

LIGHT ON SPARROWS AND HAIRS (Mt 10,29-31)

J. DUNCAN M. DERRETT
University of London

Resumen

La introducción, aparentemente inútil y embarazosa, de los gorriones y los cabellos en la gran misión de Mt 10 se explica por la instrucción de los misioneros para evitar los lazos del cazador, pues cada parte de cada uno es preciosa para el Creador. Ellos pueden pisotear serpientes con sus pies. Una vez más, los temas del AT explican aporías del NT.

Summary

The apparently otiose and embarrassing introduction of sparrows and hairs into the Great Commission of Mt 10 is explicable by the missionaries' training to avoid the Snares of the Fowler, because each part of each is "dear" to the Creator. They can tread the Serpent under foot. Once again, OT themes explain NT *aporiai*.

I. A STRANGE BACKGROUND

The twelve disciples were given extraordinary powers in their commission to preach the Kingdom to the lost sheep of Israel. If some places would not receive them they were to shake off the dust as if it were that of the land of Sodom and Gomorrah¹. But at Mt 10,16-39 we have a strange tale of woe. How could any teacher who aimed directly or indirectly to heal all sicknesses seriously predict that his agents would be

¹ Mt 10,14-15. The dust of gentile lands defiles. On the inhospitable Men of Sodom see J. D. M. Derrett, *The Making of Mark* (Shipston-on-Stour 1985) 114-115 (*ad* Mk 6,10-13).

judicially scourged, having been betrayed, if necessary, by their nearest and dearest?² Salvation may actually *require* this experience. "You will be hated by everybody for my Name's sake, but he that endures to the End shall be saved" (10,22; cf. LXX Ps 24,3; 32,20; 61,6; 70,5; Lam 3,25). Such sufferings somehow resemble those of Jesus himself (vv. 24-25a). The disciples too will be accused of operating under (or with) demons. Such speeches hardly recruit sceptics; fortunately the apostles have already been recruited³. There were paradoxes in the Mission itself: "Be not afraid of those (human foes) who kill the body (LXX Prov 29,25)... fear him who can (anomalously: 1 Cor 5,5; Tg Is 58,11) destroy both soul and body in hell"⁴. The latter "fear" (of God) – a concept familiar to the psalmist and Isaiah but better evidenced in Luke than in Matthew⁵ – is more real than the prediction (not merely risk) that one will suffer hostility from one's own family (a hostility brought up for the second time at vv. 34-36), and moreover this hostility has a two-way aspect, for the apostle must be prepared to desert his own parents and children before he is worthy of encountering those scourgings, etc. A totally new social group is envisaged. Does all this reflect the experiences of Christians under persecution by the state? Surely not in the late first and early second century⁶? Who are the enemy? "Councils and synagogues" in v. 17 implies both native customary and state disciplinary authorities, both a social and a political repression. Are the apostles, and their like, masochistic seekers for martyrdom? If so, how can their perverted desires be guaranteed to be satisfied?

² The righteous suffer the range of punishments from the lash to crucifixion (Plato, *Rep.* II.5, 361E-362A; Cic., *de Rep.* 3.27), but that they should face *traps* is a Jewish notion.

³ Mk 8,34-39; Lk 9,24-27. J. D. M. Derrett, *New Resolutions of Old Conundrums* (Shipston-on-Stour 1986) 71-84.

⁴ Is 8,12-13; Wisd 16,13. God's punishment is not confined to death: Philo, *Praem. et poen.* XX. § 6, 69-73. Ps 118,6; Is 51,7-8.12-13.

⁵ Is .50,10; Ps 85,10(9); 103,11; 115,11 and especially 34,8(7). Lk 1,50; 23,40; Acts 10,2.22; 13,16.26. Cf. Lk 18,2.4; Jas 4,12.

⁶ Under Domitian 89-96 persecution was sufficiently widespread. K. Aland, *History of Christianity I* (Philadelphia 1985) 65-69; H. Klein, "Gerichtsankündigung und Liebesforderung: Lk 6,24-6 und 27 innerhalb der Botschaft des frühen Christentums": *NTS* 42/3 (1996), 421-433.

