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MATTHEW'S THEOLOGY OF LIGHT
(Matt 4:15-16; 5:14-16; 6:22-23)

The term light / brightness is generally accepted by exegetes to have a theological significance in the New Testament primarily in Johannine writings, particularly in the Fourth Gospel and in the First Letter. Nevertheless we already deal with the picturesque or figurative use of these terms in the teachings of Jesus Christ, in the letters of Paul and in the Synoptic Gospels. In some cases one can speak of the theological contents related to the term φῶς, which arose from the Old Testament and from the Palestinian and Judeo-Hellenistic environment¹.

An interesting theological concept relating to the metaphorical significance of the term “light” – “brightness” is found in the case of the first canonical Gospel. This statement is based on an observation of the redactional work of the Evangelist: the choice of Greek terms, the theological elaboration of the Mark and Q tradition and locating the pericope in the theological structure of the first Gospel. The Greek term φῶς – “light, brightness” appears in the first Gospel seven times. It occurs twice for the first time in Matt 4:16, present in the text of Isa 8:23 – 9:1 which is only quoted by Matthew. It also appears twice in Matt 5:14-16, verses which are a redactional composition of

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¹ A simple look at the contents related with the literal, picturesque and figurative, or a theological understanding of the term φῶς κτλ in the light of antiquity is given by H. Conzelmann, art.: φῶς κτλ, TWNT IX, p. 302-349; in the opinion of the author (1973) only the noun φῶς received a theological meaning in the NT and only in Johannine literature.

the Evangelist. In the third instance, the text in Matt 6:22-23 arose based on primary source material, but without a doubt this was the redactional work of Matthew. In addition the term $\phi\omega\varsigma$ appears in Matt 10:27 (cf. Luke 12:3 = Q) and in Matt 17:2 as another effect of the redactional work of the Evangelist. Therefore, one can correctly state that Matthew was interested in the theme of “light – brightness”. Three texts which are full of terminology on light (Matt 4:15-16; 5:14-16; 6:22-23) are interesting. A literary, exegetical and theological analysis of the mentioned texts allows discovering the redactional thoughts of Matthew and his theological idea².

I. THE MESSIAH AS THE GREAT LIGHT (Matt 4:15-16)

The first text is located in a greater literary unit, in which the Evangelist tells about the beginning of the public work of Jesus in Galilee (Matt 4:12-17). The pericope was preceded by the account of the temptation of Jesus in the desert (4:1-11), and after this there follows a description of the call of the first disciples (4:18-23). The analysed text is divided into three smaller fragments³:

- v. 12 – mention of the imprisonment of John the Baptist
- vv. 13-16 – residing in Capernaum as a fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophesy
- v. 17 – the beginning of preaching the message of the Kingdom of Heaven

Even a superficial contrast and comparison of synoptic texts makes it possible to discover the original redaction of the relation by Matthew. From the sources he possessed, the Evangelist received the information concerning the arrest of John the Baptist, about the change in the place of Jesus’ resi-

² In his commentary on Matthew, J. Gnlika perceived this issue, though he did not systematically undertake it. See J. Gnlika, *Das Matthäusevangelium. I Teil. Kommentar zu Kap. 1, 1–13, 58* (HTKNT 1, 1), Freiburg–Basel–Wien 1986; comp. also A. Tronina, *Symbolika światła w Nowym Testamencie*, CzST 8 (1980), especially p. 130-131.

³ We ought to accept the argumentation of U. Luz and others who link v. 17 with the mention that Jesus was residing in Capernaum; however many authors consider v. 17 to be the beginning of a new section. Concerning this topic see U. Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus, 1. Teilband (Mt 1 – 7)* (EKK 1, 1), Neukirchen–Vluyn 1992³, p. 168-169; similar to D. A. Hagner, *Matthew 1 – 13* (WBC 33A), Dallas, Texas 1993, p. 71-72; A. Paciorek, *Ewangelia według św. Mateusza (rozdz. 1 – 13)* (NKB NT 1/1), Częstochowa: Edycja św. Pawła 2005, p. 167-168.

