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Biblical Theology Bulletin: A Journal of Bible and Theology 2010 40: 207

DOI: 10.1177/0146107910380875

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Forgiveness in “My Brothers” of Matthew 28:10 and Its Significance for the Matthean Climax (28:16–20)

William R. Bronn

Abstract

Matthew climaxes his Gospel (28:16–20) with the risen Lord, among other things, forgiving the Eleven and, subsequently through baptism, all who would come to believe in him, for their sins, (re)establishing fellowship or brotherhood with himself. Matthew signals this intention by Jesus expressing solidarity with his Eleven, referring to them as “my brothers” (28:10). *Brothers* alludes to the Genesis story of Joseph pardoning his Eleven brothers (45:1–15). This allusion is confirmed by the perfect correspondence between Genesis 45:1–15 and Matthew 28:16–20 in every element of their commissioning forms and material substance.

Key words: : The Great Commission (in Matthew), Commission Form, Joseph (Patriarch), Brothers, Forgiveness, Baptism, Resurrection

Commentators typically see the last four verses of Matthew’s Gospel as its climax but do not agree entirely on its meaning. Various allusions are drawn to the Hebrew Bible (HB) but these remain uncertain, perhaps from the essentially elusive nature of allusions. There is general agreement among authors (e.g., Cope: 95–96; Allison: 11; Luz: 619 n. 23) on criteria for establishing the probability of an allusion, but their application here has, so far, produced conflicting results. For Matthew 28:16–20, however, there is an additional tool, a form (Gattung), elucidated by the thesis of Benjamin J. Hubbard, that appears to corroborate an allusion seen in Matthew 28:10 to Genesis 45:1–15 and to shed considerable light on his final four verses.

That Matthew was accustomed to advancing his understanding of the Jesus tradition by adopting or creating

allusions to the traditions of ancient Israel is generally accepted. Two such allusions to the Joseph of Genesis 37–50 are reported by Raymond E. Brown: The first is that of the characterization of Joseph the foster father of Jesus in the Matthean birth narrative (chapters 1 & 2) in accord with certain attributes of Joseph the patriarch of the Book of Genesis (Brown 1993: 111–12). This allusion, accord-

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ing to Brown, came from a pre-Matthean narrative of the birth of Jesus created from a composite of the stories of Joseph the patriarch and the birth of Moses. Brown offers his own re-creation of this tradition in a table which alternates between allusions to Joseph the patriarch and to the infant Moses, twice, and then ends with the last allusion to Joseph the patriarch. The *Joseph* units supply the parallels between Joseph the foster father of Jesus who received instructions in dreams and saved Jesus' life by fleeing to Egypt, and Joseph the patriarch as one who received revelations from God through dreams and who saved Jacob/Israel from famine by bringing him to Egypt. The *Moses-infancy* units reflect on how evil kings (Pharaoh//Herod) had tried to murder the infant Moses//infant Jesus by the slaughtering of infant male Hebrew children (Brown 1993: 105–09).

Arland J. Hultgren has expanded this composite birth narrative for Jesus the Messiah by showing how Matthew's birth story alludes to the origins of the Hebrew people, as seen in its national epic of descent to and exodus from Egypt, as a new nation. This allusion thus becomes the foundation for the Matthean community's self-understanding of its origin and the legitimacy of its claim to be the *New Israel* (Hultgren: 91–108).

Brown's second allusion is the parallelism between Jesus and his betrayal by Judas (= Judah), one of the Twelve, for 30 pieces of silver, and Joseph the patriarch (one of the Twelve sons of Jacob/Israel), who was betrayed by his brothers and sold, at Judah's (=Judas') suggestion and arrangement, to the Ishmaelites for 20 or 30 pieces of silver (Brown 1994: I, 655 n. 51). In this parallelism Brown notes another common feature, the forgiveness manifested by both (Brown 1993: 112 n. 32).

In support of the second allusion, I shall expand on this attribute of forgiveness for the remainder of this paper. Forgiveness appears to be a concern throughout Matthew, which crescendoes in 28:10 where Jesus refers to the Eleven as "my brothers," alluding to the scene (Genesis 45) of the patriarch Joseph forgiving his brothers, and which climaxes in 28:19b with the mission-call to baptize disciples from all nations.

