structures, “You see all these things do you not?” (v. 2b). Then he uttered the oracle of doom against the temple buildings: they will be utterly destroyed (v. 2d). This oracle leaves the question open about the meaning of “all these things.” If the temple’s physical structure is destructible and does not convey everything there is to see about the temple, then the expression “all these things” refers to something else which is stable or indestructible. What is it? The whole of the speech (24:4b-25:46) is an effort to respond to that question. When the temple buildings have been destroyed, something about it as a house of worship will remain. The speech is delivered to awaken the disciples’ consciousness and faith so that they may see beyond what is physical, and come to understand that aspect of the temple which is non-physical, but spiritual and lasting.

Subsequently, while Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, his disciples raised a question regarding the time and the sign of his $\pi\alpha\rho\upsilon\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$ (v. 3b-c). In the broader context of Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem and his ministry in the temple, this question reflects Jesus’ unsuccessful previous attempt to establish his messiahship there.⁸⁸ Then, immediately before Jesus’ departure from the temple (24:1) and his oracle of doom (v. 2d), comes his grim prediction that the temple would be abandoned (23:38). But the abandonment is only temporary, it will last until Israel confesses that Jesus is the One to come (v. 39). The disciples’ question in 24:3, therefore, reflects their expectation⁸⁹ that Jesus, who has just abandoned the temple, will come

⁸⁸ Only in Matthew’s version of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem, two christological titles are attributed to him: a humble “king” (21:5), the “son of David” (vv. 9, 15). After entry, the expulsion of dealers from the temple, the cure of the blind and the lame are the first ministries Jesus performs (vv. 12-16).

⁸⁹ The disciples’ eschatological hopes would have combined elements of both the Jewish and early christian hopes for a new messianic world order which would replace the old one that has been destroyed by the divine intervention. See, Christopher ROWLAND, The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity (London: SPCK, 1982), pp. 9-11.

back in his physical being to reclaim his temple as the coming One. Moreover, Jesus' coming is expected to mark the time of reckoning consisting of the elimination of the present world order (24:2d, 22, 29, 51; 25:30, 41, 46a) whose corruption will have become incorrigible (chapter 23 and 24:10-12). Thus, since the disciples expect Jesus' παρουσία to take place as a physical reality; they want to know what sign will indicate that event when it is about to take place.

After a long speech, Jesus' last words to the disciples do not confirm any hope about his physical return. On the contrary, he informs them that on the feast of the Passover "...the Son of Man will be crucified" (26:2). Thus the same process mentioned in 24:1-2 is repeated in 26:2; i.e. the actor who departed from the temple and is no longer physically present will also depart from his physical life and from the company of his disciples. Nevertheless, the association of the crucifixion with the Passover feast⁹⁰ provides a new context of faith in which the crucified Son of Man was believed to be present in a new way. First, the same night that the Jews celebrated the Passover, the Christians kept a vicarious fast for Israel, and during that fast the story of the first Passover was read and commented upon typologically where Christ was understood as the lamb of sacrifice whose blood was poured out for the redemption of the believers. Secondly, the night of fasting and Scripture reading was seen as a preparation for the παρουσία which would take place at dawn. Through the night long vigil, the Christian community made itself ready to meet its Lord who is now present in a new way.

In this manner, Matt 26:2 re-articulates the early Christian faith that the *crucifixion* does not mean the end. As a direct response to the disciples' question in 24:3 Jesus presents the cross as a concrete sign of the Son of Man's παρουσία (i.e. his new presence). That is, the Passover-Crucifixion event signifies a spiritual presence or a new life of the Son of Man based on the faith of the Christian believers.

⁹⁰ See footnotes 66 and 83.

From the Ruins of the Old a New Life Emerges

The distinguishing feature of the second level part 1 (24:4b-31) is the description which enumerates the successive calamities of the end-time. But these calamities consist of the old social and religious structures coming to an end. Then, from their collapse, the text indicates that something of a new religious value will emerge.

At the outset, we have noticed verbal confrontations between the speaker and the elements of the eschatological woes. From the narrative perspective, the latter lure people towards the Anti-NPs designated as *a disjunction from the true Messiah or from life*, and will result in many people being lost, whereas the speaker's exhortations are a motivation towards the NPs of *conjunction with truth and life*. From the theological point of view, the speaker's exhortations and prohibitions of movements are for the propagation of *hope* in the midst of overwhelming *despair*. Moreover, as the outcome of this verbal confrontation has shown, the numerous and overwhelming calamities will not last. Consequently, hope will eventually triumphs over despair as a new reality of salvation.

For example, the second microtext (24:4b-13) describes the various eschatological woes as an experience with an overwhelming impact on the majority of people (vv. 5c, 11): there will be rampant violence such as social conflicts, natural disasters (vv. 6-7), persecutions (v. 9), as well as mutual mistrust, hatred and lawlessness in the community (vv. 10, 12). But, none of these misfortunes will last (vv. 6c-d, 8); they will all come to an end (v. 13). Then, the speaker's exhortations appear feeble and have very limited results at the beginning (vv. 4b, 5a-b, 6b, 8, 9b, 13). Yet, when everything has come to an end, a totally new world emerges. The endurance and salvation of one person (v. 13) will be enough to turn around the entire situation into a new reality, called the universal proclamation of gospel of the kingdom (v. 14a). It is these developments that will bring about the end (v. 14b). Therefore, it will not be a destructive end, but the whole will culminate in a new presence, the triumph of the gospel.

Another significant message is conveyed in the third microtext (vv. 15-22) concerning human resourcefulness to deal with the ominous sacrilege in the holy place (v. 15) and the destructive great tribulation (vv. 21-22). That is, while the desolating sacrilege is portrayed standing

in the holy place as an object devoid of life, the listeners appear as beings full of vitality, imagination and creativity. For instance, they can see the desolating sacrilege and listen to prophetic instructions in order to deal with it effectively, and as readers they can interpret its meaning (v. 15).

Then, through exhortations and prohibitions, the text indicates the practical ways with which the audience can deal with the looming disaster (vv. 16, 17-18). Finally, even in more complex circumstances where disaster appears inevitable (v. 19), they have the way of prayer to appeal to the (implied) Spiritual Power who can provide a suitable time and weather conditions to render the flight successful (v. 20). The same intervention is implied in the action of curtailing the duration of the great tribulation for the sake of the elect (v. 22c). Therefore, while the great tribulation is brought to a definitive end, a new existence of the elect is allowed to thrive.

In this regard, the text supplements human resourcefulness and agility with a deep faith in the presence of a Divine Power whose timely intervention is sure to save during the time of crisis. Even at the height of the eschatological calamities when everything seems to head towards ruin, a few people, the elect or a remnant, will survive and continue to live through faith in the Divine presence.

There will be a re-enforced messianic propaganda which will combine verbal communication with the demonstrations of signs and portents having the power to mislead everyone (vv. 23-24). This propaganda, however, is stopped dead by the speaker who counters with incisive and compelling prohibitions, "do not believe it" (vv. 23e, 26e) and "do not go out" (v. 26c). Instead of the false propaganda, the speaker establishes his personal authority by using the first person singular in order to ensure the validity of his utterances, "Lo, I have told you beforehand" (v. 25). While the voices of the messianic pretenders are effectively dismissed as false and misleading, the speaker's words are re-enforced by the authority of his personality as a new reality which is true and reliable.

Thus, in all these microtexts the power of the *words* which is articulated through the gospel of the kingdom (v. 14) and the authority of the speaker (v. 25) prevail over all the physical structures and the eschatological woes such as the temple buildings, the deceptions of the messianic pretenders, violence, community disorders, the desolating sacrilege, and the great tribulation. All of them have a common weakness: they will not last. The speaker's words emerge in the midst of all

the eschatological chaos as a new reality. Although these words sound feeble at first, they eventually become the good news of the kingdom which will be proclaimed throughout the whole universe. Moreover, the speaker's words persist and become a new reality, because he has spoken them with authority, and they are spiritual.

The Indelible Wounds of the Παρουσία

The story of the παρουσία of the Son of Man begins with v. 27. The event is characterised by a paradox where two unlike aspects are combined as constituent elements of the παρουσία of the Son of Man. One aspect is the universal, awe-inspiring and glorious splendour of the coming Son of Man (vv. 27, 30b), while the other is the weak and vulnerable Son of Man described by the expressions referring to death, greed (24:28; 26:2b), and the past wounds (25:35-36, 42-45). The latter dimension refers to something in the Son of Man which is frail and will ultimately die, i.e. his physical body. But there is another reality of the Son of Man stemming from his frailty and death which remains and continues to exist, viz., the marks or wounds.

Thus, in the course of the analysis, we have noticed a paradoxical content showing a contrast between the triumphant and the sad dimensions of the παρουσία of the Son of Man. On the one hand, the literary unit vv. 27-28 and the microtext vv. 29-31 indicate a combination of the luminous, striking and universal characteristics of the παρουσία as illustrated by the swift and dazzling movement of lightning which encompasses the entire cosmic sphere (vv. 27, 30b). These characteristics fit the picture of the Messiah who is powerful and glorious, and will come to judge all the nations (25:31-32). On the other hand, we find sombre characteristics of death and greed represented by the dead body and the gathering of the vultures (v. 27); and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn when they see the sign of the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven (v. 30b). The sombre aspects of the παρουσία reflect the weaknesses or wounds of the past, and they are recurrent elements in this text (24:28, 30b; 25:35-36, 42-43, 45; 26:2b).

Up to this point, certain questions remain unanswered. Why should the παρουσία of the Son of Man be associated with death and the gathering of the vultures? What is the sign of the Son of Man that provokes sadness or regret on the part of all the tribes when they see it? These

questions are partially answered in the narrative analysis which articulates adequately the sombre dimension of the παρουσία of the Son of Man (vv. 27-28, 30b). These negative qualities or values present the Son of Man as a hero who has sustained wounds or indelible marks in the mould of the narrative stories. For this reason, the text presents the Son of Man's παρουσία as something genuine, and so meeting him is worthwhile.

