

Great Texts Reconsidered.

Matthew xi. 25-27 = Luke x. 21, 22. (Continued.)

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V. It might have been thought that the interpretation of the second stanza was sufficiently different from any sort of Trinitarian orthodoxy to render it at least harmless, and therefore capable of attribution to Jesus Himself, in the eyes of the most determined of German 'Liberal' scholars; for, according to this interpretation, the speaker makes no higher claim than to be the supremely inspired, but still human, prophet. Even this, however, is far too much for Norden. To the question, Can we admit this passage to be an *αὐτοφωνία* of the Lord Himself? he replies—'Only if we make Him operate with the forms and concepts of theosophical mysticism.' But such an assumption would introduce a false *trait* into the picture of His manner of speech which attested *Logia* (*beglaubigte Logia*) compel us to build up. 'Jesus does not speak the language of philosophers or theologians' (J. Weiss). It is precisely the second Logion, containing the speaker's claim to authority to which Norden objects. He finds the speaker's assertion of his own unique knowledge of the Father a distasteful 'self-preaching' (*Selbstprädikation*) such as Celsus attributes to pagan or Gnostic prophets (*vide supra*, § III); and discovers a sharp contradiction between the claim to be the unique depository of revelation and the humility which the speaker predicates of himself in the third stanza. He points out, further, that the phrase 'the Son,' used absolutely, without the addition of the words 'of Man' or 'of David,' has a definitely theological and Johannine flavour (a point which does not appear altogether harmonious with his attempt to humanize the meaning of 'No one knoweth the Son save the Father'), and that the only other instance of its occurrence in the Synoptic Gospels is Mk 13³², in which not even the 'Son' is said to have knowledge concerning 'that day and that hour.' He emphasizes, what is

obvious to the most casual reader, and is a commonplace of critical scholarship, the strong affinity between this passage and the discourses in the Fourth Gospel, with special reference to the mutual knowledge of Father and Son (cf. Jn 10¹⁵, *καθὼς γινώσκει με ὁ πατήρ, κἀγὼ γινώσκω τὸν πατέρα*): and finds in this fact a further argument against the authenticity of the Sayings—'the Johannine Jesus is not the historical Jesus.' His final conclusion is that, though the passage was derived by Matthew and Luke from Q, it is not on that account to be regarded as an authentic word of the Lord, but as a free composition in the manner of a threefold *ῥῆσις*, employing *motifs* borrowed from some pagan theosophical document; the composer, he thinks, may well have been the compiler of Q himself.

It may be useful to append at this point a summary of the views expressed with regard to these problems by a much more recent writer, Professor Martin Dibelius, in *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums* (Eng. tr., *From Tradition to Gospel*, 1934, 279-283). This author, who possesses the distinction of being a co-founder of the science of 'form-criticism' as applied to the Gospels, declares himself unconvinced by Norden's strictly *formgeschichtliche* argument, but agrees that the three Sayings given by Matthew have an intimate connexion in respect both of form and of rhythm, and concludes accordingly that they stood in Q in the Matthæan order. With Norden, however, he does not admit that this of itself guarantees their Dominical character; on the contrary, he regards them as an instance of the intrusion of a 'mythological' element not merely into the narrative of the life of Jesus but into the tradition of His teaching. 'The Christological content, the concentration on the ego of the speaker in the third strophe, the mystic response in the second, the totally

unevangelical idea of "rest"—all this indicates the religious and historical place of the text to be outside of the Sayings of Jesus. But what is still more important is that the whole text serves for the self-recommendation of the speaker and of the revelation brought by him . . . the second strophe of our text brings a self-recommendation, for it serves to proclaim the Son as the exclusive herald of the revelation . . . the third strophe also stands in the same category, which, in the address to the "weary and heavy laden" and in the requirement of meekness and humility, is once more *so similar to*' (italics ours) 'the Gospel. But its essential content consists in and is concentrated upon him who speaks and who imposes the "easy yoke." . . . This combination of self-recommendation and of the preaching of conversion is the typical mark of the divine or semi-divine herald of a revelation in Hellenic religiousness, *i.e.* of a mythological person.'