dence and the topic he preached, the message about the need to convert and the upcoming Kingdom of Heaven, therefore the dependency of the Evangelist on earlier relations does not undergo any doubt (cf. Matt 1:14-15, 21; Luke 4:14-15, 31). One of the many in Matthew's Gospel quotes speaking of the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises⁴ was added to the relation, and it is this quote which awakens our particular interest. This is because only Matthew added the foretelling of the prophet Isaiah (cf. Isa 8:23; 9:1) concerning the information about the location of Jesus' place of residence, giving the relation a new theological meaning which is not present in the remaining synoptics:

And leaving Nazareth, he came and settled in Capernaum, beside the lake, by the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah:

“Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali! Way of the sea beyond Jordan, Galilee of the pagans! The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light; a light has dawned on those who sat in a land of shadow dark as death” (Matt 4:13-16).

There are difficulties in determining the sources of origin of the text of Isaiah cited since it does not completely fit either the Masoretic text or the Greek Septuagint translation. In addition the present sense of the cited text significantly departs from its Old Testament meaning (cf. Isa 8:23 – 9:1)⁵.

The first part of the cited text was shortened and re-written: “Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali! Way of the sea beyond Jordan, Galilee of the pagans!” (v. 15; cf. Isa 8:23). For Matthew, geographical information was important, which anticipated the previously mentioned change of Jesus' place of residence (v. 13). One can doubt that by quoting Isaiah, Matthew falls into a contradiction here and that he needed the quote only on account of the

⁴ See: ἵνα πληρωθῆ τὸ ρηθὲν (Matt 4:14; Cf. 1:22; 2:15; 12:17; 21:4), also ὅπως πληρωθῆ τὸ ρηθὲν (Matt 2:23; 8:17; 13:35). See L u z, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, p. 134-140; H a g n e r, *Matthew*, p. liii-lvii.

⁵ First the prophet presents the dramatic events related with the Syro-Ephraim war (734-733 B.C.) and the raid of the Assyrian armies, as a result of which three new provinces arose, composed of part of the land of the Northern Kingdom (2 King 15:29), and next he foretells the saving intervention of God related with the appearance of light and the birth of the child from the Davidic dynasty (Isa 9:1nn). See L. S t a c h o w i a k, *Księga Izajasza I (1-39). Wstęp – przekład z oryginału, komentarz* (PST IX, 1), Poznań 1996, p. 220 nn.; cf. R. F. S h e d i n g e r, *Must the Greek Text Always Be Preferred? Versional and Patristic Witnesses to the Text of Matthew 4:16*, JBL 123 (2004), p. 449-466.

phrase “Galilee of the pagans”. It is not a significant fact that Nazareth which Jesus left lay in the territory of Zebulun, however Capernaum as a new place of stay was from generations the territory of Nephtal. The Evangelist was looking at the beginning of the public work of the Messiah in a complete way – Jesus Christ was active in Galilee and the neighboring territories, primarily on the borders of the Lake of Galilee, in the regions where the Jews and pagans lived⁶.

The second part of the quote has great significance, in which the text from Isaiah (Isa 9:1) was more faithfully cited. Let us draw attention to the parallelism of the two clauses of the verse:

A people sitting in darkness	has seen a great light
sitting in the land and shadow of death –	light has dawned on them
ὁ λαὸς ὁ καθήμενος ἐν σκότει	φῶς εἶδεν μέγα
τοῖς καθημένοις ἐν χώρα καὶ σκιᾷ θανάτου	φῶς ἀνέτειλεν αὐτοῖς

The geographical information in the first part of the verse acquires new significance. The Evangelist presents the inhabitants of these territories as the first witnesses and addresses of the appearance and public work of Jesus (v. 16). The question concerns the intentions Matthew had concerning the Isaiah text: who was he thinking of? In the first Gospel the term λαὸς (14 times in Matthew) always signifies the people of Israel and there are no clear reasons for accepting any other meaning in this place. The next part of the verse is more difficult to interpret, and one is free to ask if we are not dealing with a synonym parallelism twice describing the people of Israel, which up to that time had remained in darkness and the land of death? Or maybe at the same time it signifies Israel and the pagan nations, which is suggested by the contents of the invocation in the preceding v. 15⁷? Originally the text