Before we come to the *sparrows* we should admit that the anticipated hostility was rational. The message of the Mission⁷, a prophecy of woe mitigated by a call to repentance, was unwelcome because it required a breach with normal behavior. He who must forgive debts and enemies, turn the other cheek, and not take thought for the morrow must be a weak link in the chain-mail of family, clan, tribe, or village solidarity: he will profit from the labor and thought of others whilst being unpredictable himself. One who preaches so improbable a way of life must expect impatient responses (Prov 29,27), and his disciples every form of dissuasion – violent in proportion to their plausibility. If he does indeed expel demons and cure diseases his doctrine too could derive from the Father of Lies, Beelzebul (Mt 12,24.27) or any other Satan. Jesus came to despatch not only missionaries but also a sword (Mt 10,34); and there is Lk 22,35-38.

No doubt the latter passage owes something to Ezekiel and other OT notices that, at the End, Jerusalem will be menaced with the Sword⁸, and to Cant 3,8, with its "every man has his sword on his thigh, because of fear in the night", linking Solomon (and therefore the Messiah) with swords. But Jesus' command to take up the sword (in self defence) indicates the degree of hostility the disciples will confront at the very outset of their post-Easter life because of Jesus' being counted as a "transgressor"⁹. Such is our background, and now we can take up the sparrows. Mt 10,29-31 is seldom given special attention¹⁰. It is noteworthy that no pagan parallel has ever been found for it¹¹.

⁷ D. R. A. Hare, *The Theme of Jewish Persecution of Christians according to Matthew* (SNTSM 6; Cambridge 1967) 125.

⁸ J. D. M. Derrett, *Studies in the New Testament* III (Leiden 1982), 193-199.

⁹ D. J. Moo, *The Old Testament in the Gospel Passion Narratives* (Sheffield 1983) 134-137.

¹⁰ A. Stolz, "Christi de passeribus parabola": *VD* 14 (1934) 56. I do not find it handled by Jülicher or Jeremias.

¹¹ C. T. Ramage, *Bible Echoes in Ancient Classics* (Edinburgh 1878) 188-189; K. Berger / C. Colpe (eds.), *Religionsgeschichtliches Textbuch zum Neuen Testament* (NTD Textr. 1; Göttingen 1987) 107; F. G. Downing, *Christ and the Cynics* (JSOTM 4; Sheffield 1988) 66-67.

II. A PROMISE OF SAFETY?

At Mt 10,22-23 the disciples are reassured that constancy plus repeated flight will lead to salvation. This is a doubtful reassurance. But then we have vv. 29-31 along with their menacingly conditional v. 32. (We shall come to Lk 12,6-7, whose context differs, later).

²⁹ οὐχὶ δύο στρουθία ἀσσαρίου πωλεῖται; καὶ ἓν ἐξ αὐτῶν οὐ πεσεῖται ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν ἄνευ τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν ¹².

³⁰ ὑμῶν δὲ καὶ αἱ τρίχες τῆς κεφαλῆς πᾶσαι ἡριθμημένα εἰσὶν.

³¹ μὴ οὖν φοβεῖσθε (cf. 10,26a), πολλῶν στρουθίων διαφέρετε ὑμεῖς.

This does not promise that they will be saved from execution ¹³, even though a disciple is worth more than *many* sparrows. Admittedly "sparrow" (στρουθίον) can mean any very small bird ¹⁴. There is a somewhat contrived rabbinical passage in which God's sentence on individual birds is taken to imply his concern for the survival of certain people ¹⁵. But even that leaves such a promise far from reassuring. Counting hairs sounds precise, but to what end?