Most scholars accept the date and provenance of Matthew's Gospel as ~85 CE in Antioch, Syria. Literature on that place and time is replete with reasons why, following the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in 70 CE, there was marked political and religious strife. Many Jews and Christians fled to Antioch. There and elsewhere Formative

Judaism vied with emerging Christianity for the soul of Judaism, and Christians fought with themselves over the requirement, or not, for circumcision and observance of the Law. David C. Sim (29) suggests that Matthew's community was torn in two over this issue. It is no surprise that Matthew's Gospel is said to contain a strong reconciliation *Tendenz* (propensity—Kennard: 159–63) or that "no ancient document known to us [is said to show] more sensitivity to the desperate need for love and peace rather than hate and vengeance than does Matthew" (Davies & Allison: III, 703).

Then, too, the vision of the patriarch Joseph developed over time to where he became an *Idealtyp* (model—Niehoff: 52). Two contemporaries of Matthew, Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 BCE–c. 50 CE) and Josephus (37–c. 100 CE), wrote midrashim on the Joseph story (Genesis 37–50, from the beginning a monumental story covering nearly a third of the book) where this tendency is strongly evident: Philo's *On Joseph*, especially 246–50 (Loeb Classical Library [LCL], 1935 version), and Josephus' *The Jewish Antiquities* 2.9–200 (LCL, 1957 reprint version). The growth of Joseph's stature to that of an exemplar of love by forgiveness of his brothers for their attempted fratricide against him, as also witnessed to in the *Testaments of the Patriarchs*, would make the leap to using Joseph as the model for Jesus' loving forgiveness of his *brothers*, the Eleven (twelve less Judas) and subsequently all his future disciples, a small one both for Matthew and his readers. For example, one such ancient Christian reader, Ambrose (339–397 CE), calls Christ the "true Joseph" (*On Joseph*, 9.47; *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*. Vol. 65. *Saint Ambrose: Seven Exegetical Works... Joseph... 1972 version*), and later he says, "He [Christ] is the same who spoke before in Joseph and afterward in his own body" (12.70).

The strongest evidence for Matthew's stress on forgiveness is, of course, found in what he wrote. Three pericopes are unique or uniquely expanded by Matthew to demonstrate his heightened interest in reconciliation and forgiveness beyond the other Synoptics: viz., 5:21–24, 6:15, and 18:15–35. The first concerns offenses committed against a brother under Jesus' expansion of the 5th Commandment: Being angry with a brother, insulting a brother, or calling him a fool are such offenses, and anyone who does such must reconcile with the brother before he can offer a gift at the altar [of God].

The second is the postscript to the Our Father: this re-

peats the prayer's requirement of forgiving others in order to be forgiven but in the negative—if you don't forgive men, neither will the Father forgive you. (The postscript is not found in Luke's version nor in the partial parallel found in Mark 11:25). (Note too: *Our Father* implies we are brothers and sisters.)

Third and most emphatic is the ecclesiastical chapter (chapter 18), 56% of which deals with brotherly forgiveness beginning with "If your brother sins against you..." The Lucan parallel succinctly (30 words) concludes that a brother must be forgiven seven times a day. Matthew expands Q to 121 words going into detail about how every effort must be made to reconcile with an offending brother. When Peter asks how often he must forgive his brother, he is told seventy times seven times (see Gen 4:24 on revenge). Luke then moves on to a discussion about faith, but Matthew continues with his exclusive and lengthy parable of the Unforgiving Servant, which concludes rather harshly about what Our Heavenly Father will do to one who does not forgive his brother from his heart.

Not only is it clear that Matthew has a special interest in forgiveness but, looking back, we see that he speaks of forgiveness almost exclusively in terms of *brotherhood*. *Brothers* must be a very significant term to Matthew, for he uses it in this metaphorical (as opposed to biological) sense 18 times, 8 with no Synoptic parallel (5:22x2; 5:23, 24; 5:47; 23:8; 25:40; 28:10), whereas all such uses but one (Luke 22:32) found in the other Gospels have parallels in Matthew (Mark 3:33, 34, 35; Luke 6:41; 6:42x2; 8:21; 17:3; John 20:17).

Graciously, Matthew defines the term for us when the Matthean Jesus tells his disciples, "You are all brothers" (23:8): a term for members of the Christian community, brethren, members, insiders. Jesus includes himself in this community by thrice calling his disciples "My brothers" (12:50; 25:40; 28:10).