⁶ P a c i o r e k, *Ewangelia*, p. 170-171; see the text interpretation of Matt 4:13-16 by U. Luz (*Das Evangelium nach Matthäus, ad locum*); in the next part of the commentary (p. 172) the author accurately describes his point of view: “[...] für den Evangelisten nicht speziell in der Übersiedlung Jesu nach Kafarnaum, sondern in seiner ganzen galiläischen Wirksamkeit das Jesajazitat erfüllt war”; more accurately J. H o m e r s k i, *Ewangelia według św. Mateusza. Wstęp – przekład z oryginału, komentarz* (PNT III, 1), Poznań 1979, p. 117-118; cf. H. G i e s e n, *Galiläa – Mehr als eine Landschaft. Bibeltheologischer Stellenwert Galiläas im Matthäusevangelium*, *EthL* 77(2001), p. 23-45.

⁷ This is the direction Eusebius’ commentary was going, who divided Galilee into Jewish Galilee (v. 15a) and Pagan Galilee (v. 15b). See L u z, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, p. 171-172; cf. H a g n e r, *Matthew*, p. 74.

exclusively referred to the generations of Zabulun and Nephtali, who after the Syro-Ephraime war found themselves under the rule of the Assyrians and lost hope of being saved⁸. In the new context the words generally point to the region incorporating the banks of the Lake of Galilee – on the “Galilee of the pagans” which is the place where the Messiah appears⁹.

The second motive of the discussed verse is a metaphor of light and darkness. The inhabitants of the mentioned geographical lands are presented as those who up to now dwelled in darkness and “in the land and shadow of death”¹⁰ and therefore as if in Sheol. It is a metaphorical description of a situation of distress and doom, the absence of God and lack of salvation – a state similar to death (Job 10:21-22; cf. Ps 107:10, 14)¹¹. Nevertheless, now a great light has arisen for them, and that is how Jesus’ appearance and his message about the imminent reign of God have been interpreted by Matthew. There is no need to differentiate between the person of the Messiah and his teaching. Jesus with his teaching is symbolically presented as the great light making the darkness bright. In the Jewish tradition, light in Isa 9:1 was interpreted as the spoken light of the Torah; in general, the Torah was brightness, as was the word of Yahweh (Ps 119:105). Similarly, the appearance of the Messiah was sometimes metaphorically presented as the coming of light – the Messiah (or his soul) was light¹². In Matthew’s version the cited text from Isaiah received characteristics of the announcement of the Messiah, which is additionally stressed by the presence of the verb ἀνατέλλω (cf. Num 24:17: ἀνατελεῖ ἄστρον ἐξ Ιακωβ). The expected messianic king began his public teaching about the upcoming reign of God.

⁸ In comparison with the Masoretic text and Greek translation (cf. Isa 9:1) v. 16 maintains some of its source vocabulary, and at the same time shows great independence from LXX, for example the grammatical tense of the verbs: in Matt the past tense (*aoristus*) as in TM. The Evangelist saw in Jesus the fulfillment of the OT prophesies. See G n i l k a, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, p. 96-97.

⁹ According to W. Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (ThHNT I), Berlin 1986⁶, p. 106, this concerns all the inhabitants of the regions located about Lake of Galilee.

¹⁰ The *Biblia Tysiąclecia* (third edition) correctly translates „land covered by the shadow of death”.

¹¹ On the topic of the symbolism of light in the OT see S. Aalen, art.: ’or, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. I, ed. J. Botterwick, H. Ringgren, Grand Rapids, Michigan 1977, p. 147-167, particularly p. 160-163; P a c i o r e k, *Ewangelia*, p. 171.

¹² *Pesikta rabbati* 36 = 161a; cf. *Genesis rabba* 1, 6 (Gen 1:1); and 85, 1 (Gen 38:1). Cf. C o n z e l m a n n, art.: φῶς κτλ, p. 319; T r o n i n a, *Symbolika swiatla*, p. 131.

