

## A Study in the Synoptic Problem.

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THE literary relationship of Mt 11<sup>2-19</sup> to Lk 7<sup>18-35</sup> is a very complex problem in literary criticism. In Mt 11<sup>2-11, 16-19</sup> we have two blocks of matter to which Lk 7<sup>18-28, 31-35</sup> are parallel. But the connecting links, namely, Mt 11<sup>12-15</sup> and Lk 7<sup>29, 30</sup> are totally different. St. Matthew has ἀπὸ δὲ τῶν ἡμερῶν Ἰωάννου τοῦ βαπτιστοῦ ἕως ἄρτι, ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν βιάζεται, καὶ βιασταὶ ἀρπάζουσιν αὐτήν. πάντες γὰρ οἱ προφῆται καὶ ὁ νόμος ἕως Ἰωάννου προεφῆτευσαν. καὶ εἰ θέλετε δέξασθαι, οὗτός ἐστιν Ἡλείας ὁ μέλλων ἔρχεσθαι. ὁ ἔχων ὧτα ἀκούειν ἀκούτω, whilst St. Luke has καὶ πᾶς ὁ λαὸς ἀκούσας καὶ οἱ τελῶναι ἐδικαίωσαν τὸν θεόν. βαπτισθέντες τὸ βάπτισμα Ἰωάννου. οἱ δὲ Φαρισαῖοι καὶ οἱ νομικοὶ τὴν βουλήν τοῦ θεοῦ ἠθέτησαν εἰς ἑαυτούς. μὴ βαπτισθέντες ὑπ' αὐτοῦ.

Now we might explain these facts in more than one way. *E.g.* A, it might be supposed that the whole section as it is found in St. Matthew is taken from Q, or, as I should prefer to say, from the Matthean Logia. In that case St. Luke would have taken some offence to vv.<sup>12-14</sup>, and indeed they are very difficult, and substituted for them a comment (Lk 7<sup>29, 30</sup>).

Or B, we might suppose that the two blocks (Mt 11<sup>2-11, 15-19</sup>) stood either as one connected whole, or as two independent sections, in the Logia, and that the editor has either inserted into the one discourse other sayings (vv.<sup>12-15</sup>) which stood elsewhere in the Logia, or has taken these sayings in order to serve as a connecting link between the two independent blocks. In either case he has done what he frequently does, namely, combine sayings of a detached kind, in this case vv.<sup>12-14</sup>, with larger blocks of discourse, in this case vv.<sup>2-11, 15-19</sup>.

That B is right is probably proved by the fact that St. Luke has a parallel to Mt 11<sup>12, 13</sup> in chap. 16<sup>16</sup>, ὁ νόμος καὶ οἱ προφῆται μέχρι Ἰωάννου. ἀπὸ τότε ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ εὐαγγελίζεται, καὶ πᾶς εἰς αὐτήν βιάζεται. Since these words stand in quite a different connexion from that of St. Matthew, it is probable that in the source, or sources, lying behind the two Gospels, they were not connected with Mt 11<sup>2-11, 16-19</sup>, but were detached fragments.

But if B is right, how are we to explain the fact that working quite independently it should have occurred to St. Luke to do what the editor of the First Gospel has done, namely, either insert into a long section from his source a comment, or connect two different sections of his source with a comment? In the first case, why put in a comment at exactly the same place as the editor of the First Gospel? In the second case, why connect two sections with a comment at all? Indeed, how should two writers independently hit upon the idea of combining these same two sections?

There remain therefore the problems—(1) How explain the occurrence of Mt 11<sup>12-15</sup> and Lk 7<sup>29-30</sup> at the same place in a discourse which must ultimately have come from a source common to the two Gospels? (2) What is the relationship between Mt 11<sup>12, 13</sup> and Lk 16<sup>16</sup>?

The answer to both these questions is, I believe, to be found in the fact that St. Luke was acquainted with the First Gospel.

He probably had before him chap. 11 of St. Matthew, and also a parallel account in another Greek source also ultimately derived from the Logia. In rewriting the section for his Gospel he might have followed this second account, but he notices or remembers that in the First Gospel after the words, 'he that is less in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he,' there occur the words of Mt 11<sup>12, 13</sup>. He found these words very difficult, as do modern commentators, and he substitutes for them a comment which he conceived would reproduce their general tenor. 'The kingdom of heaven is taken by violence' when those who might be supposed to have no right to it, 'the tax-collectors and the common people' (cf. Jn 7<sup>49</sup>, 'this multitude that knoweth not the law are accursed'), laid claim to it by submitting to John's baptism, whilst those who believed that they alone had a right to the kingdom, the lawyers and the Pharisees, refused his baptism.