Jesus speaks of "my brothers" in all four Gospels six times: Matthew 12:50//Mark 3:34, 35//Luke 8:21; and Matthew 25:40; and Matthew 28:10//John 20:17. But the last dyad differs significantly from the other parallels because it occurs after the Resurrection, placing them in a unique theological setting. In John 20:17, Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene with a commission for Jesus' brothers, but these brothers are an indefinite group of disciples.

In Matthew, however, when Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary with a commission for Jesus'

brothers, these brothers are the Eleven disciples specified in 28:16. These are the Twelve (eleven plus the betrayer: 26:20) who ate the last Passover supper with Jesus, went from there to the Mount of Olives with him (26:30), swore allegiance to him there (26:35), but fled moments later at his arrest (26:56). On the mountain in Galilee would be their first meeting since Jesus' arrest. For Jesus to call them "my brothers," he would have had to overlook what they had done to him; it must have taken an act of forgiveness (Schillebeeckx: 381–82), which once more (5:21–24; 6:15; 18:15–35 above, and now 28:10) is conveyed in terms of brotherhood.

Many commentators both ancient and modern find forgiveness in 28:10.

Ulrich Luz states,

Instead of "the disciples" Jesus says here "my brothers"; the wording reminds the readers of 12:49–50 & 25:40. After Jesus' disciples have all abandoned Jesus and fled, the word "brothers" indicates that for Jesus they are not definitively fallen; their unfaithfulness has not abolished his faithfulness... [607].

Luz then quotes Dionysius the Carthusian (318), "It ['my brothers'] is an expression of his acceptance. Christ does not despise the disciples because of their flight" (ibid.).

And Luz also quotes Martin Luther (5.303): "He is before them with his grace, and even before he meets them in Galilee he calls them 'brothers' even though he could have called them traitors" (ibid.).

Fredrick Dale Bruner simply and elegantly says, "In this one word [brothers] is crammed the whole New Testament gospel of forgiveness" (798).

But the argument is not compelling because, unlike our other three examples (5:21–24; 6:15; 18:15–35), forgiveness is not explicitly stated, only implied. For example, some see "brothers" as referring to the Passion psalm's reference to "brothers" in Psalm 22:22. Raymond Brown sees a parallel between "brothers" in John 20:17 and Matthew 28:10 and gives them a common interpretation different from above (Brown 1990: 31 with notes & 71–72 with notes). More evidence is needed to know what Matthew's intent was.

I suggest "my brothers" of 28:10 with its meaning of forgiveness does not end here. This verse, once the interruption by the last half of the guard story is set aside (Brown 1994:

II, 1301–03), is the immediate preparation for the climax of the entire Gospel (vv 16–20), which includes the continuing climax of the theme of forgiveness (v 19b).

Matthew is known to use key words or phrases (here: "my brothers" in 28:10) to allude to texts in the Hebrew Bible (HB). The scene elicited here is that of Joseph forgiving his brothers, but that scene goes beyond forgiveness: Joseph saves his brothers and their families from starvation and promises to continue providing for them (Gen 45:10, 11). So, too, does Matthew continue this allusion beyond forgiveness to the saving and providing aspects of 28:20b, found in his climactic ending (28:16–20). Ambrose (*On Joseph*, 12.70–73) seems to have recognized this also and drew no fewer than six parallels between the patriarch Joseph of Genesis 45 and Matthew's risen Christ in chapter 28: (Matt 28//Gen 45) v 10//v 5; v 10//v 9; v 18//v 9; v 19//v 5; v 20//v 10.

It is Matthew's continuance of this parallel to the Genesis scene that best confirms that the allusion was to the Joseph story and that, therefore, Jesus' forgiveness was the intent of "my brothers" in 28:10. Support for this proof text regarding the unique parallelism between Matthew 28:16–20 and Genesis 45:1–15 is the objective of the remainder of this paper.

There has been considerable effort devoted to unlocking the riches of Matthew's dense climactic ending (28:16–20) and, as a result, there is a wealth of critical thinking available in the technical literature. I will be relying most heavily on Benjamin Hubbard's dissertation (1974) on this passage.

Hubbard has discerned a form (*Gattung*) in 27 passages of the HB: a "commissioning *Gattung*" in his words. Its elements, vocabulary, and recurring themes are described in my Appendix. Hubbard (177–79) finds that Matthew 28 is composed of no fewer than three applications of this *Gattung*: 28:1–8; 28:9–10; and 28:16–20.

