

PHILOSOPHY 1600 HONORS - PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Exercise 3: The Gospel According to Matthew

Due Date: Friday, December 5

Proportion of Final Grade: 5%

This exercise has two objectives. First, and as was noted in the two earlier exercises, many people find it somewhat difficult, initially, to read religious writings in a critical fashion, and to pay close attention to exactly what is said, and to precisely what beliefs and values are being put forward. One purpose of the present exercise is to provide you with additional practice in doing this.

Secondly, one of the crucial issues that each one of us faces is how one can determine what moral standards are correct. The thrust of this course is that the best approach involves critical, philosophical reflection upon the alternatives, and upon the arguments for and against each alternative. Many people in Western society believe, however, that this is not the right approach. For they believe that there is a certain man, Jesus, who was either God Incarnate, or who at the very least stood in a unique relationship to God, and who, as a consequence, speaks with unsurpassed authority on religious and moral matters. The present exercise is designed to raise the question, then, of whether it is in fact reasonable to treat Jesus as an authority on ethical and religious matters.

Reading: *The Gospel According to Matthew*

Instructions

1. Do not do the reading **until** you have carefully read through the questions that are to be answered. For you need to have those questions very clearly in mind as you proceed, so that you can be looking for the relevant passages.
2. Give very brief answers to each of the following questions, and then list as many passages as you are asked to give in support of your answer.
3. In the case of some of the questions, there are several passages that are relevant. Always try to use the most clear and explicit passage (or passages).
4. Each correct written answer is worth one point, as is each correct supporting passage. The total possible score for the exercise as a whole is 50 points.

Part I. Some Attitudes and Beliefs of Jesus, According to Matthew

1. Was the idea of people suffering eternal torment in hell invented by the Catholic Church, or did Jesus himself believe in hell?

Two supporting passages are (1) _____
(2) _____

2. Did Jesus give any indication of what proportion of people might wind up in hell, and if so, what?

Two supporting passages are (1) _____
(2) _____

3. Did Jesus have any beliefs concerning the cause of epilepsy, or any other illnesses?

Two supporting passages are (1) _____
(2) _____

4. What did Jesus say would happen at his Second Coming, when he returned to earth at some future point in time? (Note that the two expressions, "the Second Coming," and "the resurrection of Jesus," are supposed to refer to different events. Thus the *American College Dictionary*, for example, defines "Second Coming", or "Second Advent", as follows: "the second coming of Christ to establish a personal reign upon the earth as its king.")

Two supporting passages are (1) _____
(2) _____

5. Did Jesus claim to know exactly when his Second Coming would take place?

A supporting passage is (1) _____

6. Did Jesus provide any indication of approximately how soon his Second Coming would take place?

Three supporting passages are (1) _____
(2) _____
(3) _____

7. What view did Jesus advance on sex before marriage?

A supporting passage is (1) _____

8. Did Jesus teach that God would forgive any sin, if one sincerely repented?

A supporting passage is (1) _____

9. What was Jesus's attitude toward those who did not accept his teaching, or the teaching of his disciples?

Two supporting passages are (1) _____
(2) _____

10. Christianity teaches that Jesus's death is an atoning sacrifice, without which it would not be possible for God to forgive people their sins. Did Jesus accept this idea that his own death would be an atoning sacrifice?

A supporting passage is (1) _____

11. Some Christian churches teach that there will be a Final Judgment after death. Does Jesus express any view on this matter?

Two supporting passages are (1) _____
(2) _____

12. Many people today seem to believe that sexual desire is quite a natural emotion, and not something, in itself, to be condemned. Would Jesus have agreed?

Two supporting passages are (1) _____
(2) _____

13. Did Jesus believe in the existence of demons, or the devil?

A supporting passage is (1) _____

14. What did Jesus take God's commandment to be with respect to a person who curses his or her father or mother?

A supporting passage is (1) _____

Part II. Questions About the Content of Matthew, and about the Teachings of the Catholic Church

1. Did Jesus found a church, and if so, what powers did he give to it?

A supporting passage is (1) _____

2. The Catholic church teaches that Mary was always a virgin. Is this reasonable in the light of Matthew?

Three supporting passages are (1) _____
(2) _____
(3) _____

3. The Catholic church teaches that divorce is never permissible. What was Jesus's teaching? Did he think that divorce, followed by remarriage, was ever permissible - for example, in a case of continual physical abuse?

Two supporting passages are (1) _____
(2) _____

4. The Catholic church teaches that Jesus was God Incarnate. Which passage in Matthew most clearly indicates Jesus's own view of himself? Did Jesus hold that he was God Incarnate, according to that passage?

A supporting passage is (1) _____

5. Matthew claims that Jesus arose from the dead. But there is another event that Matthew claims to have happened, within a very short time after Jesus's death, that is even more remarkable. What is the event in question?

A supporting passage is (1) _____