For instance, in v. 28 there is an indication that the dead body will always attract the vultures which will gather around wherever it will be (24:28). In other words, the event of death in relation to the παρουσία of the Son of Man is paradoxical because it indicates a weakness or a termination of life. Yet, that event is never lost or forgotten altogether, because something of it is preserved or persists. Similarly, the reaction of mourning by all tribes of the earth when they see the sign (v. 30b) indicates those marks or permanent features of the παρουσία of the Son of Man which cannot be erased and provokes sadness or regret. In that way, the qualities of triumph and sadness as characteristics of the παρουσία go hand in hand.

Moreover, there is a correspondence between these instances (vv. 28, 30b) and the King's utterances on the judgment scene in which he recalls the past setbacks when he was hungry, thirsty, a stranger, etc. and some people came to his assistance (25:35-36, 40) while others ignored him (vv. 42-43, 45). Hence, these setbacks have become indelible marks in the memory of the Messiah-King. That is why he recalls them at this crucial moment of judgment; he can neither ignore them nor erase them. The text goes as far as to explain why these past tragedies cannot be forgotten: they recur in the least of the King's brothers (and sisters vv. 40, 45). Thus, the same wounds which were inflicted on the King in the past are inflicted on the least from generation to generation. In accordance with the narrative stories, such misfortunes of the past become permanent wounds or marks just like the wounds of the hero (heroes), and their presence is felt at all times.

At the end of the text, a reference is made to the crucifixion of the Son of Man which will occur after two days on the feast of Passover (26:2). The reference to the crucifixion is in fact a recurrence of the element of violence and sadness which we have seen previously in connection with the παρουσία of the Son of Man. This particular instance is significant because it indicates a

clear and direct link between death and the subject: the one who will be executed on the feast of the Passover is in fact the Son of Man who is to come. Hence, the secrecy surrounding the mysterious figure whose body lies there has at last been revealed. If the figure whose dead body attracts the vultures is indeed the Son of Man himself, then the sign of the Son of Man whose appearance in heaven will provoke sadness and regret on the part of all the tribes of the earth (v. 30b) is the cross on which the Son of Man will be hanging (26:2).

Hence, the crucifixion of the Son of Man (Matt 26:2) in the context of the Passover signified the termination of his life only as a temporary measure, because whenever the Passover was celebrated in the early Church, the Christians believed that at dawn of the following day the παρουσία of the Son of Man would take place, and he would be present and united in a new way with the community. It is specifically on account of the Son of Man's violent death on the cross that the entire event of the Passover-Crucifixion now bears the sense of a new presence and a new life in the gathering of the Christian community for the purpose of worship.

Interpretation of Signs and Spiritual Presence:

The entire parable section (24:32-25:30, see also vv. 31-46) focuses on the theme of *waiting* for the Messiah (master) who has not yet come. Although his coming is assured, the precise time is unknown, so those who are waiting rely only on the visible signs indicating that his coming is imminent. While the moment of waiting is filled with tension, anxiety and uncertainty, it is nonetheless supposed to be a period of correct observation, of interpretation of the signs and of acting appropriately. Thus, the one for whom we are waiting affects us mentally, emotionally and spiritually even before he arrives.

In the analysis of microtext six (24:32-35), we have seen from the discursive point of view that the changing vegetation of the fig tree shows the concrete and visible signs that, while the awaited summer is something beyond our grasp, it will come in the future. That is, the observation of the changes in the fig tree is in fact the interpretation of the signs which indicate that summer is close at hand. Hence, the interpretation of the fig tree phenomenon is an illustration of what happens when we are waiting for the coming of the Son of Man. "All these things" represent events

which will take place prior to the παρουσία of the Son of Man. They are concrete and visible signs, yet the reality which they signify is spiritual and beyond our sense perception because the Messiah has not yet come.

Hence, in both units (vv. 32-33, 34-35) a contrast is clearly indicated between what is concrete and visible, and what is spiritual in so far as it lies beyond sense perception and is conveyed only through the assuring words of the speaker. In this regard, the narrative analysis has described the budding fig tree and the occurrence of “all these things” (v. 33, 34) as elements of the begin state characterised by a lack which is the absence of the Son of Man. The narrative sequence, therefore, tends towards that new state when the Son of Man will be present. Furthermore, the two units indicate the manipulation which is characterised by the value of the speaker’s authoritative utterance as shown in the solemn declaration (v. 34) and the saying about the enduring words (v. 35). That is, the speaker’s words are reliable and worth listening to because of the dignity of the person who utters them. These two components of the microtext (vv. 32-35) emphasize that although the Son of Man is physically absent for the time being, there are visible signs as well as the reliable words of the speaker which guarantee that his coming is imminent and certain. Therefore, the Son of Man’s coming is the subject of faith and hope, and that is made real and present now by the authority of the speaker whose words are valid and reliable for all times (vv. 34-35).

Moreover, what the visible signs and the spiritual reality signify is accentuated in the following parable stories (vv. 37-44). These stories use signs taken from the concrete life experience; they illustrate the importance of interpreting and understanding the meaning of those signs, and lead to appropriate and timely action.

At the outset, the text underlines the general ignorance which prevails regarding the exact time of the Son of Man’s coming (v. 36). The knowledge of the day and hour is reserved to “the Father” who is an exception to the general rule (24:36b). The exclusive knowledge of the Father, however, represents the greatest guarantee that the Son of Man is surely coming, since such knowledge is based on the authority of someone who is greater than the angels and the Son (v. 36). Thus, through the reference to this person the speaker elicits the highest authority possible in order

to assure the listeners that what he says concerning the Son of Man's coming is true, that it is indeed a fact hidden in the mind of the Father.

The three following parables (vv. 37-39, 40-41, 43) reiterate the importance of seeing the signs and interpreting their meaning. However, what is peculiar to these stories are the two different ways in which various people react to the signs. There is a majority of people who ignore the signs altogether, thus when disaster comes they are taken by surprise and perish. But there are a few people who keenly observe and interpret the signs, and when disaster comes, they are ready to take appropriate action to avoid it.

Noah's contemporaries busied themselves with self-indulgence and were oblivious to the ominous disaster right up to the day when Noah entered the ark. When the flood eventually came they were taken by surprise, and they all perished (v. 39). But Noah was alert, i.e. he observed and interpreted the signs correctly. On the right day he entered the ark (v. 38c). Likewise, of the two men working in the field one will be saved and another will perish; and the same applies for the two women working at the mill. These examples are illustrations of what will happen when the παρουσία of the Son of Man takes place: some people will be saved, others will perish. Finally, the householder's negligence of his duty to keep vigil would cost him his house, because the thief would come and break through the house at an unexpected time of the night (v. 43). These examples emphasize the importance of keeping vigil constantly since one does not know in what part of the day the Lord is coming (vv. 42, 44).

The speaker's utterances point at the signs of His presence, so they (utterances) are of greater significance in this part of the text. He uses several communication strategies. First, he appeals to his own authority in the solemn declarations characterised by the first person singular "I say..." (24:2c, 25, 34); and the vast majority of these sayings are introduced by the stereotyped formula *Amen/Truly*, in order to confirm them as reliable and true (24:2c, 34, 47; 25:12b, 40b, 45b). In this regard, Lev GILLET describes the *amen* as "...the guarantee, to speak with an infallible authority."⁹¹ Secondly, the speaker refers to the universality of the gospel of the kingdom (v. 14a)

⁹¹ See Lev GILLET, "Amen," in *The Expository Times*, 56 (1944/5), p. 135; see also David DAUBE, "Ill Amen," in *The Journal of Theological Studies*, 15 (1964), pp. 27-31; Heinrich SCHLIER, "ἀμήν," in KITTEL, *Dictionary*, pp. 335-38.

and to the immortality of his words (v. 35). Thirdly, the speaker appeals to the supreme authority of the Father (v. 36) in order to reassure and convince the hearers that the *παρουσία* of the Son of Man will certainly take place soon. Their faith should be based on the Father's prior knowledge (v. 36) and on the speaker's words which are valid and true at all times.

The following set of parables (24:45-25:30) deal with *seeing* and *interpreting* the signs during the Son of Man's absence, and then with working hard in preparing oneself to become ready to meet him when he comes. The three parables give examples of two different responses to the challenge of interpreting and following the signs. First, we start with those elements (slaves, virgins, groups at the right hand on the day of judgment) who saw the signs, interpreted them correctly, and took a right course of action during the time of waiting. When the master came after a long while, he found them ready to meet him with good works. Here a question arises: What prompted them to apply themselves so diligently during the time of waiting when everything else seemed to be quiet? The answer is that they had observed and interpreted the time of quiet correctly as a sign that the Son of Man's coming was imminent.

For instance, what motivates the slave described as "faithful and wise" (vv. 45-47) to work diligently during the master's absence is his observation and interpretation of certain incidents. The great trust which the master has shown in this slave by giving him the all-important task of feeding the members of his (master's) own household (v. 45), is seen as a clear sign that the master could come at any time and demand the account of how he has performed his duties. Therefore, the slave resolves to work diligently and constantly in executing his duties to the best of his ability, to ensure that at any time when the master comes he will be found faithfully engaged. Interestingly, the narrative sequence of this unit dwells on the cognitive operations in the manipulation and sanction, in order to underline the values attributed to this slave such as, he is "faithful and wise" (v. 45), a "blessed" or "happy" slave (v. 46), and his master will give him "all his possessions" (v. 47). These are spiritual values which indicate that the state of the slave has been transformed. That is, this slave is already in communion with his master (although the latter is still physically absent). This slave who was initially described as faithful and wise, and entrusted with only part of the responsibility (v. 45), is now in full communion with the master, i.e. he has the whole responsibility over the master's

possessions (v. 47). Moreover, the new values associated with the slave, such as “happiness” and the “full trust” (vv. 46-47), describe the spiritual bond in which both subjects now participate.