In the Table on the following page, Hubbard's application of his *Gattung*, element by element (defined in the Appendix), to Matthew 28:16–20 (69–72) is compared directly with my application of his *Gattung*, element by element, to Genesis 45:1–15. The first and fourth columns quote the verses of each passage being compared in their entirety. No verse from either pericope has been edited or omitted, nor has the biblical order of any verse been altered. Column two gives the abbreviated *Gattung* element being applied simultaneously to the Matthean and to the Genesis verses. The fit is perfect even down to the particular repetitions of

CONF (18b and 8b) and REASS (20b and 10b–11) elements respectively. I have separated the first three words of Matthew's v 18 and assigned them to the element of REASS; Hubbard (77) does not do that in his table for Matthew, but he does insist that they are words of reassurance. Also, there is a commissioning of Jacob within the commissioning of the brothers in Genesis 45:9, which becomes a table within the Table. (The significance of underlining and of bold print will be discussed later.)

Also, numerous examples of the commissioning-*Gattung* vocabulary (intertextuality), used in the Genesis pericope, are noted within the Table in italics: fourteen imperatives or the equivalent (connoting authority); eight occurrences of "all" (*pas*—signifies universality); five "therefore" (*oun*—enhances the command); "behold" (*idou*—a command) once; and equivalents of "fear not" (words of reassurance) used twice (*me lupeisthe, mede sklepon humin phaneto*). The Matthean passage is similarly marked for clarity.

These and the use of all the *Gattung* elements establish that Genesis 45:1–15 is another example of Hubbard's Commissioning *Gattung*. But to defend against the rejoinder that Matthew's passage parallels the Genesis passage only because they both used a common form, the critical matter of parallels in their substance or matter will be compared.

In the Table, the exact texts to be compared for material correspondence are underlined in columns one and four in parallel cells. Column 3 describes the material correspondence between each pair of parallel cells. Two material correspondences will require further discussion.

The first correspondence is Matthew 28:18a and Genesis 45:4. Neither the Matthean Jesus nor the patriarch Joseph spoke of the forgiveness of his brothers directly, and yet some kind of reconciliation took place. In the case of Joseph, Westermann (142) says that Joseph relieves the tension created by the failure of the ten brothers and the alleged crime of Benjamin by calling for the dramatic closing of the physical space between them and himself, a deeply significant gesture. Schillebeeckx (381–82) believes that the first condition for the Eleven's recognizing Jesus as the Risen One was the experience of having received forgiveness from Jesus—a quite specific experience of grace and mercy, the result of which was that they were received back into the present fellowship with Jesus...and each other. Hubbard sees this happening in Matthew 28:18a because "to approach" (*proserchomai*) is used by Matthew in only one other place,

Table: Hubbard's Application of His Gattung to Matthew 28:16–20 (pp. 69–72) in Parallel with My Application of His Gattung to Genesis 45:1–15 and My View of their Material Commonality