Matthew's interest in the topic of light in the Christological context can be observed earlier in the pericope on the journey of the wise men who went according to the light of the star (four times ἄστηρ in Matt 2:1-12), in order to pay homage to the king of the Jews – the Messiah. The light in the heavens pointed to the newly born Child. An analogical tendency can be perceived in the edited report of the description of the transfiguration on the mount (Matt 17:1-9). The transfigured person of Jesus is described by Matthew comparing his face to the sun (ὡς ὁ ἥλιος) and his garments to brightness (ὡς τὸ φῶς). It is a specific trait of Matthew's presentation of the transfiguration (Matt 17:2). The metaphor of light and darkness as the sphere of salvation and destruction appears in the first Gospel several more times. In the text analyzed above the metaphor of light was applied to describe the beginning of the public work of Jesus Christ – the great light in the "Pagan Galilee".

II. DISCIPLES AS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD (Matt 5:14-16)

Matthew's interest on the topic of light / brightness is revealed in the next text which is found this time at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5 – 7). After the eight beatitudes (5:2-12) the Evangelist brings up two parables, the first about salt and the second about light, pointing to the call for life of the disciples of Jesus Christ (5:13-16). The topic of the greater righteousness of the disciples (5:17-20) closes the opening section of the Sermon on the Mount and prepares its main section¹³.

The structure of the text of Matt 5:13-16 which interests us is clear. The fragment is composed of parallel contrasted allegories or metaphors, which through the help of two different images point to the same thought¹⁴. The

¹³ An interesting work on the structure of Matt 5 – 7 is presented by U. Luz (*Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, p. 185-187); cf. further G. B o r n k a m m, *Der Aufbau der Bergpredigt*, NTS 24 (1977/78), p. 419-432; S. A. P a n i o l l e, *La struttura del discorso della montagna (Mt 5 – 7)*, in: *Testimonium Christi. Scritti in onore di J. Dupont*, ed. C.M. Martini et al, Brescia 1985, p. 329-350; D. C. A l l i s o n, *The Structure of the Sermon on the Mount*, JBL 106 (1987), p. 423-445. See also the description of the studies: M. D u m a i s, *Le sermon sur la montagne. État de la recherche. Interprétation. Bibliographie*, Paris 1995, p. 80-91.

¹⁴ J. J e r e m i a s, *Die Gleichnisse Jesu*, Göttingen 1962⁶, p. 89-91; however K. Berger (*Formgeschichte des Neuen Testaments*, Heidelberg 1984, p. 38-39) introduces the term "metaphorische Personalprädikationen" – the personal metaphorical predicate (see also p. 46-47).

first of the metaphors compares the disciples of Jesus to the salt of the earth (v. 13a: ὑμεῖς ἐστε τὸ ἅλας τῆς γῆς), which is helpful and useful as a necessary condiment, however the undertone of the comparison is negative¹⁵. The second saying presents the disciples as the light of the world (v. 14a: ὑμεῖς ἐστε τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου). It was broadened: it contains the thesis (v. 14a), next an explanation based on two images about the characteristics of the parable (vv. 14b-15) and a parenthetical indication (v. 16):

You are the light of the world (v. 14a).
 A city set on a hill cannot be hidden (v. 14b).
 No one lights a lamp and hides it under a basket, but puts it on a lamp-stand;
 and it shines for everyone in the house (v. 15).
 So let your light shine before people in the same way,
 So that they might see your good deeds and praise your Father,
 who is in Heaven (v. 16).

The saying was reedited and arranged by the Evangelist. Exegetes state that vv. 14b-15 come from the Q source and probably go back to Jesus himself, but presently we can only give suppositions as to the context in which they were spoken as well as their original meaning (cf. Mark 4:21; Luke 8:16; 11:33). On the other hand, vv. 14a and 16 carry clear editing traits of the work of Matthew, which belong to the peculiar texts of Matt and contain his characteristic vocabulary¹⁶.

Through the personal pronoun “you” (ὑμεῖς) the logion relates to vv. 11-12 in which Jesus foretells the persecution of his disciples. The persecuted disciples are the salt of the earth (v. 13) and they are also the light of the world (v. 14a). Both metaphors point to the mission assignment of the disciples and the obligation to give witness: through their lives on earth there must become present the good news about the Kingdom of God. Christian mission and witness are directed to all people, as suggests the general expressions “salt of the earth” and “light of the world” (cf. Matt 13:38). Somewhat later the hearers of this witness were described generally as “people” (v. 16a). The new universalism of the Christian message and Matthew’s thought on common salvation is revealed here, though in this place in the Gospel it is only present in a hidden way (cf. Matt 28:19).