Somewhat later St. Luke found in his saying source a secondary form of the saying which he has thus obliterated by a comment. This he placed at 16<sup>16</sup>. We may suppose that this saying

was either very similarly worded to that of Mt 11<sup>12, 13</sup>, or that it had already been paraphrased into much the same form as that in which St. Luke gives it. In either case the paraphraser, whether St. Luke or some one before him, has recognized that St. Matthew's words are very obscure, and that the ultimate saying that lies behind them conveyed the sense that the 'kingdom of heaven' had burst its supposed limits as confined to law-abiding Jews, or was being seized by others than those who regarded themselves as the rightful inheritors of it, and was now being made accessible to others, it was being 'preached,' and 'every one,' *i.e.* not merely the law-abiding Jew, 'was forcing his way' into it.

If what has been said is upon the right lines, then we have an answer to our first question. Mt 11<sup>12-14</sup> and Lk 7<sup>29, 30</sup> occur at the same place in a discourse, not because they have been placed there independently by the two Gospel writers, but because the verse in St. Luke is a commentary upon the verses in St. Matthew. That St. Luke should have been acquainted with the First Gospel is *a priori* probable. That he does not anywhere directly betray his knowledge of it has led to the common supposition of critics that he had not seen it. But why should he make much use of, or directly borrow from, every Gospel book with which he was acquainted? Supposing that the purpose and general point of view was quite other than his own, then he would naturally not make frequent use of it. I have tried to show that in the case under discussion he knew and commented upon the First Gospel, and there are one or two other passages where the explanation of words found in both Gospels by the suggestion that St. Luke had seen the First Gospel is at least as probable as any other. Such are Mt 7<sup>28</sup> = Lk 7<sup>1</sup> and Mt 21<sup>43, 44</sup> = Lk 20<sup>18</sup>. On these see the *Commentary on St. Matthew* in the 'International Critical Commentary,' pp. 73 and 233.

We may now consider our second problem. What is the relationship between Mt 11<sup>12, 13</sup> and Lk 16<sup>16</sup>? That St. Matthew drew the saying from

his discourse (the Matthean Logia?) is probable. That the words in St. Luke come also ultimately from this source, but probably through another medium than the Greek translation used by the editor of the First Gospel, is very likely. I believe that the saying in the original Aramaic form was a rather obscurely expressed one, but that it might have been translated 'the kingdom of heaven is being burst through, and law-breakers are seizing it.' The sense of this was that Jesus in His preaching was opening the kingdom of heaven to others than the orthodox Pharisaic Jew. I will not here discuss the Aramaic root lying behind *βιάζεται*, *βιασταί*, but may refer to an article by Dr. Marshall in the *Critical Review*, vi. 48. The Aramaic root which lies behind would, as Dr. Marshall shows, suggest violent persons of a special kind, *i.e.* persons who broke through the fence of the Law, and did not duly observe it, such persons as the tax-collectors and sinners who are so often referred to in the Gospels. Indeed, I think it possible that this Aramaic word has usually been rendered in our Gospels 'sinners.' Compare St. Paul's use of *ἁμαρτωλός* as applicable to himself and St. Peter when they threw over the Law for faith in Christ, and his denial of the applicability of the term to himself and St. Peter whilst they remained faithful to the Law (Gal 2<sup>13-17</sup>). Compare also the equation of *ἁμαρτωλός* (Lk 6<sup>32, 33</sup>) with *τελώνης* (Mt 5<sup>46</sup>) and *ἔθνικός* (Mt 5<sup>47</sup>).

If something like this was the meaning of the Aramaic saying, the editor of the First Gospel has obscured, probably intentionally, the meaning. For in his rendering the special application to the opening of the kingdom of heaven to the unorthodox and outcast is, if not lost, at least obscured by the fact that his Greek does not immediately suggest this to a Greek reader. The translator who lies behind St. Luke's version has seen the meaning of the words. He feels that mere translation will not bring out their significance, and so he paraphrases. 'The kingdom is burst open' when it is preached to all men without condition or limitation, and when 'all press into it.'