Matt 28:vv	Gattung element (see Appendix)	Material commonality (<u>underlined</u>)	Gen 45:vv
16 <u>Now the eleven disciples</u> went to Galilee, to the mountain to which <u>Jesus</u> had <i>directed</i> them	INTR	Each stage is set with an equivalent cast of characters and setting	1 Then <u>Joseph</u> could not control himself before all those who stood by him; and he cried, " <i>Dismiss all</i> from me." So <u>no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his [eleven] brothers.</u> 2 And he wept aloud, so that <i>all</i> the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it.
17a And <u>when they saw him</u>	CONF	Precise moment of revelation	3ab And Joseph said to <u>his brothers</u> , "I am <u>Joseph</u> ; is my father still alive?"
17b they worshipped him; but <u>some doubted</u>	REACT	Both sets of antagonists confused	3c But his brothers could not answer him, <u>for they were dismayed</u> at his presence.
18a And <u>Jesus approached</u> (Jesus named 5x in ch. 28: 28:5, 9, 10, 16, 18, to clearly identify him with the "crucified one" [Osborne: 79]).	REASS	Dramatic closing of space, a significant gesture (Westermann: 142). Both protagonists identified by name several times plus a distinguishing attribute.	4-8a So <u>Joseph said</u> to his brothers, "Come near to me, I pray you." <u>And they came near.</u> And he said, " <u>I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt.</u> [Not bitter words, but a clarification of who he is. Joseph's name is repeated 4 times: vv 3, 4, 9, 12 (Westermann: 142–43). 5 <i>Therefore do not be distressed, or angry</i> with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. 6 For the famine has been in the land these two years; and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. 7 And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. 8 <i>Therefore</i> , it was not you who sent me here, but God.
18b and said to them, " <u>All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me</u> " (Divine Passive)	CONF	God has given universal authority to each protagonist	8b and he [God] <u>has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt</u> (41:57 exaggerates to over the whole world.)
19-20a <i>Go therefore and make disciples</i> of all nations, <u>baptizing</u> them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 <i>teaching</i> them to observe all that I <u>have commanded</u> you.	COMM	Each protagonist exercises his authority and sends his brothers off on a commission	9a (to brothers) <u>Make haste therefore and go up</u> to my father and <u>say</u> to him, 9a INTRO (to Jacob's commission) And say to him 9bc CONF Thus says your son, Joseph, God has made me lord of <i>all</i> Egypt 9d-10a COMM <i>come down therefore</i> to me, <i>do not tarry</i> 10a <i>you shall dwell</i> in the land of Goshen and you (sing.) shall be near me , you 10b REASS
20b and behold, <i>I am with you always</i> , to the close of the age."	REASS	Each protagonist mediates the Shekinah to his brothers, Jesus forever and Joseph temporarily.	10b–11 and your children (" you shall be near me " is now applied to Joseph's brothers) and your children's children 11 cont. And your flocks and your herds, and <i>all</i> that you have, and there I will provide for you , for there are yet five years of famine to come, lest you 11 cont. and your sons (" I will provide " is applied to Joseph's brothers) 11 cont. and <i>all</i> that you have shall come to poverty. REAS cont.

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Table: Hubbard's Application of His Gattung to Matthew 28:16–20 (pp. 69–72) in Parallel with My Application of His Gattung to Genesis 45:1–15 and My View of their Material Commonality

Matt 28:vv	Gattung element (see Appendix)	Material commonality (underlined>	Gen 45:vv
	CONF		12 (RPT 3C) <i>Behold</i> your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see, that it is my mouth that speaks to you.
	COMM		13 (RPT 9) " <i>You must tell</i> my father of <i>all</i> my splendor in Egypt, and of <i>all</i> that you have seen. <i>Make haste</i> and <i>bring</i> my father down here."
	REASS		14-15a Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. 15 And he kissed <i>all</i> his brothers and wept upon them.
	REACT		15b (contrast 3c) and after that his brothers talked with him.
Note: Revised Standard Version (RSV) is used, except that a few vocabulary words have been changed to reflect the Greek better.			

the Transfiguration, where Jesus approaches to reassure his prostrate disciples (Hubbard: 77). That body language filled this lack of direct statements of forgiveness seems quite reasonable; seeing the scriptures locked into such a strict parallel in form and so much substance here adds considerable weight to his argument.

But the most important material parallel is the theme of the Shekinah, found in nearly every pericope Hubbard examined (Hubbard: 66), here specially nuanced for this unusual circumstance and indicated by bold print in the Table. These are the words and phrases that suggest God's protective and sustaining presence. It is stated directly in Genesis 45:10, in my view, in a thinly veiled paraphrase using "near" in place of the usual "with." Ambrose, too, while not using the term Shekinah, does draw this same equation between Matthew 28:20 and Genesis 45:10 (*On Joseph*, 12.72). Perhaps "near" is used for Joseph since he is only its mediator. That he is its mediator seems indicated in the triple "God sent me here..." (see Table) but even more clearly in 50:15ff.

Genesis 50:19 is a rhetorical question in Hebrew: "...am I in the place of God?" but a declarative statement in the LXX: "...for I am in the place of God." Joseph says that he stands in for God in Egypt, while he is still alive, and that, after his death, God in visitation will watch over them, twice (50:24, 25). Closely related to 50:19 is 50:21, where Joseph says, "I will provide..." This, too, has its parallels in 45:7 and 45:11 and continues the Shekinah theme, a strong one in this story (see 39:2, 21, 23; 46:4; 49:25; 50:24). There seems little room for doubt about this parallel between Jesus' and Joseph's reassurance of his brothers to be with or near them.