Since the earliest recoverable commentaries the majority exegesis has been (with verbal variations) ¹⁶ that God cares for every creature, including the insignificant and poorly-endowed sparrow (so Stolz), whether saleable or not ¹⁷, if only after death eschatologically. If sparrows, the cheapest meat on the market ¹⁸, suffer only by God's will, the same

¹² Cf. LXX Is 36,10. No hunter can succeed without divine help: Oppian, *Halieutica* 2,4-6.29-37. For ἄνευ see Gen 41,44; P. Par 45⁴.

¹³ F. W. Beare in his *Matthew* (1981).

¹⁴ M. Moschopolus is said to have remarked this, whether in his *Eclogae* (1524,1532), *Peri Schedon* (1545) or *Apophthegmata* (1591, 1612). For *ḥīpôr* covers many types of bird: S. Bochart, *Hierozoicon* (London 1663) II, bk. 3, cap. 21,22.

¹⁵ Midr. R. Gen. LXXIX.6 (Soncino trans., 730).

¹⁶ G. Bornkamm in Bornkamm et al. (eds.), *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (London 1963) 18; G. Barth, *ibid.*, 101. Some commentators, e. g. W. F. Albright / C. S. Mann (AB, 1971, pp. 127-128) think that our verses are unworthy of comment.

¹⁷ Catullus 33.8.

¹⁸ It is absurd to think they were not sold as food, or that they were sold dead: J. Gnlika, *Matthäusevangelium* I (Freiburg 1986) 388-389. The point is that they die so that another may make the smallest conceivable profit out of them.

qualified care *a fortiori* will be exercised in respect of people, even those who knowingly walk into danger. "No human persecution is to be allowed to corrupt the loyalty of the disciples to God and to diminish their trust in him" (T. W. Manson). God does indeed care for *some* bird's deaths (Dt 22,6-7; cf. Mishnah, *Ber.* 5,3), and indeed he claims to own every bird (Ps 50,10-11). But unfortunately this exegesis ignores certain questions. Why sparrows? Why must they be *sold*? Is there a hint of betrayal (Gen 37,27; Jdg 4,9; Jl 3,8)? Why "fall to the ground" (which is no picture of "care")¹⁹? Why "hairs of the head" (a cliché)? That does not necessarily exclude *other* hair, since Hebrew and Aramaic, like English, lack (though Sanskrit and Pali have) separate words for head-hair and body-hair²⁰. Daniel's friends' head-hair is meaningful, since the hair of their bodies was protected by their clothing (LXX Dan 3,94). Why refer to *hair* at all? Surely there is no allusion to Dan 4,33 (Nebuchadnessar)? The usual remark, that "hair of the head" is a proverbial expression — true enough²¹ — does not explain why "numbered". In short, there are too many particulars. This is often the case with parables and parabolic sayings, and to seek reasons for them annoys those who contend that such details are insignificant, or ought to be! But see Cant 5,11!

To return: every commentator understands vv. 29-31 to mean that the disciples, who can aim to be no safer than their Master, must understand that God cares for them, since their fates are known to him, as are the fates of sparrows (whom he does *not* protect from death). There is doubt whether v. 30 has been intruded, since it breaks the flow; for v. 31 reads easily after v. 29. And some, whom the reasoning does not convince, suspect that words have fallen out²². All agree that vv. 32-33 amplify

¹⁹ G. Schwarz, "*Und Jesus sprach*". *Untersuchungen zur aramäischen Urgestalt der Worte Jesu* (BWANT 118; Stuttgart 1985) 106. "Fall to the ground" means "be infructuous" (1 Sam 3,19; 2 Kgs 10,10), become void. The fall of hair cut by the barber is the finest example (not so female tresses, which have a market).

²⁰ *Keśa / kesa*: hair of the head; *roma / loma*: body-hair. Only headhair is shaved / cut by the barber; pubic hair is shaved (not by Greeks?) personally, a much less frequent need.

²¹ See IV below.