VI. It is time to turn to a critical examination of the arguments just set forth. They are concerned with three points—(a) the true text of the passage under discussion, (b) its meaning, (c) its source and ultimate author—though, as has already been pointed out, it is not always possible to keep these questions in logically watertight compartments. With regard to the text, we may say at once that we agree with Norden's conclusion that the Matthæan three-membered version is the more original, that Matthew and Luke found the Saying in Q in this shape, and that Luke has omitted the Invitation to the weary and heavy laden—doubtless because it seemed to him inappropriate in a context recording the victory of the followers of Christ over the demons, a victory which implied strength rather than weariness and heavy burdens, and because he felt that this message was sufficiently expressed in other parts of his Gospel. But the argument whereby this conclusion is supported seems to us precarious and indeed unsound, despite the enormous erudition which is at the author's command. Expressed in absolutely plain language it amounts to something like this: 'All revelational *ρήσεις* are three-membered, concluding with an appeal to mankind; this passage is a revelational *ρήσις*; therefore, this passage must have been

originally three-membered and included an appeal to mankind, in other words, the Matthæan version must be the true one.' If the argument be expressed in this way, the present writer's natural comment is *Nego maiorem*. Like Dibelius, he is not convinced that Norden really has proved that a threefold form of *ρήσις* actually existed as a definite and stereotyped convention to which prophets, adepts, and other composers of magical or theosophical literature felt obliged to conform. No doubt it is natural for one who believes himself to be in possession of a revelation (a) to state the fact, (b) to thank God for it, and (c) to invite his fellow men to share it with him; but that rests merely upon common sense, and does not require the assumption of a fixed and somewhat elaborate literary 'form,' an assumption which we cannot help thinking flows from the tendency, endemic in German scholarship, to attempt to impose rigid categories upon materials essentially vague, fluid, and elusive. If the main examples given by Norden be studied carefully, it seems to us that the impression gathered by the reader would be rather that this scholar has somewhat violently imposed the alleged 'form' upon the passages which he quotes than that he has easily and naturally educed it from them. If, for instance, we look at Eccles 51, we notice in the first place that the thanksgiving with which the chapter opens is not by any means a thanksgiving for revelation, but merely for escape from some personal peril, which according to the LXX text (v.⁶) was a slanderous accusation 'to the king';¹ it has no logical connexion with the section which follows on the pursuit of Wisdom, and, indeed, in the Hebrew original discovered some forty years ago is separated from it by a hitherto unknown psalm (R. H. Charles, *Apocr.*, i. 514). It seems to us, therefore, that the parallel between this chapter and our Logion breaks down, or rather reduces itself to no more than the occurrence in both passages of the words *ἐξομολογείσθαι, ζυγός, ἀνάπανσις*. The first of these words might well occur in any Hebraic or Hebraizing thanksgiving for anything, and proves nothing; if the occurrence of the last two in both passages is

¹ But see Box and Oesterley's critical apparatus *ad loc* (R. H. Charles, *Apocr. and Pseudep.*, i. 513).

more than a fortuitous coincidence, there seems to be no difficulty, on any theory of the Logion's authorship, in supposing that it may have included a faint echo of the language of Sirach. The passage from Poimandres seems to be equally recalcitrant to compression within the mould of the threefold *ῥῆσις*. There is, indeed, a prayer of thanksgiving to God for revelation; but there is no threefold *ῥῆσις*, for the exhortation addressed by the adept to mankind is separated from the prayer by narrative. Moreover, Norden seems to assume a much earlier date for the *Hermetica* than would now be generally accepted by scholars; W. Scott's verdict is that 'most of the extant *Hermetica* were written in the course of the third century after Christ,' from which it would seem to follow that it is not inconceivable that the striking phrase (καθὼς παρέδωκας ἀντὶ τὴν πᾶσαν ἐξουσίαν) may actually be an echo of the Gospels. The prayer which concludes the Asclepius equally does not appear to be a case in point; for it is exclusively occupied with thanksgiving, and there is no statement of the contents of the revelation,¹ nor appeal to mankind to share it.

We must, therefore, needs consider the supposition of a rigidly stereotyped form of revelational *ῥῆσις* to be a figment. If, however, we look at the two versions of the Logion as given by Matthew and Luke, without any preconceived ideas as to the literary 'form' determining it and merely in the light of common sense, it seems perfectly true that the Matthæan version does constitute a poem in three stanzas, each consisting of four lines of definitely rhythmical character, though not reducible to any known metre.² The sequence of these stanzas, in which the speaker, in a mood of mystic exaltation, first addresses God, then (as it were) soliloquizes aloud, then addresses those whom he would have to be his hearers (whether physically present or present only in imagination) seems to us highly natural and indeed more natural than the

¹ That is, other than that contained in the body of the tractate itself, which is far too long to be described as one member of a *ῥῆσις*.