Similarly, the five wise virgins whose task was to meet the bridegroom began by making proper calculations and by acquiring all the elements necessary to render their meeting with the bridegroom successful (25:1-2, 4-10). For instance, they took with them not only the burning lamps but also a sufficient supply of oil (v. 4); they rejected the request of the foolish virgins to share oil on the ground that the supply might diminish (v. 9). Consequently, when the bridegroom came, these virgins were ready to meet him. They entered with him into the wedding hall (v. 10b). Thus, the joy of participating in the wedding celebration in the company of the bridegroom is a spiritual benefit gained by these virgins due to their correct perception and interpretation of the signs.

Likewise, the two slaves who had been given five and two talents respectively regarded the distribution of the talents according to each person’s ability (v. 15) as a sign that this moment was a rare opportunity for them to improve their lot. Each of them applied himself fully to the business and acquired a 100% gain. This achievement earned the two slaves much more than mere interest: on the day of reckoning they received the master’s praise, the promise of greater fortunes, and above all an invitation into the joyful life with the master (vv. 21, 23). For these slaves, the reward for the correct vision and the interpretation of the signs is the priceless gift of spiritual bonding with their master.

The narrative sequence of the three parables enables the reader to understand the judgment scene: for instance, why will the Son of Man-King invite the group at his right hand (the sheep) to enter into the kingdom, saying to them: “ ‘Come, O Blessed of my Father’ ”? (25:34b). The answer is provided by the text: because this group have the kingdom already prepared for them by the Father since the beginning of time (25:34). The repetition of the term Father in this case indicates an important development of the paternal role of God in relation to the previous occurrence (24:36). The same Father-Son relation which exists between the Father and the Son of Man is now extended to those at the right hand side. As François-Xavier Durrwell so eloquently

observed, God's paternity is at the basis of a deeper understanding of the Paschal mystery.⁹² Through this invitation, the righteous share with the Son of Man in the new life of filial communion with the Father.

In the past, this group recognized the signs in the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and the prisoner, and they rendered assistance wherever it was required even if they did not fully grasp the significance of those signs (vv. 37-39). The past events of the desperate needs of the least of the brethren turned out to be the concrete signs of the Messiah's spiritual presence (vv. 40, 45). His presence in the least was so real that the King could say that the kindness done to the least of the brethren was done to him (v. 40), and the kindness refused to the least was in fact refused to him (v. 45). Ultimately, the correct interpretation of the signs and the correct action taken by those at the right hand earned them a share in the new life with the Messiah (vv. 34, 46b).

Secondly, we review the three parables (including the judgment scene) from the angle of those who misread or ignored the signs, and consequently, did not act appropriately. In 24:48, the "wicked slave" misinterprets the quiet atmosphere when the master is away, concluding that the master will be delayed. Furthermore, he blurs his own vision by indulging in drunkenness and other misdemeanours (v. 49). Consequently, he does not see the signs clearly, and when the master comes he is least prepared to meet him (v. 50). As punishment, this slave is excluded from the life with the master and banished into the place of great pain (v. 51).

Another case is that of the "five foolish virgins" (25:2-3, 8, 10a, 11-12) who did not see the signs at all until it was too late. When they saw the signs, they could not interpret their meaning. In their preparation to meet the bridegroom, these virgins did not consider it necessary to provide themselves with extra oil. Only at midnight, when the caller announced the arrival of the bridegroom, did they realize that they needed some more oil because their lamps were going out (v. 8). Moreover, even at that late hour they miscalculated the time available to them when they readily acquiesced to the suggestion made by their wise counterparts to go out to buy their own oil.

⁹² See Réal TREMBLAY, "La 'relation filiale' de l'homme avec Dieu sur la morale chrétienne selon F.-X. Durrwell," *Studia Moralia*, 35 (1997), pp. 233-46; François-Xavier DURRWELL, "La théologie comme charisme apostolique," *Studia Moralia*, 35 (1997), pp. 247-56.

Ultimately, they missed the arrival of the bridegroom, and when he had entered into the wedding hall the door was forever closed to them (vv. 10-12). Thus, the lack of perception and understanding of the signs denied the foolish virgins a place at the wedding banquet, and they were treated as strangers.

Furthermore, “the slave with one talent” (25:15, 18, 24-28, 30) appears as someone who saw the signs but, due to the fear of his master, misinterpreted their meaning. Consequently this led him to an inappropriate action: “Master, I knew you to be a hard man, ...so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground” (vv. 24b-25). The unfortunate slave heard about the correct meaning of the signs from the master himself on the day of reckoning, but then it was too late (vv. 26-27). This slave was deprived of the only talent he had, and then cast out into a place of darkness and pain (v. 30). Thus he lost the mental, emotional and spiritual bond which had existed between him and his master.

The three instances from the parables mirror the situation of those who will be on the left hand side of the King on the judgment day. These people had failed to perceive that the desperate conditions of the least who were hungry, thirsty, strangers, etc., were in fact the conditions of the Lord himself. Furthermore, unlike their counterparts on the right hand side, the group on the left ignored even the ordinary signs of human need which urgently called for help.⁹³ Consequently, this group is judged as not belonging to the kingdom: “ ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire...’ ” (25:41), “And they will go away into eternal punishment...” (v. 46a).

In all these cases we find the same pattern. The wicked and slothful slaves, the foolish virgins and the group at the King's left hand side fail to observe and interpret the signs properly. So while the master (bridegroom or Messiah) is away, they do not work hard to prepare themselves so that when he comes they are ready to meet him with the fruits of their labour such as the good works, the burning lamps, the interest, and the works of compassion. Consequently, in the end all these actors are severely punished by being deprived of the spiritual bond with their master, either by being cast out into the place of pain, left out in the cold or excluded from the joyful company with

⁹³ The omission to show compassion is as reproachable as the negative reaction of the priest and the Levite towards the injured man lying on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. But the Samaritan took care of him (Lk 10:29-37).

the master in the kingdom.

Summary of the Theological Commentary.

The theological commentary has shown that the movement of sense in this text follows a particular logic, and that it bears a theological meaning which gradually unfolds as one reads along. On the first level, the text describes the breakdown of the physical structures as an indication of their fragility or vulnerability. However, apart from physical structures, there are spiritual realities which are non-perishable and continue to exist after the physical dimension has been destroyed.

For instance, the temple buildings as a place of religious worship will be utterly destroyed (24:2). Similarly, the physical life of the Son of Man will come to a violent end on the feast of the Passover when he will be crucified (26:2). Thus, the destruction of the temple and the crucifixion of the Son of Man represent a despair which does not last. Nevertheless, in both cases there is a spiritual dimension which persists as an indestructible reality, described at some length in the second and third levels as elements of faith and hope. These elements consist of the speaker's words and the human spirit to survive echoed several times in expressions such as "see all these things," "Truly, I say to you" (24:2c, 34, 47; 25:12b, 40b, 45b), and "the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom," "Pray that your flight may..." (v. 20) and "I have told you beforehand." (v. 25).

Moreover, all the microtexts of the second level have described the eschatological woes one by one, so that they appear forceful and overwhelming. Yet, all of them have a common weakness, they eventually come to an end. Then from their ashes a new life emerges. This consists of the resistance against calamities (vv. 4b, 6b, 8), and the endurance and salvation of the few (v. 13). Ultimately, the whole process develops into the gospel of the kingdom to be proclaimed throughout the world (v. 14).

Then, in the midst of the desolating sacrilege in the holy place (v. 15) and the subsequent great tribulation, there emerges the resilient and indefatigable human spirit with the determination to survive as a new reality. This is indicated in the resourcefulness of human beings to cope with the ominous presence of the sacrilege and the great tribulation (vv. 16-20). The human spirit coupled with the intervention of the Spiritual Power (vv. 20, 22) will ensure the curtailment of the damage that the tribulation may inflict upon humanity and the survival of the elect.

Verses 23-26 show that the envisaged powerful propaganda of the messianic pretenders is rendered null and void by the sheer force of the speaker's words and the authority of his person. That is, through the incisive prohibitions (vv. 23e, 26c, e) and the declaration in the first person, "I have told you beforehand" (v. 25), the machinations of the messianic pretenders are effectively brought to an end, while the unquestionable authority of the speaker as the communicator of the truth is fully established. What the speaker communicates is true and reliable, because he has spoken it.

However, the description of the παρουσία of the Son of Man which is the climax of this text (24:27-28, 29-31; 25:31-32) presents us with a paradox. In spite of the great moment of power and glory which portrays the παρουσία of the Son of Man as a dazzling and triumphant event, the wounds incurred in the past remain evident, and they cause sorrow and remorse to those who see the sign (v. 30b); they cause disbelief and shock to those who are reminded of the past (25:37-39, 44). The wounds of the past have thus become indelible marks of the Son of Man which will appear in heaven (24:30a). Such marks have become timeless or permanent features of the Son of Man, signaling his presence.

Then as we read into the third level the parable stories (24:32-25:30), the text appears to be sliding into an anti-climax, due to numerous indications of the master's absence in expressions such as: "he is not yet" (24:32-33, 34), "Concerning that day and hour, nobody knows..." (v.36a-b) and "he is delayed..." (vv. 48b; 25:5-6, 19). Consequently, we have at our disposal only the visible signs, whereas the reality remains hidden or unknown to us. There are strong guarantees, however, that the One (the Messiah) who is signified and for whom we are waiting is imminent. First, we are assured of this fact by the reliable authority of the speaker's person and his words which are valid and true at all times (24:35b). Secondly, the exact day and hour of the Messiah's coming is already known and kept as a top secret by the Father (v. 36b). Thus, the assurance of the Son of Man's presence is based on the solid faith in the speaker's words and on the divine authority of the Father.