²² Gnlika, *Matthäus*, 390; E. Schweizer, *Good News according to Matthew* (London 1978), holds v. 30 an interpolation; P. Gaechter, *Matthäusevangelium* (Innsbruck 1963), 341. R. Bultmann suspected vv. 30-31 and even 29-31 to be inauthentic (*Jesus and the Word*, New York 1958) 160-161. T. W. Manson, *Sayings of Jesus* (1949)

the lesson: fear God, who can (a) indeed effect one's entire destruction yet (b) reward those who are so loyal to Christ that they will "confess him" before (any) people. The context shows that this means "confessing", and not "denying", under persecution, including torture. Others will betray you, you must not betray Christ.

Many believe that Luke improved on Matthew²³. Lk 12,6-7²⁴, addressed to Jesus' friends, emphasizes that God is to be feared. He remembers²⁵ every sparrow that is sold and since one is more important to him than many sparrows, one need not fear the effects of preferring obedience to God to any inducement worldly people can hold out (Acts 5,29).

Such has been the understanding of the matter, universal except for Johannes Henricus Michaelis, who, in 1720, published in two places his recognition that v. 29 meant something subtly different²⁶. Once this hint (subsequently neglected) is followed up, our questions are answered and our focus on this passage is sharpened. It turns out that one must accept that Jesus and his hearers were well versed in the Psalms and would know at least two verses of Amos.

III. BIRDS AND PEOPLE

At first sight there is no need to connect birds with people, and the falling of birds to the earth does not seem to suggest any similarity. Amos challenges this in a rhetorical series of questions, intended to assure his hearers that Jews will suffer for their sins as surely as one phenomenon

106-108, thought that v. 31 had a mistake in translation from Aramaic ("The difference is qualitative, not quantitative"). Such are the results of not knowing the background, in which Ps 8,9(8) looms large.

²³ S. Schulz, *Q. Die Spruchquelle der Evangelisten* (Zürich 1972) 66-76, 157-159. Schwarz, "Und Jesus sprach", o. c., 107.

²⁴ D. W. Sweetland, "Discipleship and persecution: a study of Luke 12:1-12," *Bibl.* 65 (1984) 61-80.

²⁵ See LXX Ps 9,12(13).19(18) (declared relevant by Grotius and Michaelis). 31 (MT 10,9).32 ἐπλήθηται (10,11). 33 (MT 10,12). Also Ps 12,2; 41,10; 43,25; 73,19.23; Is 49,14; Lam 4,20. God will not forget: Heb 6,10. All sacrifices are remembered by God.

²⁶ He related Mt 10,29 to Ps 11,1 in his *Biblia Hebraica* and his commentary on Psalms (*In Hagiographos*, I, *In Psalmos*, 75) both from Halle, 1720.

causes us to infer another. He requires Israel to make peace with God. Am 3,5 reads, "Can a bird (*šipôr*) fall in a snare (*pah*) upon the earth, where no snare (*môqēš*) is set for him; and shall a snare (*pah*) spring up from the ground, and have not caught (*lqd*) any catch"²⁷? V. 7 tells us that God does nothing which he has not revealed (cf. Mt 10,26-27) through his prophets. The fall of a bird to the ground (a metaphor for "coming to nothing")²⁸, the springing of a trap, both exemplify a fate contrived by a *fowler*, who will sell the birds on the market²⁹. He does so under a divine charter (Ps 8,9[8] "birds of heaven"). There is a sequence of cause and effect, which God can predict; and which many besides fowlers can visualize. The prophetic warnings mean trouble, since God removes no affliction till it has done its work.

How are birds caught in nets and snares? O. Keel (1978) describes the processes abundantly. Birds are not taught to avoid human devices. Many of the smaller birds can be caught easily, especially sparrows that nest in numbers in trees and bushes³⁰, since they failed (Job 35,11; 39,17) to avoid the fowler. Sinners, not paying attention to warnings, can be caught by Yahweh, as it were, in a trap (Job 18,9; Ps 11,6; Prov 22,5; Is 8,14-15; 24,17; Jer 48,43-44). The wicked lay snares (Ps 140,6[5]; 142,4; Jer 18,22; Hos 5,1), especially for prophets (Hos 9,8); yet the righteous escape (Ps 119,110). Prophets warn of ways in which one may be caught. In a semi-dualistic thought-world, a wily Satan (with divine permission) lays traps, snares, for the unwary³¹, who have disregarded divine warn-