¹⁵ See J. Ł a c h, „Sól ziemi” (*Mt 5, 13*), CT 52 (1982), nr 4, p. 47-56.

¹⁶ L u z, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, p. 220; H a g n e r, *Matthew*, p. 98; P a c i o r e k, *Ewangelia*, p. 207.

The term light (τὸ φῶς) is once again found in the central point of the declaration. The disciples of Jesus are the “light” and ought to “shine before people”. The terms have a general sense and their meaning depends on the context, that is why first one must pay attention to the present here two images of the allegory’s characteristics: the city set on a hill and the lamp shining in the house (vv. 14b-15). Though in a different way, both images illustrate a similar idea: the necessity and irrevocability, simply the inevitability of giving witness before people and the world. It is the so-called *tertium comparationis* of both allegories. It is therefore impossible for a city built on a hill to hide itself from the human eye¹⁷. Similarly impossible and senseless is lighting a lamp and placing it under a basket, meaning hiding the light, and as a consequence extinguishing it; whereas the normal assignment of a lamp is to illuminate the inside of a home¹⁸. Such is the status of the disciples of Jesus: they are not allowed to hide before people; on the contrary, they ought to be witnesses to the world. To witness is an obligation of disciples resulting from their accepting Jesus and his teaching, and his light is the source of their light.

Finally, Matthew added a hermeneutical key which makes more precise when the community of disciples is the light of the world (v. 16b). This light is their good, simply “beautiful acts” (τὰ καλὰ ἔργα), which the disciples ought to fulfill for people. It means – quite possibly – acts of mercy (cf. Matt 26:10: ἔργον γὰρ καλὸν ἠργάσατο)¹⁹. Joining Jesus and following him, as well as accepting the Gospel about the Heavenly Kingdom finds its external

¹⁷ Such a city in Palestine was for example Sefforis, but one could also think of Jerusalem. Some exegetes (ie. G n i l k a, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, p. 135-136; cf. H a g n e r, *Matthew*, p. 100; P a c i o r e k, *Ewangelia*, p. 209) suspect that in this image there are some theological contents related with the Biblical mention of a “city” built by God to which all nations shall come (Isa 2:2-5). Here, this city would be the community of Jesus’ disciples. Such a broader, allegorical meaning of the term *polis* in v. 14b can be accepted in a spiritual sense, or maybe the *sensus plenior* of the expression, however it does not result directly from the analyzed text. See further: Ch. G r a p p e, *Royaume de Dieu, Temple et Cité de Dieu dans la prédication de Jésus et à lumière de Matthieu 5, 13-16*, in: *La Cité de Dieu – Die Stadt Gottes*, hrsg. M. Hengel, Tübingen 2000, p. 147-193.

¹⁸ The parable of the lamp (Mark 4:21; Matt 5:15; Luke 8:16; 11:33) is brought up by all the synoptics; differentiating the meaning of the logion might even reach as far back as Jesus himself. See W. M i c h a e l i s, art.: λύχνος κτλ., TWNT IV, p. 325-329.

¹⁹ So states J. Gnllka (*Das Matthäusevangelium*, p. 137), according to whom this concerns works of mercy done with personal affection, for example visiting the sick, accepting foreigners, helping the poor by giving alms, and so on: A. Paciorek (*Ewangelia*, p. 210) views it differently, and points to works of justice.

expression in works of faith and belief practiced on a daily basis. Accepting the Gospel and living the Gospel is a unity, from this the light of the community of believers shines on the outside and is seen by the surrounding world. Its ultimate goal is to praise God our Father (v. 16c; cf. John 15:8)²⁰.

The metaphor about the disciples of Jesus as the light of the world makes Christians aware of the responsibility to unceasingly give witness, and from this also comes their missionary function. The community does not live for themselves, but takes part in public life – is given to the critical judgement of people, and even persecution (cf. Phil 2:15). Their living according to the Gospel is for the environment already a sign of the presence of the time of salvation.