In the Table once again, the correspondence, here material, is perfect, doubly striking, showing the clear guidance that Genesis 45 had for Matthew 28, and Cope's criteria regarding the probability for the existence of an allusion through clear correspondence in both form and matter have been met (Cope: 96). It is not necessary that Matthew himself be familiar with this Gattung if he was simply modeling his passage on Genesis 45:1–15, as I suggest. Nevertheless, Hubbard's Gattung has been a most useful tool in recognizing and comparing these two passages.

A final test, according to Cope (95–96), is necessary to establish that Matthew himself was the author of the allusion and not a pre-Matthean source. It is concerned with the personal style of the individual author (Cope: 96). More specifically, he speaks of language and motif (Cope:120). Much of the language of Matthew 28:16–20 is dictated or suggested by the Commissioning Gattung, and those significant words and expressions are noted in the Table.

But the word repeatedly associated with the theme of forgiveness, *brothers*, does not even occur in Matthew 28:16–20, though it is used heavily throughout his Gospel. It appears alone at 28:10 in the whole Matthean resurrection narrative. But, in fact, it stands out as the only use of the term amid three uses of the more general term *disciples*. Here, "brothers" serves as a "stepping-stone" (Cope: 84) to the meaning and construction of the commissioning pericope.

Finally, we return to the theme of forgiveness, which cements Matthew as the author of this allusion and which I claimed climaxes in Matthew's last four verses, "the Great Commission." They contain but one imperative: "make dis-

ciples.” How this is to be accomplished is spelled out in the two participles modifying the subject [you] of that imperative: “baptize” and “teach.”

Of the former, Luz (632) says, “It is certain that for Matthew the promise of forgiveness of sins is also associated with baptism.” Bruner (822) expands on 28:19b, saying baptism brings two gifts: the return of the Father’s favor through the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the power of the Holy Spirit, referring the reader to Acts 2:38. He again quotes Calvin (3:228), who was still commenting on 28:10 but perhaps looking ahead to v 19b, “Since it was not only Apostles that He [Jesus] included under ‘brothers,’ let us be assured that by Christ’s command this message is extended to reach down the years to us” (Bruner: 798). The word *baptism* takes on a personal meaning, and there appears to be special significance to the exclusively Matthean Jesus’ statement on the night before he died that the cup of his blood was to be poured out for many “for the forgiveness of sins” (26:28).

The eleven “brothers” received forgiveness on the mountain, but future disciples or “brothers” (again, 23:8) who are the fruit of the Great Commissioning receive cleansing or forgiveness of sins at baptism. The Resurrection is victory over death; it is forgiveness of sins (Bruner: 798). Forgiveness is part of the victory. Forgiveness belongs to the scene of Christ’s triumphant meeting with his “brothers.” This would explain, at least in part, why Matthew would want to model the climactic scene of his Gospel on Genesis 45.

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Note: The author wishes to acknowledge contributions to this effort by Professor Arland J. Hultgren and Mr. Bruce Eldevick of Luther Seminary, and Professors Phillip J. Rask and William L. Baumgaertner of St. Paul Seminary.

Appendix

Hubbard's general "commissioning form" (Gattung) deduced from 27 commissioning narratives

of the HB (1974, pp. 62–65)

Definition of terms/elements found in the

Commissioning Gattung:

- INTR/Introduction – A brief introductory remark providing circumstantial details.
- CONF/Confrontation – The deity/commissioner then comes on the scene to address the individual to be commissioned.
- REACT/Reaction – The individual reacts to the presence of the deity or his angel by way of an action expressive of fear or unworthiness.
- COMM/Commission – The individual is told to undertake a specific task.
- PROT/Protest – The individual may respond to the commission by claiming he is unable or unworthy to accomplish the task.
- REASS/Reassurance – The commissioner speaks words of reassurance.
- CONC/Conclusion – The commission usually concludes in a more or less formal way, most often with a statement that the one commissioned starts to carry out his task.

Notes: These seven elements of the commissioning Gattung are not perfectly rigid requirements for every case: one or two of the non-essential elements may be missing (typically the REACT or PROT), or an element may be found in a different order, or one or more elements may be repeated.

Often certain technical words or phrases reoccur: "I am with you," "fear not," "be strong and of good courage," "behold (I)," "go," "I command," "I send," "the word (of Yahweh)," and "all."

Certain themes tend to occur: universality, observance of God's commandments, and God's constant, protective presence (Shekinah) is in evidence (Hubbard: 66–67).