²⁷ Midr. R. Num. XII.3 (Soncino trans., 454). Mt 10,29 (Lk 12,6) is connected with Am 3,5 by Origen and others as shown at R. H. Gundry, *Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel* (SNT 18; Leiden 1967) 135; tentatively approved by A. T. Hanson, *Living Utterances of God. The New Testament Exegesis of the Old* (London 1983) 30. Am 3,5 is dealt with by Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World* (New York 1978) 91,94 and figs. 112,120 (known to me *gratia* J. W. McMillan).

²⁸ N. 19 above. Hos 7,12 is especially useful for us.

²⁹ Certainly to be eaten: Tat., *Diatess.* (Arab.) 13,15. The fowler's apparatus is listed in Oppian, *Cynegetica* 1.62-66; *Halieutica* 1.29-34; 2.99-104; 4.120-125; and *Anthol. Pal.* VI.109, IX.824 (Loeb edn. III,443); Aristophanes, *Av.* 194,524-9. Arrows: Attius at Cic., *Fin.* 5.11,32. A. R. S. Kennedy, "Fowl", in *Encycl. Bibl.* (1903) 1558-1562; J. A. Thompson, "Snare", in *New Bible Dictionary* (1982) 1126. Add: slings, throwing-sticks illustrated by Keel, *Symbolism*, fig. 120. Buyers: Aristoph., *Av.* 530-538.

³⁰ W. M. Thomson, *Land and the Book* (London 1886) 43, 258, 567-568. LXX Jer 30,28.

³¹ Cf. Lk 21,34; 1 Tim 3,7; 6,9; 2 Tim 2,26. A man caught in the Tempter's net,

ing. Satan is the great Fowler. Jesus himself was approached by "tempters", Satan's emissaries³². Wicked rulers set traps which make their subjects stumble³³. David thought of himself at one time as a partridge hunted in the mountains (1 Sam 26,20); and the righteous are in no better case (Lam 3,52).

The fowler appears in Psalms³⁴, and at Hos 9,8; and the Psalmist compares himself unfavorably to a bird, wanting to fly (*nwd*).

LXX Ps 10,1: πέποιθα· πῶς ἐρεῖτε τῇ ψυχῇ μου³⁵ μεταναστεύου ἐπὶ τὰ ὄρη (Heb. "your mountains") ὡς στρουθίον (Heb. "you birds")³⁶.

LXX Ps 54,7-8: Τίς δώσει μοι πτέρυγας ὥσει περιστερῶς καὶ πετασθήσομαι καὶ καταπαύσω; ἰδοὺ ἐμάκρυνα φευγαδεύων καὶ πῦλίσθην ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ.

The upshot of these passages is that the wicked prepare snares for the righteous, and the latter wish they could fly away, since the flight of birds suggests escape from the enemy. The sparrow faces enemies alone (Ps 102,7-9[6-8]). People and snares for birds are repeatedly brought into juxtaposition³⁷. Fear of men certainly suggests a snare (Prov 29,25; cf. Sir 9,13). If the psalmist's prayers are answered, he knows that through his trust in God he will be preserved from the wiles of the Fowler, which remains a powerful image of the devil³⁸. Divine help is needed to be rescued from a snare, a popular image³⁹, sustained by many comparisons between wiles and snares, limed sticks, decoys, etc⁴⁰. What the

the evil inclination: Midr. R. Exod. XXX.16,17 (Sonc. trans. 364-5, 366). See below ("powerful image"). Also Test. Joseph VII.1 (α version).

³² Mt 16,1; 19,3; 22,18.35; Jn 8,6. Cf. Mt 4,1; 6,13; 26,41; 1 Cor 7,5.

³³ Job 34,30 MT,Tg; 11QtgJob. The snare causes one to stumble (*tql*) and it is temptation (*taqqālâ*).