III. THE INTERNAL LIGHT OF A DISCIPLE (Matt 6:22-23)

The last text augments the most difficult interpretations. Matt 6:22-23 is again a fragment from the Sermon on the Mount, a collection of teachings and moral indicators. This part of the Sermon (Matt 6:19 – 7:11) is dedicated to accomplishing by disciples “a greater righteousness”. In the context preceding the text the addressees are challenged to gather treasures in heaven (6:19-21), and in the context following the text they are warned against serving God and mammon (6:24), and then against excessive worries (6:25-34) and judging neighbors (7:1-5). The analyzed text reads as follows:

The lamp (ὁ λύχνος) of the body is the eye (v. 22a).

It follows that if your eye is healthy (ἀπλοῦς),
your whole body will be filled with light (v. 22b).

But if your eye is diseased (πονηρός),
your whole body will be full of darkness (v. 23a).

If then, the light inside you is darkness, what great darkness that will be! (v. 23b).

The text is composed of an introduction with a characteristic maxim or saying which is often acknowledged as the definition of the human eye, because it describes its function (v. 22a). Afterwards follows a commentary built in the form of an ideal symmetrical antithetical parallelism (vv. 22b-

²⁰ For the first time in the first Gospel God is called the “Father in Heaven” and from here on this phrase appears systematically in the Sermon on the Mount and in all the Gospel according to Matthew (19 times). See H a g n e r, *Matthew*, p. 101; P a c i o r e k, *Evangelia*, p. 210.

23a) clarifying the conditions for correctly (v. 22b) and incorrectly (v. 23a) seeing. The closing verse is the conclusion, a warning against the effects of incorrectly seeing (v. 23b).

The logion about the lamp mainly comes from the Q source and probably goes as far back as the historical Jesus of Nazareth. Luke (11:34-36) also cites it, though in a different way. Originally, the logion was linked with the words of Jesus about the lamp shining inside the home, which “is not placed under a basket, but on a lampstand” (Luke 11:33n; cf. Matt 5:14). The first three clauses of the statement (vv. 22a, 22b, 23a) are cited from the Q source, even though in Luke’s version the antithetical parallelism is not as precise and elaborate as in the case of Matthew (Luke 11:34bc). The present form of the parallelism is certainly a work of the Evangelist (cf. the same expression ὁ ὀφθαλμὸς σου πονηρὸς as in Matt 20:15). His redactional activity is even clearer in the closing verse (v. 23b), which has no parallel in the third Gospel. As ought to be judged, Matthew the Evangelist shortened the source he had, giving the statement a new sound and tone (cf. Luke 11:35-36)²¹.

The interpretation of the discussed text arises among exegetes diverse questions and its point of debate concerns Biblical and non-Biblical tradition which comprise the first-rate context of the logion of Matt 6:22-23. On the one hand the exegetes refer to ancient philosophical theories on the topic of the human eye and sight, and on the other hand others reach for Biblical sources accepting the response as a Semitic type metaphor. In what sense should we understand the statement that “the lamp of the body is the eye?”²²

²¹ On the topic of tradition and the editing of Matt 6:22-23 see L u z, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, p. 356-357; G n i l k a, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, p. 240; H a g n e r, *Matthew*, p. 156-158; P a c i o r e k, *Ewangelia*, p. 287. The original reading of the logion is unknown: D. C. A l l i s o n, *The Eye Is the Lamp of the Body (Matthew 6:22-23 = Luke 11:34-36)*, NTS 33 (1987), p. 61-83, discusses among others that the logion belonged to the Q source, giving its hypothetical reconstruction (on p. 80-80 the Arameic reconstruction) and points to Jesus as the author of the logion; see further A. P a c i o r e k, *Ewangelia Galilejska*, Lublin 2001, p. 305-307.

²² For a broad report on the discussion and arguments see S. S z y m i k, *Problem polemiki antyepikurejskiej w pisamch Nowego Testamentu*, Lublin 2003, p. 122-128; cf. H. D. B e t z, *Matthäus 6, 22-23 und die antiken griechischen Sehtheorien*, in: *ibidem, Studien zur Bergpredigt*, Tübingen 1985, p. 62-77; *ibidem, The Sermon on the Mount. A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, Including the Sermon on the Plain (Matthew 5:3-7:27 and Luke 6:20-49)* (Hermeneia), Minneapolis 1995, p. 435-442; cf. also P a c i o r e k, *Ewangelia*, p. 287-288, who proposes translating the discussed verse as “a person’s light is their eye”.