Consequently, the rest of the parable section (24:37-25:30) is a challenge to the hearers to see and interpret the signs correctly and to perform good works while they are waiting for the Son of

Man so that when he comes they are ready to meet him. For instance, the narratives about the wisdom and diligence of Noah, the five wise virgins and the slaves provide an incentive for the audiences to do the same during the period of waiting. But, the failure to read the signs by Noah's contemporaries, the wicked slave, the foolish virgins and the slave with one talent results in dire consequences. These serve as a warning to the listeners not to follow such examples.

Thus, the parable section corresponds to the final judgment scene in its challenge to the audience and readers to see and interpret the signs of the Messiah's presence, which is no longer a simple reality of the past or something which is still to come. It is a personal experience of the present situation. When the speaker relates the story of the judgment scene to the audience, it is presented as an event of the past with an impact on the present. The righteous at the right-hand side are invited into the kingdom because of the good works towards the King in the least of the brothers (vv. 35-36, 40). This is intended as a motivation for the audience to become part of this group by their own good works towards the King who is in the least of the brothers (and sisters) here and now in their own lifetime. Similarly, those at the left-hand side are portrayed as the cursed, and they are cast out into eternal fire because of their neglect of the King in the least (vv. 41-43, 45), as a deterrent to the listeners not to follow such omissions of good works towards the King. Hence, on the day of judgment the audience and readers will be judged and retribution served on them; whether it will be a reward or punishment depends on their performance now. Thus, the speaker establishes the presence of the Son of Man in the least from the moment of his speech and for all time.

CONCLUSION

In the introduction, we stated that our goal in this dissertation was to establish that Matthew's eschatological discourse ends with 26:1-2 rather than with 25:46. The thesis is based on the conviction that the content of 26:1-2 is essentially linked to the preceding eschatological discourse material rather than the subsequent passion-resurrection narrative (26:3-28:20), and that without 26:1-2 Jesus' response to the disciples' question concerning the time and the sign of his παρουσία and the end-time (24:3) would be incomplete.

Our survey of scholarly views has shown that the traditional opinion regards 25:46 as the endpoint of Matthew's eschatological discourse, with most scholars treating 26:1-2 as part of the passion-resurrection narrative. Our review has nevertheless revealed a lack of consensus regarding the boundaries of the said discourse, as well as a lack of clarity in the organisation of the eschatological material by some commentators.

We hope to conclude by showing how the inclusion of 26:1-2 has played a key role in the discovery of the tripartite structure of the discourse. This structure not only reveals the logical organisation of the material, but also brings about a sound theological commentary, thereby confirming our original hypothesis.

A. THE TRIPARTITE STRUCTURE

Chapter one has established the boundaries of Matthew's eschatological discourse and redefined its structure. Our study was not based on the source-redaction criticism, nor was our goal to rediscover the intentionality of the author. Our investigation was based on a semiotic reading⁹⁴ of the discourse.

These efforts have yielded interesting results. Not only did we determine that 26:1-2 is the ending of Matthew's version of the eschatological discourse, but we offer a new proposal of the threefold structure which facilitates the comprehension of the whole text. The three distinct levels are related to each other in a particular way. The first level consists of a dialogue section in two parts (24:1-4a; 26:1-2), between which a long speech section is inserted (24:4b--25:46); the two dialogue segments deal with Jesus' departure from the temple and the disciples' question concerning the time and the sign of Jesus' *παρουσία* and the end of the age. The second level, in speech form, consists of the response to the question in 24:3 in the form of stories about the eschatological woes and the coming of the Son of Man. The second level is also divided into two segments (24:4b-31; 25:31-46), between which the parable section is inserted. The parable section (24:32--25:30) makes up the third level and consists of stories about the time of waiting for the master and judgment.

The value of this tripartite structure is that it shows the logical succession of the various parts of the eschatological discourse. Because the three levels are interlinked they convey a theological meaning. The meaning is that Jesus who has gone away from the temple is expected (by his disciples) to come back or be present (24:3). But, once his earthly life has come to an end (26:2), he will be present in a spiritual way rather than in his physical form. There is something of him which will endure, and that is his words (24:35). Moreover, after his crucifixion and death, he will rise again into new life. To the believers the celebration of the Passover in the context of the crucifixion will express a new life of resurrection based on the christian faith and worship.

The tripartite structure underlines the significance of communication, and depends on

⁹⁴ See "Methodology" in the introduction, pp. 19-21.

various factors. In the context of the structure of Matthew's gospel the eschatological discourse appears as the fifth and final set of Jesus' sayings to his disciples immediately before his death. It constitutes thus the climax of his teaching, or, as Fred Burnett has pointed out, Jesus' last will.⁹⁵ Of importance also is the fact that this discourse is given privately to the disciples on the Mount of Olives soon after Jesus' unsuccessful ministry in Jerusalem and in the temple (chapters 21-23). This is a spatial revolution. The privacy of the communication on the mountain⁹⁶ points, consequently, to a readjustment of the focus of Jesus' teaching. Jerusalem, the home of Judaism, has proven to be unworthy of the Messiah's special attention (23:37-39), and now, exclusive attention is devoted to the disciples who show eagerness to get the best out of it, "Tell us,..." (24:3). So the Messiah has made a new home on the mountain, and a new messianic people has been born.

It is within the tripartite structure that Jesus articulates powerfully the message about his παρουσία. Below we shall underline some cases of this powerful message we have discovered.

⁹⁵ BURNETT, Testament, p. 29.

⁹⁶ Special attention given to disciples echoes previous instances, Matt 13:10-17; 16:13-23; 17:18.

B. NEW THEOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

In the status questionis we raised a question⁹⁷ which would guide our analysis and reflection on the text (Matt 24:1--26:2). At the conclusion of this dissertation we would like to revisit this question in order to highlight some theological insights.

Our discursive and narrative analyses have shown that aside from physical structures characterised by fragility and destructibility, there exists something non-tangible, spiritual and enduring.

1. Abandonment of the Physical Temple for a Spiritual Reality

The discussion of the fate of the temple's physical structure (24:2, 15) and the Son of Man's earthly life (26:2) has provided an important theological insight from the first level of the tripartite structure. The semiotic square has shown that the movement of various elements in the text causes the theological message to revolve around two basic themes, /division/ and /unity/. We noted that Jesus' two movements from the temple and from his physical life constitute a separation from these physical realities. The Son of Man's glorious coming with power to judge all the nations constitutes his spiritual presence which will occur after the Passover-crucifixion as a new and eternal state of the convergence or unity of the good forces, the Father, the King/Son and the righteous.

Jesus' exit from the temple is immediately linked with his oracle of doom against its buildings in order to indicate the seriousness of his movement. This is not an ordinary exit, but rather an abandonment, indicating that the temple as a place of religious worship has lost its value. However, Jesus' rhetorical question and the saying about "all these things" (24:2b) indicates that behind the physical façade there is something non visible and enduring. That is the spiritual dimension of worship which will continue after the temple has been destroyed.

There is a correspondence between Jesus' departure from the temple and the announcement of the Son of Man's crucifixion on the feast of Passover. Both instances deal with the destruction of physical existence in a religious context. The Son of Man's earthly life will be

⁹⁷ See above, p. 3.

taken in the context of the Passover feast. Consequently, the religious meaning of this feast will be transformed, as Jesus will no longer participate in it. Instead, a new liturgical life based on the faith of the believers will prevail.

In this way, these two departures bring Jesus' indictment against Jerusalem and the temple to its logical fulfillment: "Behold, your house is forsaken and desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord' " (23:38-29). The departures do not, however, mean the end of religious worship. On the contrary, this depends upon the faith of the people whether they embrace Jesus as the One who is to come or not, "until you say 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of Lord' " (v. 39). This parallel between the preceding text and the eschatological discourse convinces us that our earlier assertion is correct, that the predictions made by Jesus in chapter 23 are fulfilled in 26:2.

Once Jesus has left the temple a religious vacuum occurs because the temple has no Messiah. On the Mount of Olives, the disciples' question reveals their anxiety and expectation that sometime in the future Jesus would return in his physical self as the Messiah to reclaim the temple. But, the worthlessness of the physical temple is reiterated during the speech in the description of the desolating sacrilege. The holy place becomes insecure, it must be abandoned forthwith. Alternatively Jesus revealed to the disciples a new reality which is spiritual, non-visible and non-perishable. This reality lies hidden behind the visible and perishable physical structures. For instance, continuity of new life is ensured by the universal proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom, the resourcefulness of the people in coping with the threatening situations and the timely intervention of the Spiritual Power for the survival of the elect. These elements were classified under the category of /non-division/.

Therefore, in the dialogue (24:1-4a; 26:1-2) the text shifts the emphasis away from the destructible realities of the temple and Jesus' physical life, to what is stable and reliable, that is, the gospel and Jesus' words. Henceforth, what is important are the words which are uttered in this eschatological discourse and the authority of the One who utters them. The power and stability of Jesus' words is the most recurrent concept throughout the discourse. We find this in the solemn declarations (24:2c, 34, 47; 25:12b, 40b, 45b), in the "I" saying (24:25) and in the declaration about the permanence of the speaker's words (v. 35b). The power of the words lies in the fact that they

are spiritual; and it is the speaker's words which inspire faith that will endure. In that way, the destruction of the temple and the crucifixion of the Son of Man do not leave a religious vacuum. On the contrary, henceforth worship relies on a principle that is spiritual and enduring rather than on the physical and perishable.