³⁴ Ps 11,2; 91,3; 124,7; 140,5; 141,9; cf. Jer 5,26.

³⁵ Cf. Lk 13,31. See Kee], *Symbolism*, 93.

³⁶ Note the plural – a single soul is paralleled by a flock of birds.

³⁷ Josh 23,13; Ps 124,7 (our soul escaped); Prov 6,5 ("Deliver thyself as a roe from the hand [of the hunter] and as a *bird* from the hand of the fowler"); cf. 7,23. Qoh 9,12. Jer 5,26-27 (the unwary are like a *cage* full of netted birds). Sir 9,13.

³⁸ See n. 31 above.

³⁹ *Aesop's Fable* no. 205 Halm (1852) = 166 Chambry (1927), 74 Handford (1954).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*; 85, 88, 296 Halm; 282, 285, 349 Chambry; 75, 356 Handford.

apostles and disciples have to face is snares laid by rulers and ruled alike, who find the gospel absolutely obnoxious. But just as God has foreseen the successes of actual fowlers, so the disciple's ability to escape from persecution depends on his prophets' efficiency in tutoring their converts to trust only in him (not in men), and so by perfect righteousness take advantage of a divine safe-conduct. To this we must now turn. For people have problems of loyalty, which birds do not have.

IV. THE HAIR OF THE HEAD

It is known that the New Testament contains many puns on Hebrew and Aramaic words⁴¹: here we have a splendid example, which should be approached circumspectly. God can be interested in the whole growth of hair (Jdg 13,5; 16,17.22 [Samson]; Lev 14,8-9 [leper]; Num 6,19 [Nazirite]); and certainly in individual hairs (Lev 13,21.31.32). A bombastic guarantee is found at 1 Sam 14,45; 2 Sam 14,11; 1 Kgs 1,52 ("not a hair of your / his head shall fall to the ground"): this implies freedom from injury however slight, since a hair is worth nothing⁴². God's enemies' hair *is* at risk (Is 3:24, 7,20; Jer 7,29). Jesus' grant of a safe-conduct, as Matthew Henry puts it (on Ps 91), "under the broad seal of heaven", must be totally effective (Jn 10,28). Yet it is conditional. It does not operate for disciples who are likely to deny their Master, or whose way of life contradicts their gospel, so that they lay traps for others (Mt 5,13)⁴³.

Why "counted"? "As many Xs as the hairs of my head" is a proverbial saying (Midr. R. Gen. LXXX.6, Soncino trans., 731); and "more numerous than the hairs of my head" is another (Ps 40,13[12]; 69,5) whereby sins and the wicked are numbered. God can number stars and sand⁴⁴. The lives/souls of the righteous poor are precious (*yāqār*) to God, and so every part is valued⁴⁵. The principal text is Ps 72,14; and Ps 72 is re-

⁴¹ J. D. M. Derrett, *Some Telltale Words in the New Testament* (Shipston-on-Stour, 1997) 5. Note *môrāh* (razor/authority) at 1 Cor 11,5 (ZNW 72 [1981] 131). A razor implies power: Mishnah, Naz. IX.5.

⁴² Aristophanes, *Ranae* 614.

⁴³ Derrett, *Telltale Words*, o. c., 73-75.

⁴⁴ Gen 13,16; 15,5; 16,10; Ps 147,4; Jer 33,22; Hos 1,10.

⁴⁵ Ps 72,14; also 49,8; 116,15; Is 43,4; and the important Lam 4,2. Cf. 1 Sam

cognized by the targumist and by the rabbis as a blue-print of the Messiah's programme⁴⁶. If the Messiah, whose Kingdom has already come, gives such a guarantee, who will doubt it? Michaelis saw that Ps 72,14 illuminated Mt 10,30. In a *Pesiqta* Joh. Drusius (1550-1616) found "nonne omnes capillos omnis creaturae ego numero?" Though his reference has not been checked⁴⁷, Wetstenius accepted it.