In the Biblical tradition the inspired authors did not discuss the physical process of seeing, but most of all accepted the metaphorical or figurative sense of human sight (Ps 38:11; Prov 15:30; 29:13; Tob 10:5; 11:13, John 11:9-10)²³. Matthew also – as it appears – reaches to the metaphorical sense of the human eye in which he is dependent on the environment and the sources he possesses (cf. Matt 5:29; 7:3-5; 13:15-16 and so on). The sense of the introductory maxim becomes understandable if it takes into account the original context of the logion from the Q source: the lamp lights the interior of the home, just as the eye lights up the inside of a person (Luke 11:33-34). The presence within the text of the unusual pair of adjectives ἀπλοῦς / πονηρός confirms the accepted way of interpretation. The discussion is transferred onto the ethical level, and the literal interpretation of the statement about the healthy and sick eye ought to be regarded as erroneous. The first adjective appears in the New Testament exclusively in the analyzed logion (v. 22b; Luke 11:34) and means “sincere, straightforward, open” and even “immaculate, perfect”; it deals with the sincere or straight-forward looking at the surrounding world – the correct perception and opinion of reality²⁴. The second adjective confirms the ethical sense of the reply, which in Matt 20:15 describes the attitude of the person who is unkind and jealous, which in the first Gospel has a mainly ethical tone; it deals with looking at things insincerely or falsely²⁵.

The goal of the declaration is the conclusion: “If therefore the light which is in you is darkness, then that darkness is indeed great!” (v. 23b). The vocabulary and contents of the verse come from a source which the third Evangelist also had at his disposition, by using positive terminology and speech in Luke's understanding (cf. 11:35-36), but it was shortened in the first Gospel and acquired only a negative meaning. Luke encouraged being alert and remaining in the light, however Matthew already speaks of the present in man blindness and darkness. The inside of a person is occupied by an appa-

²³ In Biblical texts there is sometimes mention of “weak eyes, darkened” on account of illness or old age (Gen 27:1; 48:10; Deut 34:7; 1 Sam 3:2; Job 17:7; Lam 5:17). See W. M i c h a e l i s, art.: ὀφθαλμός, TWNT V, p. 376-379.

²⁴ The Codex Bezae in the case of Matt 10:16 („innocent as doves”) reads ἀπλοῦστατοι; in the OT this adjective appears only once in Prov 11:25 (LXX); see also FlavAp II, 190; TestIss 4:1-6; TestLew 13:1nn. Cf. O. B a u e r n f e i n d, art. ἀπλοῦς, TWNT I, p. 385; G n i l k a, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, p. 242, footnote 9; P a c i o r e k, *Ewangelia*, p. 287.

²⁵ See πονηρός in Matt 5:11, 37, 39, 45; 6:13, 23; 7:11, 17,18 and so on; in Matt 23 times out of 72 places in the NT.

rent light, but in reality it is complete darkness (v. 23b)²⁶. The blindness and ignorance flowing from this actual internal state will only multiply the vastness of unhappiness, since the believer is not able to deal with his bad situation, being convinced that they remain in the light, meaning unity with God. This fateful ethical-moral situation is conditioned by the erroneous perception of reality. In the first place one must think about the bad relation of Jesus' disciples to material goods, which is suggested by the context preceding the text, in which there is mention of gathering up treasures in accord with the desires of one's heart (vv. 19-21), but also the context following the text which contains a warning against serving both God and mammon (v. 24). Did Matthew take into consideration the situation of his community in which there was present a situation of abuses on the level of material goods? This cannot be excluded, however the Evangelist mainly meant to stress the radical challenge of Jesus to accept poverty, a requirement for all of his disciples²⁷.