2. Real Παρουσία as Anticipatory and Spiritual

The analyses have shown that the parable stories describe the present situation as characterised by the absence of the master (bridegroom). He is not yet come, he is delayed, and no one knows the exact time of his coming. In the movement of elements, this belongs to the category of /non-unity/. There are, nonetheless, guarantees built into the text which assure us that the One who is signified (the Messiah) will come soon. In a spiritual sense there is already a consciousness of him in the mind of those who wait for him. That is possible through a preexisting relationship between the slaves and their master, illustrating the spiritual bond between the Son and the Father and between the listeners and the Son of man.

The first instance is in the sixth microtext which describes the growth of the fig tree as a visible sign of the summer which has not yet come. Likewise, the events described as "all these things" (24:33-34) are concrete signs which give assurance that the coming of the Son of Man is imminent. Thus, the signs make present in anticipation what we do not yet see concretely.

The most significant expression, however, is the opposition between the physical reality that will come to an end and the speaker's words which will endure for ever.⁹⁸ The indicates a new presence which is not physical but spiritual as an object of faith. It is based on the speaker's own authority which affirms that what he communicates about the παρουσία of the Son of Man is valid and true, and must be taken as a fact already fulfilled or accomplished.⁹⁹ The permanence of Jesus' new presence is corroborated by Matthew's version of the ascension. Jesus does not leave his disciples alone. But he will be with them in a new way, " 'All authority in heaven and on earth has

⁹⁸ When Jesus dies in his physical self, his words will remain because they are spirit.

⁹⁹ See pp. 175-76 footnote 90 above.

been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations... and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.' " (28:18b-20).

Furthermore, there is a reference to the Father's prior and exclusive knowledge of the day and hour of the Son (v. 36). In fact, this prior knowledge is an indication that the *παρουσία* of the Son of Man is already a reality in the mind of the Father. Then when the speaker, who is the Son, articulates it, he is rendering the *παρουσία* real and present so that we (audience and readers) can anticipate it in faith.

The stories of Noah, the workers and the householder underscore the importance of seeing and interpreting the signs of the Lord's coming correctly, in order that he finds us ready. In some cases, the speaker uses parable stories as speech devices to encourage the audience to see and interpret the signs and discover for themselves that the Messiah's coming is imminent. The significance of these devices is to create a sense of urgency concerning the Son of Man's coming.

The last three parables reveal the existence of the mental, emotional and spiritual relationship between the slaves and their master well before his return and the day of reckoning. On the one hand, we noticed that the faithful and wise slave is already in communion with his master long before he arrives. That is, between the two actors there already exists a spiritual bond indicated in the desire to do the master's will. When the master comes, this bond is strengthened as indicated by the values of happiness, fortune and prosperity. On the other hand, the gap between the wicked slave and his master begins before the master comes back. This slave dismisses from his memory any thought of the master. When the master comes and finds him without any good works the gap widens as he casts him away. We see that a potential exists for the presence of the Son of Man in our consciousness. The two slaves illustrate that it is up to our individual mental disposition. We may therefore recognize and welcome the Son of Man's presence or dismiss it by thinking and acting like he is in a distant future.

We have seen that the five wise virgins' astuteness in managing their affairs helps to maintain the mental link between them and the awaited bridegroom. They do not lose sight of their goal, but preserve a sufficient supply of oil so that when the bridegroom arrives they are ready.

Likewise, on the day of reckoning several elements indicate that the spiritual bond between

the two hard-working slaves and their master existed long before his return. Once the master has returned, this relationship is transformed from master-slave to a fraternal relationship of those who share in the same joy, just as the wise virgins and the bridegroom share in the same feast.

This type of relationship enables us to understand how the judgment scene makes present the spiritual relationship between the Son of Man and the group at his right, while it shows the lack of a similar relationship with the group at his left. In this section, certain qualities are associated with the righteous even prior to their invitation to inherit the kingdom. The King calls them, " '... O blessed of my Father' " (25:34b), and they are regarded as those who have always belonged to the kingdom, " 'inherit the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world' " (v. 34c). This label and invitation underline the intimate relationship of God's paternity towards the Son and the latter's filial communion with the Father. It asserts that those on the right are entitled to the new and profound experience of the same relationship.

In Jesus' speech describing the last judgment, he reveals that close bonds have always existed between the righteous and the King. This spiritual bond existed in spite of the fact that the righteous were not aware of it. The King in identifying himself with the least indicates his spiritual presence in their most desperate situations. The King's relationship with the least is so powerful and he identifies so completely with them that whatever assistance they receive is indeed given to him. Any assistance denied them is also denied the King himself.

In all these instances, we are dealing with a spiritual presence of a person in other persons which is beyond physical or tangible feelings. That is, a person may be physically absent but spiritually present in such a way that he positively influences the actions of others. This is the kind of presence which the master has upon the good slave who performed his duties faithfully while the master was delayed.

On the negative side, the spiritual presence is lacking when a slave is so negligent of his duties because he considers the master to be distant. This shows a spiritual gap or emptiness in the relationship between the slave and his master. On the day of reckoning the gap is infinitely widened when the slave is cast out from the master's presence. The emptiness is felt also by those who have never experienced his presence, on account of their lack of insight to read and understand the

signs. For these actors there can be no παρουσία of the Son of Man.

We conclude that the παρουσία of the Son of Man is a personal experience. It expresses a spiritual bond already present between the Messiah and those who wait wisely. To experience the παρουσία of the Son of Man requires faith and wisdom in interpreting the signs, as well as diligence in performing one's duty.

3. The Cross as Sign of the Son of Man's Παρουσία

Jesus' speech delivered as a response to the disciples' question (24:3) about the time and sign of his παρουσία concludes with the information about the crucifixion of the Son of Man which will occur on the feast of the Passover two days hence (26:2).

The announcement of the Passover-crucifixion anticipates that Jesus' violent death on the cross¹⁰⁰ will leave an imprint of wounds on his body. It is the indelible character of the wounds which inevitably links the parts of the text dealing with the coming of the Son of Man (24:27-31; 25:31-46) to the event of Passover-crucifixion which concludes the eschatological discourse.

To the Father is reserved the knowledge of the time of the Son's coming (24:36). Only the Son through his filial relationship with the Father can have access to that secret. Two instances of the glorified Son of Man coming from heaven (24:30-31; 25:31) assume that certain related incidents have already taken place: the Passover-crucifixion (26:2), the resurrection and ascension (28:1-20). Through his intimate filial communion with his Father after the resurrection and ascension, the Son of Man must have had access to the divine secrets. Hence, the Son of Man's power to judge all the nations derives from this filial communion with the Father. The most significant event of the judgment is the invitation of those at the right hand, and the dismissal of those at the left. The meaning of the former action is profoundly described in F.-X. Durrwell's article as an "...entry into a personal communion with him who has become their salvation."¹⁰¹

Concerning the sign, our hypothesis that the Passover-crucifixion is two-dimensional is

¹⁰⁰ On the physical, mental and emotional scars or marks caused by the crucifixion, see John J. COLLINS, "The Archeology of the Crucifixion," in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 1 (1939), pp. 145-59.

¹⁰¹ English translation is mine; see DURRWELL, "Théologie...", *Studia Moralia*, 35 (1997), p. 254.

affirmed. That is, while the earthly life of the Son of Man comes to an end, the wounds sustained on the cross become a permanent feature of the Son of Man's new presence for the benefit of those who will remain behind. These wounds cannot be ignored, and through them the Son of Man will continue to challenge humanity: he will arouse sadness and he will judge all human beings for the compassion given to the least and for omitting to show such compassion.

Henceforth, each time Jesus' story is told the marks of the crucifixion on Jesus' body will be the evidence of his heroic life as the crucified Son of Man who, through his παρουσία, has conquered death by rising from the dead. Thus, the cross is the sign of Jesus παρουσία and the end of the age.

Finally, the Son of Man's ordeal reiterates the previous reference to the tribulation which will be undergone by the listeners. They too will participate in the παρουσία of the Son of Man by incurring similar heroic marks through their own torture and death during the persecutions (24:9, 13). In that way, the discourse relates the personal experience of persecution to the event of the cross. This relationship helps to deepen the faith and understanding of the believers concerning the Son of Man's new presence. Therefore, Jesus' death on the cross and their own persecutions are not bad news. On the contrary they signify a new state of existence in which the Son of Man and the listeners partake of the same ordeal which bequeaths them unity as their new and permanent state. The value of the state is apprehended only with the eyes of faith.

C. SUMMARY OF CONCLUSION

Our conclusion has shown beyond any doubt that 26:1-2 is an important part of Matthew's eschatological discourse. It plays a crucial role in the constitution of the tripartite structure, and subsequently, in the understanding of the theological meaning of the whole text.

Since 26:1-2 has a narrative format, it has a complementary role in relation to 24:1-4a. Thus, the disciples' question in 24:3 concerning the time and the sign of Jesus' παρουσία is definitively answered in 26:2. To the disciples' hopes that Jesus will return in his physical self, Jesus' response gives an alternative which is a spiritual presence of the Son of Man in the proclamation of the gospel

and in the speaker's words. The shocking announcement about the crucifixion of the Son of Man coincides with the feast of the Passover, to relate it to the new life of the resurrection celebrated by the christians as the παρουσία of the Lord. So there is a new life after the crucifixion. This life is characterized by wounds as the indelible marks of a hero. These marks will, just like the words, remain for ever, challenging the faith of the christian community.

The theological message in the parable section revolves around two opposing factors: being one with the Son of Man and being separated from him. This is illustrated by contrasts in relationships of the slaves with their master. Some slaves are in harmony with the master's will during his absence. When he eventually comes back their inclusion into the joyful state with him becomes their eternal reward. That is, they discover the παρουσία to be a sharing personal relationship. But the slaves who negligently or stubbornly maintain the distance by disassociating themselves from the master's will, are punished by the escalation of the gap between themselves and their master. They never get to know the παρουσία.