As for the *numbering*, one must realize that the Hebrew behind the word is *spr*. This covers writing and counting. In a famous biblical event Absalom, whose hair was specially luxuriant, and required the services of a professional barber annually (whereas warriors naturally visit the barber much more frequently), Yahweh caused him to be caught by his hair in a tree by way of a dramatic *talio* for his unrighteous doings⁴⁸. Absalom was *tempted* and fell metaphorically, and his reward was to fall to the ground actually. In post-biblical Hebrew *sāpar* means "to count"; its *piel* form, *sîpēr*, means "to cut", especially in hair-dressing⁴⁹. In Aramaic "to cut" is *sapār*, and the hair-dresser (of no high social status: Mishnah, *Qidd.* IV.14; 82a) is *sapārā* (Mishnah, *Šabb.* 1,2), in Heb. *sapār* (a haircut is *tispôret*). The Torah regulated Jewish haircuts (Lev 19,27; Bab. Talm., *Sot.* 49b), to avoid Greek hairstyles. The numbered hairs of the righteous fall to the ground in obedience to God, *yet no single hair is actually damaged thereby* by those scissors (Mishna, *Kel.* XII,1; Bab. Talm., *B. M.* 116a) which are like snares! Hair was cut regularly (1 Cor 11,14), so the image was familiar. Every aspect of animal and human life is regulated by God, including wastage: obedience to him makes such loss intelligible.

26,21; 2 Kgs 1,13-14.

⁴⁶ Tg Ps 72; Midr. Ps. *ibid.*; Midr. Qoh. 1.9; Bab. Talm. *Šabb.* 30b; *Ket.* 111b; Sifre Dt § 310 (trans. Hammer, 316). Mekilta, *Amaleq* 2.188-192 (Lauterbach 2.161); Pirqe de Rabbi Eliezer 11(10); *Pesiqta Rabbati* 13.2; 32.3/4 (trans Braude, 246, 626). Ostensibly about Solomon, the psalm faithfully prefigures the reign of the Messiah.

⁴⁷ If not *p'siqta' Zûṭarā'* (1546), then *P.d'Rav Kāh'nā'* or *P. Rabbā'i* in ms.?

⁴⁸ 2 Sam 14,26; 18,9 (MT,Tg)-15.

⁴⁹ M. Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli...* (New York 1950) 1017. The assonance between *spwr* ("bird") and *spr* is remarkable. Syriac (a form of Aramaic) denotes all the work of the barber by *sapar* (C. Brockelmann, *Lexicon Syriacum* [Edinburgh / Berlin 1895] 235b). Folk-linguistics would say cut hair is countable. In reality *spr* goes right back to iron *stili*.

V. A PARALLEL

These safe-conducts take on a new life at Lk 21,18-19 and Acts 27,34. They are guarantees of safety against oppressors, without any suggestion of a condition. They relate to LXX Dan 3,9. Those passages raise doubts, since many martyrs can testify that no devotion to God or to Jesus has protected them from hideous fates. The embarrassment is avoided if we see the author of Luke-Acts simply applying the promise of Mt 10,30 out of context.

VI. MULTIPLE ATTESTATION ⁵⁰

Corroboration is available. Jesus promises his disciples that they will be able to tread upon dangerous wild creatures (Lk 10,19). This must be a genuine promise to the just. They remind us, as they reminded contemporaries, of Ps 91,12, the same psalm that, at v. 3, speaks of rescue from the fowlers' snare, a psalm Satan knew well (Mt 4,6). Yahweh reassures the righteous (LXX Ps 90,13):

ἐπ' ἄσπιδά καὶ βασιλίσκον ἐπιβήσῃ
καὶ καταπατήσεις λέοντα καὶ δράκοντα.