The proposed interpretation is conditioned by the context of the analyzed text (vv. 22-23), meanwhile the metaphor of light is much more vast, and previously already appears twice. That is why within the context of the entire Gospel of Matthew, through the apparent light inside a person, one can at the same time understand the incorrect relation of the listeners to Jesus and his teaching, as well as the inappropriate moral attitude of the disciples of Jesus. In the first case, one is reminded of the accusations brought up by Jesus against the crowds about opened eyes which do not see (Matt 13:10-17), and in the second word about the hypocrite who takes the speck out of his brother's eye even though in his own eye there is a plank (Matt 7:3-5).

The disciples of Jesus ought to care for sincere and proper seeing, meaning properly viewing and correct opinion, in order to have the light within them. The source of good or evil is not the human eye as such but the internal light (*lux internum*), unless it previously became darkness. The light brightening up the interior of the person is a result of the unity with Jesus Christ and his teaching – the light of the world, and finds its internal expression in deeds of light.

²⁶ Not without reason does A. Paciorek propose filling in the declaration with a second, positive part: "If however the light in you is light, your whole body will also be bright" (*Ewangelia*, p. 287).

²⁷ L u z, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, p. 360-363; cf. H a g n e r, *Matthew*, p. 158. The majority of exegetes interpret and comment on Matt 6:22-23 in union with the closest context. Such a unity is not held by H. D. Betz (*A Commentary*, p. 4 p. 439).

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In the analyzed texts “light” was the key term and had an important meaning for Matthew. The Evangelist first presented the Messiah Jesus as the great light, brightening up Israel and the pagan people (Matt 4:12-17), and then presents the community of the disciples of Jesus as the light of the world, shining before all people (Matt 5:14-16). In the end the Evangelist stressed the need for light inside the person (Matt 6:22-23). In the case of the first Gospel one can speak about the specific for Matthew theology of light. We must add that the interest of the Evangelist with the issue of light is confirmed by other particular texts, in which the dualism of light – darkness enters into the picture as characteristic of the Biblical environment and also early Christian theology (Matt 8:12; 22:13; 25:30; cf. also Matt 28:1).

The outlined theological concept of light is the original framework of the first Evangelist, who used the present in the Old Testament and Judaism symbolism of describing the heroes of salvation history as lights and the future salvation as a time of light. The source of his theological ideas might have been in particular the prophet Isaiah (Isa 42:6; 49:6; 51:4-5; 58:10; 62:1, 3; cf. Ps 27:1; 138:12 LXX). The symbolism of brightness or the metaphorical application of light is also present in the New Testament: in the Letters of Paul (Rom 13:12; 2 Cor 4:6; 6:14; Eph 5:8-9; Phil 2:15; 1 Thes 5:5), in the Gospel according to Luke (1:78-79; 2:32; 8:16; 11, 35-36), and in particular in the Gospel according to John (cf. John 1:5, 7-9; 8:12; 9:5; 12:46). In addition, in early Christian theology, the theology of light was also worked out, whose creators were the inspired authors of the New Testament. Matthew had his part in this, not such a great part but in his own way unrepeatable and exceptional.

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MATEUSZOWA TEOLOGIA ŚWIATŁA (Mt 4, 15-16; 5, 14-16; 6, 22-23)

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Autor artykułu, posługując się głównie metodą historii redakcji, omawia trzy teksty pierwszej ewangelii, w których występuje terminologia światła. Najpierw, sięgając do zapowiedzi proroka Izajasza, św. Mateusz ukazał wystąpienie Jezusa w Galilei jako wielką światłość, która oświeca Izraela i ludy pogańskie (Mt 4, 15-16). Następnie został poddany analizie tekst Kazania na Górze, w którym uczniowie Jezusa są przedstawieni jako światłość świata; ich światłość winna świecić przed ludźmi (Mt 5, 14-16). Na koniec autor omawia logion Jezusa o oku jako lampie dla ciała, zapewniającym wierzącemu światło wewnętrzne (*lux internum*) (Mt 6, 22-23). Analizowane teksty zostały opracowane redakcyjnie przez ewangelistę, zaś „światłość” jest w nich terminem kluczowym. Według autora artykułu można mówić o specyficznej Mateuszowej teologii światła.

Key words: light, theology of light, theology of St. Matthew.

Słowa kluczowe: światło, teologia światła, teologia św. Mateusza.