These stories drawn from human life experience crystallize in the judgment scene where the Son of Man-Shepherd-King invites those at his right to an eternal reward with him and the Father, and dismisses those at his left to eternal fire with the devil and his angels. The παρουσία of the Son of Man is experienced by the former and completely lost to the latter.

These two contrary experiences of the παρουσία are the post Passover-crucifixion experiences of faith. For some it is an experience of faith in and communion with the Father and the Son of Man, now risen from the dead and present in a new way. But for others it is an experience of a lack of such faith and exclusion from the joy of communion with the Son of Man.

Ε Χ Ο Υ Ρ Η Σ Ο Σ

Α. ΤΗ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΚΑΤΑΧΡΑΣΗ

[Matt 24:1-26:2]

Ματθ. 24:1 Καὶ ἐξελθὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀπὸ τοῦ ἱεροῦ ἐπορεύετο, καὶ προσῆλθον οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ἐπιδειξαι αὐτῷ τὰς οἰκοδομὰς τοῦ ἱεροῦ. 2 ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· Οὐ βλέπετε ταῦτα πάντα; ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, οὐ μὴ ἀφεθῆ ὧδε λίθος ἐπὶ λίθον ὃς οὐ καταλυθήσεται.

3 Καθημένου δὲ αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τοῦ ὄρους τῶν Ἐλαιῶν προσῆλθον αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ κατ' ἰδίαν λέγοντες· Εἰπέ ἡμῖν πότε ταῦτα ἔσται καὶ τί τὸ σημεῖον τῆς σῆς παρουσίας καὶ συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος; 4 καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς·

Βλέπετε μὴ τις ὑμᾶς πλανήσῃ. 5 πολλοὶ γὰρ ἐλεύσονται ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου λέγοντες· Ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ Χριστός, καὶ πολλοὺς πλανήσουσιν. 6 μελλήσετε δὲ ἀκούειν πολέμους καὶ ἀκοὰς πολέμων· ὁράτε μὴ θροεῖσθε· δεῖ γὰρ γενέσθαι, ἀλλ' οὕτω ἐστὶν τὸ τέλος. 7 ἐγερθήσεται γὰρ ἔθνος ἐπὶ ἔθνος καὶ βασιλεία ἐπὶ βασιλείαν καὶ ἔσονται λιμοὶ καὶ σεισμοὶ κατὰ τόπους· 8 πάντα δὲ ταῦτα ἀρχὴ ὠδίνων.

9 τότε παραδώσουσιν ὑμᾶς εἰς θλίψιν καὶ ἀποκτενοῦσιν ὑμᾶς, καὶ ἔσεσθε μισούμενοι ὑπὸ πάντων τῶν ἐθνῶν διὰ τὸ ὄνομά μου.

10 καὶ τότε σκανδαλισθήσονται πολλοὶ καὶ ἀλλήλους παραδώσουσιν καὶ μισήσουσιν ἀλλήλους· 11 καὶ πολλοὶ ψευδοπροφήται ἐγερθήσονται καὶ πλανήσουσιν πολλούς· 12 καὶ διὰ τὸ πληθυνθῆναι τὴν ἀνομίαν ψυγήσεται ἡ ἀγάπη τῶν πολλῶν. 13 ὁ δὲ

ὑπομείνας εἰς τέλος οὗτος σωθήσεται. 14 καὶ κηρυχθήσεται τοῦτο τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ οἰκουμένῃ εἰς μαρτύριον πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, καὶ τότε ἕξει τὸ τέλος.

15 Ὅταν οὖν ἴδητε τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ Δανιὴλ τοῦ προφήτου ἐστὸς ἐν τόπῳ ἁγίῳ, ὁ ἀναγινώσκων νοεῖτω,

16 τότε οἱ ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ φευγέτωσαν εἰς τὰ ὄρη, 17 ὁ ἐπὶ τοῦ δώματος μὴ καταβάτω ἄραι τὰ ἐκ τῆς οἰκίας αὐτοῦ, 18 καὶ ὁ ἐν τῷ ἀγρῷ μὴ ἐπιστρεψάτω ὀπίσω ἄραι τὸ ἱμάτιον αὐτοῦ. 19 οὐαὶ δὲ ταῖς ἐν γαστρὶ ἐχούσαις καὶ ταῖς θηλαζούσαις ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις. 20 προσεύχεσθε δὲ ἵνα μὴ γένηται ἡ φυγὴ ὑμῶν χειμῶνος μηδὲ σαββάτω.

21 ἔσται γὰρ τότε θλίψις μεγάλη οἷα οὐ γέγονεν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς κόσμου ἕως τοῦ νῦν οὐδ' οὐ μὴ γένηται. 22 καὶ εἰ μὴ ἐκολοβώθησαν αἱ ἡμέραι ἐκεῖναι, οὐκ ἂν ἐσώθη πᾶσα σὰρξ· διὰ δὲ τοὺς ἐκλεκτοὺς κολοβωθήσονται αἱ ἡμέραι ἐκεῖναι.

23 τότε ἐὰν τις ὑμῖν εἴπῃ· Ἴδου ὧδε ὁ Χριστός, ἢ Ὡδε, μὴ πιστεύσητε· 24 ἐγερθήσονται γὰρ ψευδόχριστοι καὶ ψευδοπροφῆται καὶ δώσουσιν σημεῖα μεγάλα καὶ τέρατα ὥστε πλανῆσαι, εἰ δυνατόν, καὶ τοὺς ἐκλεκτούς· 25 ἴδου προεῖρηκα ὑμῖν. 26 ἐὰν οὖν εἴπωσιν ὑμῖν· Ἴδου ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ ἐστίν, μὴ ἐξέλθητε· Ἴδου ἐν τοῖς ταμιείοις, μὴ πιστεύσητε·

27 ὥσπερ γὰρ ἡ ἀστραπὴ ἐξέρχεται ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν καὶ φαίνεται ἕως δυσμῶν, οὕτως ἔσται ἡ παρουσία τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου· 28 ὅπου ἐὰν ᾖ τὸ πτώμα, ἐκεῖ συναχθήσονται οἱ ἄετοί.

29 Εὐθέως δὲ μετὰ τὴν θλίψιν τῶν ἡμερῶν ἐκείνων ὁ ἥλιος σκοτισθήσεται, καὶ ἡ σελήνη οὐ δώσει τὸ φέγγος αὐτῆς, καὶ οἱ ἀστέρες πεσοῦνται ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, καὶ αἱ δυνάμεις τῶν οὐρανῶν σαλευθήσονται.

30 καὶ τότε φανήσεται τὸ σημεῖον τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐν οὐρανῷ, καὶ τότε κόψονται πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ ὄψονται τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενον ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ μετὰ δυνάμεως καὶ δόξης πολλῆς· 31 καὶ ἀποστελεῖ τοὺς ἀγγέλους αὐτοῦ μετὰ σάλπιγγος μεγάλης, καὶ ἐπισυνάξουσιν τοὺς ἐκλεκτοὺς αὐτοῦ ἐκ τῶν τεσσάρων ἀνέμων ἀπ' ἄκρων οὐρανῶν ἕως [τῶν] ἄκρων αὐτῶν.

32 Ἀπὸ δὲ τῆς συκῆς μάθετε τὴν παραβολήν· ὅταν ἤδη ὁ κλάδος αὐτῆς γένηται ἀπαλὸς καὶ τὰ φύλλα ἐκφύη, γινώσκετε ὅτι ἐγγὺς τὸ θέρος· 33 οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς, ὅταν ἴδητε πάντα ταῦτα, γινώσκετε ὅτι ἐγγὺς ἐστὶν ἐπὶ θύραις.

34 ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι οὐ μὴ παρέλθῃ ἡ γενεὰ αὕτη ἕως ἂν πάντα ταῦτα γένηται. 35 ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ παρελεύσεται, οἱ δὲ λόγοι μου οὐ μὴ παρέλθωσιν.

36 Περὶ δὲ τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης καὶ ὥρας οὐδεὶς οἶδεν, οὐδὲ οἱ ἄγγελοι τῶν οὐρανῶν οὐδὲ ὁ υἱός, εἰ μὴ ὁ πατὴρ μόνος.

37 ὥσπερ γὰρ αἱ ἡμέραι τοῦ Νῶε, οὕτως ἔσται ἡ παρουσία τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. 38 ὡς γὰρ ἦσαν ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις [ἐκείναις] ταῖς πρὸ τοῦ κατακλυσμοῦ τρώγοντες καὶ πίνοντες, γαμοῦντες καὶ γαμίζοντες, ἄχρι ἧς ἡμέρας εἰσῆλθεν Νῶε εἰς τὴν κιβωτόν, 39 καὶ οὐκ ἔγνωσαν ἕως ἦλθεν ὁ κατακλυσμὸς καὶ ἤρην ἅπαντας, οὕτως ἔσται [καὶ] ἡ παρουσία

τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.

40 τότε δύο ἔσονται ἐν τῷ ἀγρῷ, εἷς παραλαμβάνεται καὶ εἷς ἀφίεται· 41 δύο ἀλήθουςαι ἐν τῷ μύλῳ, μία παραλαμβάνεται καὶ μία ἀφίεται.

42 γρηγορεῖτε οὖν, ὅτι οὐκ οἴδατε ποία ἡμέρα ὁ κύριος ὑμῶν ἔρχεται. 43 ἐκεῖνο δὲ γινώσκετε ὅτι εἰ ἦδει ὁ οἰκοδεσπότης ποία φυλακῆ ὁ κλέπτης ἔρχεται, ἐγρηγόρησεν ἂν καὶ οὐκ ἂν εἶασεν διορυχθῆναι τὴν οἰκίαν αὐτοῦ. 44 διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ὑμεῖς γίνεσθε ἔτοιμοι, ὅτι ἡ οὐ δοκεῖτε ὥρα ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἔρχεται.