Like the Children of Israel, whom Yahweh's protection enabled to pass safely through every natural hazard ⁵¹, and thereafter to trample upon Satan (Rom 16,20) and "spirits of seduction" ⁵², and upon unrighteous kings ⁵³ – for serpents and adders imply deceivers (Ps 58,4-5[3-4]) – the believer is protected, especially from human adversaries. Sin, however, will kill ⁵⁴. Thus the "fowler" reappears as a dangerous beast

⁵⁰ Multiple attestations and multiple forms: Craig A. Evans, *Jesus* (Grand Rapids 1992) 56-57. N. J. McElenev, "Authenticity criteria and Mark 7:1-23": *CBQ* 34 (1972) 431-460 at 434-5,443 (Mk 8,34, itself highly implausible as recruiting material). Robert H. Stein, "The 'criteria' for authenticity," in R. T. France / D. Wenham (eds.), *Gospel Perspectives I* (Sheffield 1983) 225-263 at 229-233.

⁵¹ See Is 11,8; Dt 8,15. Midr. R. Exod XXIV.4 (Soncino trans., 299-300).

⁵² Test. Levi 18,12; Test. Sim. 6,6; Test. Zeb. 9,8.

⁵³ Tg ps. Jon., Tg. Neof. Dt 33,29; Josh 10,24-25; Ps 110,1. Pesiqta Rabbati 18.6 (Braude 391). Is Job 5,23 relevant?

⁵⁴ R. Hanina at Bab. Talmud, *Ber.* 33a (Soncino trans., 204). Bahya Ibn Paquda,

(2 Thes 2,9). Granted this is the origin of Jesus' promise, found even at Mk 16,18, illustrated naively at Acts 28,5, we have two ways of expressing Jesus' guarantee to his disciples that if they are faithful to his teaching they can not only explain themselves effectively (Mt 10,19-20), but also escape from traps, walking boldly amongst hostile elements. The prediction is open to verification.

VII. CONCLUSION

Mt 10,29-32 should be read as a whole, the divine attention to birds being intelligible when their fates and humans' are justified in perspective. These are equally bound to praise God in their lives as Ps 148,10-13 and LXX Dan 3,80-82 make plain. Mt 10,29-31 and Lk 12,6-7 tell that notwithstanding the hostility which the gospel arouses, the disciples and apostles, having decided for God⁵⁵, have the natural capacity to evaluate the wiles of the "enemy", as birds may escape the snares of the fowler and one submits one's head to the barber⁵⁶, provided they trust God implicitly (LXX Ps 55,5-24) – "fearing" him – in loyalty to Christ and the gospel, whereupon they are under his safe-conduct, and not merely eschatologically⁵⁷. Their personal safety in a comprehensive danger depends on these two factors: wily observation and faith. Another authentic saying supports this. Mt 10,16 is anterior to ours and prepares us for the latter. As sheep (*shorn* for their wool), in the midst of wolves (who want *meat*), they must combine the prudence of snakes and purity of doves. Serpents defy the Deceiver (cf. Gen 3,1).

Snakes escape promptly when threatened, so that the righteous, but not the wicked, escape being bitten by them (Am 5,19; 9,3; Wisd 16,5; Sir 39,30). The dove, totally harmless, non-aggressive, will fly away (Ps

Duties of the Heart VIII.19 (trans. M. Mansoor, 382-383).

⁵⁵ Manson, *Teaching of Jesus* (1963) 165-166.

⁵⁶ The cutting of all or parts of the hair was not optional. See D. F. Payne, 'Hair', in *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester 1986) 449b, and Mishnah, *bAv.Zar.* II.2 (idolaters as hairdressers).

⁵⁷ C. F. Evans, *Luke* (London & Philadelphia 1990) 745 doubts whether Lk 21,8 refers to after-death care. Christians did have escapes (Acts 5,19-26 and ten other examples).

55,5) to escape the snare it has noticed. The dove avoids many sparrows' fate. If it succumbs to merchants for sacrificial purposes, that too is within the divine providence. The persecution expected from conventional fellow Israelites is not beyond the powers of well-instructed missionaries to deal with – the scheme of the Creator has already provided models for the attitude they must adopt. After all, he *needs* them to acknowledge Jesus and to be acknowledged by him (Mt 10,31-32).