45 Τίς ἄρα ἐστὶν ὁ πιστὸς δούλος καὶ φρόνιμος ὃν κατέστησεν ὁ κύριος ἐπὶ τῆς οἰκετείας αὐτοῦ τοῦ δοῦναι αὐτοῖς τὴν τροφήν ἐν καιρῷ; 46 μακάριος ὁ δούλος ἐκεῖνος ὃν ἐλθὼν ὁ κύριος αὐτοῦ εὕρησει οὕτως ποιοῦντα· 47 ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἐπὶ πᾶσιν τοῖς ὑπάρχουσιν αὐτοῦ καταστήσει αὐτόν.

48 ἐὰν δὲ εἶπη ὁ κακὸς δούλος ἐκεῖνος ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ· Χρονίζει μου ὁ κύριος, 49 καὶ ἄρξηται τύπτειν τοὺς συνδούλους αὐτοῦ, ἐσθίη δὲ καὶ πίνη μετὰ τῶν μεθυόντων, 50 ἥξει ὁ κύριος τοῦ δούλου ἐκείνου ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἣ οὐ προσδοκᾷ καὶ ἐν ὥρᾳ ἣ οὐ γινώσκει, 51 καὶ διχοτομήσει αὐτόν καὶ τὸ μέρος αὐτοῦ μετὰ τῶν ὑποκριτῶν θήσει· ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων.

25:1 Τότε ὁμοιωθήσεται ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν δέκα παρθένοις, αἵτινες λαβοῦσαι τὰς λαμπάδας ἑαυτῶν ἐξῆλθον εἰς ὑπάντησιν τοῦ νυμφίου. 2 πέντε δὲ ἐξ αὐτῶν ἦσαν μωραὶ καὶ πέντε φρόνιμοι. 3 αἱ γὰρ μωραὶ λαβοῦσαι τὰς λαμπάδας αὐτῶν οὐκ ἔλαβον μεθ' ἑαυτῶν

ἔλαιον. 4 αἱ δὲ φρόνιμοι ἔλαβον ἔλαιον ἐν τοῖς ἀγγείοις μετὰ τῶν λαμπάδων ἑαυτῶν. 5 χρονίζοντος δὲ τοῦ νυμφίου ἐνύσταξαν πάσαι καὶ ἐκάθειδον.

6 μέσης δὲ νυκτὸς κραυγὴ γέγονεν· Ἴδου ὁ νυμφίος, ἐξέρχεσθε εἰς ἀπάντησιν [αὐτοῦ]. 7 τότε ἠγέρθησαν πάσαι αἱ παρθένοι ἐκεῖναι καὶ ἐκόσμησαν τὰς λαμπάδας ἑαυτῶν. 8 αἱ δὲ μωραὶ ταῖς φρονίμοις εἶπαν· Δότε ἡμῖν ἐκ τοῦ ἐλαίου ὑμῶν, ὅτι αἱ λαμπάδες ἡμῶν σβέννυνται. 9 ἀπεκρίθησαν δὲ αἱ φρόνιμοι λέγουσαι· Μήποτε οὐ μὴ ἀρκέση ἡμῖν καὶ ὑμῖν· πορεύεσθε μᾶλλον πρὸς τοὺς πωλοῦντας καὶ ἀγοράσατε ἑαυταῖς.

10 ἀπερχομένων δὲ αὐτῶν ἀγοράσαι ἦλθεν ὁ νυμφίος, καὶ αἱ ἔτοιμοι εἰσῆλθον μετ' αὐτοῦ εἰς τοὺς γάμους καὶ ἐκλείσθη ἡ θύρα. 11 ὕστερον δὲ ἔρχονται καὶ αἱ λοιπαὶ παρθένοι λέγουσαι· Κύριε κύριε, ἄνοιξον ἡμῖν. 12 ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν· Ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, οὐκ οἶδα ὑμᾶς. 13 Γρηγορεῖτε οὖν, ὅτι οὐκ οἶδατε τὴν ἡμέραν οὐδὲ τὴν ὥραν.

14 Ὡσπερ γὰρ ἄνθρωπος ἀποδημῶν ἐκάλεσεν τοὺς ἰδίους δούλους καὶ παρέδωκεν αὐτοῖς τὰ ὑπάρχοντα αὐτοῦ, 15 καὶ ᾧ μὲν ἔδωκεν πέντε τάλαντα, ᾧ δὲ δύο, ᾧ δὲ ἓν, ἐκάστῳ κατὰ τὴν ἰδίαν δύναμιν, καὶ ἀπεδήμησεν.

εὐθέως 16 πορευθεὶς ὁ τὰ πέντε τάλαντα λαβὼν ἠργάσατο ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἐκέρδησεν ἄλλα πέντε· 17 ὡσαύτως ὁ τὰ δύο ἐκέρδησεν ἄλλα δύο. 18 ὁ δὲ τὸ ἐν λαβὼν ἀπελθὼν ὥρυξεν γῆν καὶ ἔκρυψεν τὸ ἀργύριον τοῦ κυρίου αὐτοῦ.

19 μετὰ δὲ πολὺν χρόνον ἔρχεται ὁ κύριος τῶν δούλων ἐκείνων καὶ συναίρει λόγον μετ' αὐτῶν. 20 καὶ προσελθὼν ὁ τὰ πέντε τάλαντα λαβὼν προσήνεγκεν ἄλλα πέντε τάλαντα λέγων· Κύριε, πέντε τάλαντά μοι

παρέδωκας· ἴδε ἄλλα πέντε τάλαντα ἐκέρδησα. 21 ἔφη αὐτῷ ὁ κύριος αὐτοῦ· Εὐ, δούλε ἀγαθὲ καὶ πιστέ, ἐπὶ ὀλίγα ἦς πιστός, ἐπὶ πολλῶν σε καταστήσω· εἴσελθε εἰς τὴν χαρὰν τοῦ κυρίου σου. 22 προσελθὼν [δὲ] καὶ ὁ τὰ δύο τάλαντα εἶπεν· Κύριε, δύο τάλαντά μοι παρέδωκας· ἴδε ἄλλα δύο τάλαντα ἐκέρδησα. 23 ἔφη αὐτῷ ὁ κύριος αὐτοῦ· Εὐ, δούλε ἀγαθὲ καὶ πιστέ, ἐπὶ ὀλίγα ἦς πιστός, ἐπὶ πολλῶν σε καταστήσω· εἴσελθε εἰς τὴν χαρὰν τοῦ κυρίου σου.

24 προσελθὼν δὲ καὶ ὁ τὸ ἐν τάλαντον εἰληφώς εἶπεν· Κύριε, ἔγνων σε ὅτι σκληρὸς εἶ ἄνθρωπος, θερίζων ὅπου οὐκ ἔσπειρας καὶ συνάγων ὅθεν οὐ διεσκόρπισας, 25 καὶ φοβηθεὶς ἀπελθὼν ἔκρυψα τὸ τάλαντόν σου ἐν τῇ γῆ· ἴδε ἔχεις τὸ σόν. 26 ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ὁ κύριος αὐτοῦ εἶπεν αὐτῷ· Πονηρὲ δούλε καὶ ὀκνηρέ, ἤδεις ὅτι θερίζω ὅπου οὐκ ἔσπειρα καὶ συνάγω ὅθεν οὐ διεσκόρπισα; 27 ἔδει σε οὖν βαλεῖν τὰ ἀργύριά μου τοῖς τραπεζίταις, καὶ ἐλθὼν ἐγὼ ἐκομισάμην ἅν τὸ ἐμὸν σὺν τόκῳ. 28 ἄρατε οὖν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ τὸ τάλαντον καὶ δότε τῷ ἔχοντι τὰ δέκα τάλαντα· 29 τῷ γὰρ ἔχοντι παντὶ δοθήσεται καὶ περισσευθήσεται· τοῦ δὲ μὴ ἔχοντος καὶ ὃ ἔχει ἀρθήσεται ἀπ' αὐτοῦ. 30 καὶ τὸν ἀχρεῖον δούλον ἐκβάλετε εἰς τὸ σκότος τὸ ἐξώτερον· ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων.

31 Ὄταν δὲ ἔλθῃ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐν τῇ δόξῃ αὐτοῦ καὶ πάντες οἱ ἄγγελοι μετ' αὐτοῦ, τότε καθίσει ἐπὶ θρόνου δόξης αὐτοῦ· 32 καὶ συναχθήσονται ἔμπροσθεν αὐτοῦ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, καὶ ἀφορίσει αὐτοὺς ἀπ' ἀλλήλων, ὥσπερ ὁ ποιμὴν ἀφορίζει τὰ πρόβατα ἀπὸ τῶν ἐρίφων, 33 καὶ στήσει τὰ μὲν πρόβατα ἐκ δεξιῶν αὐτοῦ, τὰ δὲ ἐρίφια ἐξ εὐωνύμων.

34 τότε ἐρεῖ ὁ βασιλεὺς τοῖς ἐκ δεξιῶν αὐτοῦ· Δεῦτε οἱ εὐλογημένοι τοῦ πατρός μου, κληρονομήσατε τὴν ἡτοιμασμένην ὑμῖν βασιλείαν ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου. 35 ἐπέινασα γὰρ καὶ ἐδώκατέ μοι φαγεῖν, ἐδίψησα καὶ ἐποτίσατέ με, ξένος ἦμην καὶ συνηγάγετέ με, 36 γυμνὸς καὶ περιεβάλετέ με, ἡσθένησα καὶ ἐπεσκέψασθέ με, ἐν φυλακῇ ἦμην καὶ ἦλθατε πρὸς με.

37 τότε ἀποκριθήσονται αὐτῷ οἱ δίκαιοι λέγοντες· Κύριε, πότε σε εἶδομεν πεινῶντα καὶ ἐθρέψαμεν, ἢ διψῶντα καὶ ἐποτίσαμεν; 38 πότε δέ σε εἶδομεν ξένον καὶ συνηγάγομεν, ἢ γυμνὸν καὶ περιεβάλομεν; 39 πότε δέ σε εἶδομεν ἀσθενοῦντα ἢ ἐν φυλακῇ καὶ ἦλθομεν πρὸς σε; 40 καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐρεῖ αὐτοῖς· Ἄμην λέγω ὑμῖν, ἐφ' ὅσον ἐποιήσατε ἐνὶ τούτων τῶν ἀδελφῶν μου τῶν ἐλαχίστων, ἐμοὶ ἐποιήσατε.

41 Τότε ἐρεῖ καὶ τοῖς ἐξ εὐωνύμων· Πορεύεσθε ἀπ' ἐμοῦ [οἱ] κατηραμένοι εἰς τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον τὸ ἡτοιμασμένον τῷ διαβόλῳ καὶ τοῖς ἀγγέλοις αὐτοῦ. 42 ἐπέινασα γὰρ καὶ οὐκ ἐδώκατέ μοι φαγεῖν, ἐδίψησα καὶ οὐκ ἐποτίσατέ με, 43 ξένος ἦμην καὶ οὐ συνηγάγετέ με, γυμνὸς καὶ οὐ περιεβάλετέ με, ἀσθενῆς καὶ ἐν φυλακῇ καὶ οὐκ ἐπεσκέψασθέ με.

44 τότε ἀποκριθήσονται καὶ αὐτοὶ λέγοντες· Κύριε, πότε σε εἶδομεν πεινῶντα ἢ διψῶντα ἢ ξένον ἢ γυμνὸν ἢ ἀσθενῆ ἢ ἐν φυλακῇ καὶ οὐ διηκονήσαμεν σοι; 45 τότε ἀποκριθήσεται αὐτοῖς λέγων· Ἄμην λέγω ὑμῖν, ἐφ' ὅσον οὐκ ἐποιήσατε ἐνὶ τούτων τῶν ἐλαχίστων, οὐδὲ ἐμοὶ ἐποιήσατε. 46 καὶ ἀπελεύσονται οὗτοι εἰς κόλασιν αἰώνιον, οἱ δὲ δίκαιοι εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον.

26:1 Καὶ ἐγένετο ὅτε ἐτέλεσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς πάντας τοὺς λόγους

τούτους, εἶπεν τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ· 2 Οἴδατε ὅτι μετὰ δύο ἡμέρας τὸ πάσχα γίνεται, καὶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου παραδίδοται εἰς τὸ σταυρωθῆναι.

B. SOME TECHNICAL TERMS

1. Semantic micro universe

Refers to the text as *the whole of signification*. Hence, by going through the whole of signification the semiotic analysis aims at describing the form of content which is a structured organisation of the elements.

2. Sense

This is perceived as an *effect of the difference*. That is, the form of content is articulated in and through the differences in the relations of the various elements which are perceptible in the text, such as *tall/short, cold/hot, sickness/health*, etc. It is the differences between the various elements which designate the *values* of signification in the text.

3. Structural analysis

Semiotics is described as structural analysis because its task is to articulate, in a rigorous manner, the organisation of relations of the elements also known as *the game of difference*. In this regard, we make several remarks: viz., that the difference as well as the *sense* it produces (also known as the *content*) can be manifested only in the deep structures of the text, and that the *values* can be attributed to those elements which constitute the structured organisation of the given text.

6. Figures

A figure is described as *unit of content* which is *invariant* or *stable*. It is a permanent semic

minimum which simply means basic unit of signification that is recognisable in the course of reading. The figure has signification which is capable of being selected or actualised by the text in diverse *contexts* on the level of the sentence or discourse. [See GROUPE D'ENTREVERNES, p. 89, and GIROUD, *Sémiotique*, p. 48.]

7. Figurative Trails/Traces

Figurative trails consists of the actualized or realized *sense* of the specific arrangement of figures on the level of discourse. Such sense can be discovered in a given text through the reading and the re-reading of the text by the semiotic analyst.

8. Thematic Values

Thematic values are determined by the form of the figurative trails. That is, the selection or the particular usage that the text has made of the figures which appear in their contexts. The manner in which the text has disposed of the figures (i.e. the actors in a given time and spaces) in the figurative trails is oriented towards a particular *contextual* or *classificatory* functions of the figures. Thus, on a deeper level the text attributes particular *thematic values* to the figures which appear on the surface.

9. Thematic Oppositions

The operation of defining the thematic values culminates in a *deeper* and *more rigorous* or *fundamental* articulation of the content in the very heart of the discourse. At this stage of the analysis thematic values and their *binary oppositions* appear. Sometimes the binary oppositions are explicitly expressed, but in other instances they appear only implicitly in the discourse.

The thematic values are not manifested on the surface of the text, yet they are subtly revealed starting from the figures and the figurative trails as elements which are repetitive and redundant. The more repetitive these elements the more indicative they are of the *coherence* of the figures in a given text. [See GIROUD, *Sémiotique*, pp.49-50].

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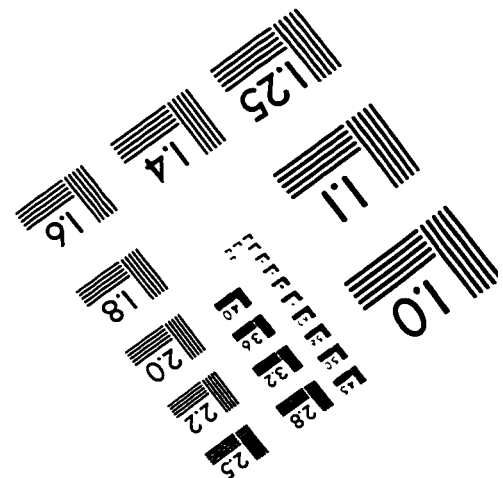
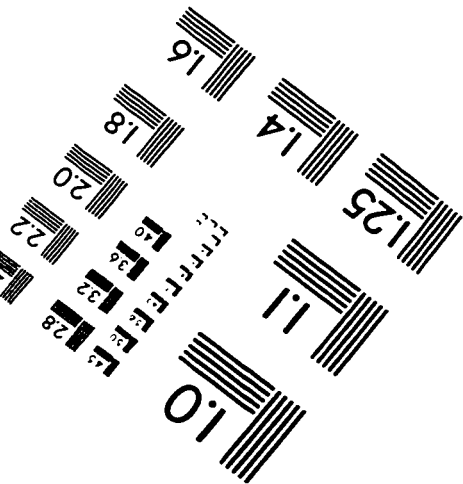
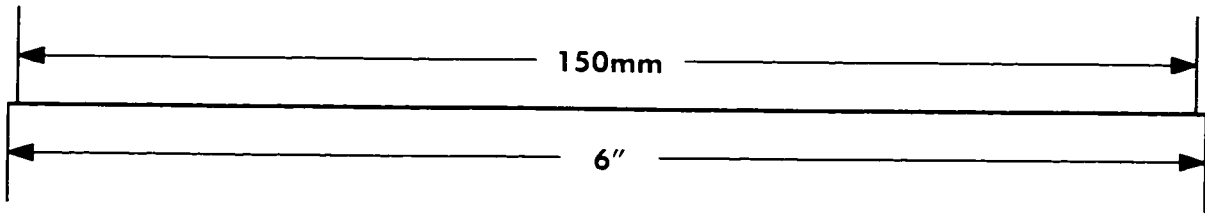
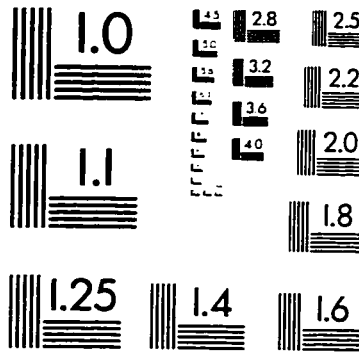
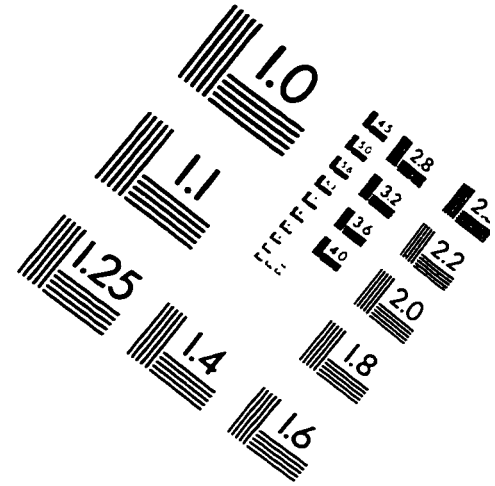
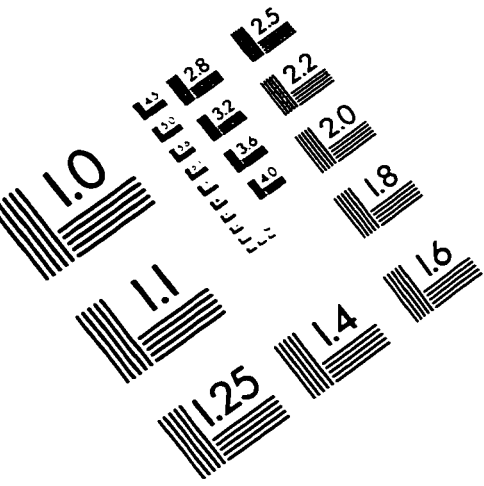
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