² The late Dr. C. F. Burney's attempt to reconstruct the original Aramaic of the first two stanzas as a poem in rhyming couplets, and of the third in the Kina-metre (in *The Poetry of our Lord*), is ingenious, but speculative.

Lucan version, which makes the speaker stop abruptly at the end of the second stanza. Stripped, therefore, of its technical *formgeschichtliche* trappings, and reduced to its simplest form, Norden's argument that the Matthæan version constitutes a single whole, which has been abridged by Luke, seems to us to stand; and the recognition of the fact that its stanzas show clear signs of having been designed to correspond in respect of internal rhythm rules out all attempts to excise the sentence οὐδεὶς ἐπιγνώσκει τὸν υἱόν, εἰ μὴ ὁ πατήρ, the removal of which would leave the second stanza hopelessly halting and discrepant with the first and third. The reversal of the order of this and the following clause in the quotations of the text given by Justin, Marcion, Irenæus, and other early writers, on which Harnack builds his case for the excision of the first clause, can be explained more easily and naturally by the considerations (a) that confusion in the order of two very similar clauses is in any case to be expected in some witnesses, and (b) that it must have been one to which orthodox Christian apologists, like Irenæus, who were concerned to vindicate against Gnosticism the claim of Christ to be the sole revealer of the Father, would be peculiarly likely to fall, especially if they quoted from memory.

We conclude, therefore, that the Matthæan version of our Logion is the original, that it comes from Q, and that its text, as we have it in our Greek Testaments, needs no serious emendation.

VII. The next problem on which we must now formulate our own judgment is that of the meaning of the Logion, and specifically of its second stanza, which, as we have seen, is the crucial one. It will be remembered that the two scholars whose views have been examined in this article come to divergent conclusions about this question; Norden regards the second stanza merely as a claim to be the supremely inspired, but still purely human depository of revelation, whilst Dibelius, in effect, admits the simple-minded believer to be in the right, and regards the text as a claim to be the unique Son of God in a purely supernatural sense—in a word, as a claim to be divine. Both of these scholars regard the claims which they respectively find in the text as incompatible with the supposi-

tion that the text comes from the lips of Jesus Himself. The examination of this contention, however, must be deferred to our final section, and the only question which for the moment confronts us is 'What does the Logion—no matter who spoke or composed it—mean, as it stands'? It will be remembered that Norden's theory of its meaning, as a claim to be the supreme and predestined prophet or adept, whose 'tradition' or mystic lore is derived directly from God, is based upon his supposition of the specifically intellectualistic character of the revelations treated of in 'revelational ῥῆσεις,' upon the rendering of πάντα μοι παρεδόθη as 'All my tradition was derived,' and the first ἐπιγινώσκει as 'foreknew' in the sense of 'predestined.' The two last positions seem to us as arbitrary as the first, and we can see no reason for not taking παραδίδοναι and ἐπιγινώσκειν in their natural senses. Given these senses, the Logion then seems to assume a meaning which is as logical in sequence as it is sublime in content. In the first stanza, Jesus addresses the Father, praising the infinite wisdom which has decreed that the qualification for receiving the knowledge of Himself shall be moral, consisting in the humility of the νῆπιτοι, rather than intellectual; in the second, He speaks of Himself, and of the mysteries of His Person, of the more immediate mystery of His appointment to Messianic governance over the Universe and the vaster, more remote and ultimate mystery of His own relations of mutual knowledge and comprehension with the Father. Given this view, which seems to us to result from the study of the passage as it stands, it is impossible to ignore the momentous implications of the absolute terms 'the Father' and 'the Son,' and of the affirmation, not merely that the Father is incapable of *full* comprehension (notice the ἐπι- in ἐπιγινώσκει) by any except the Son but that the nature of the Son is so cosmically vast and illimitable that none can fully comprehend Him save God the Father alone. It would, doubtless, be out of place to speak here of incipient Trinitarianism; but we venture to think that a first-century Greek who picked up St. Matthew's Gospel by chance and read this passage would conclude that it presupposed and was meant to express something in the nature

at least of a Binitarian conception of Deity. In the third stanza, the Divine Redeemer turns from the serene contemplation of the perfect reciprocal intellection enjoyed by Himself and the Father, and addresses Himself in tender, sympathetic appeal to weary and suffering humanity, distracted by tumultuous passions, imploring it to find inward peace and refreshment by union with and submission to Himself, the sole revealer of the Father.

VIII. We have now arrived at the last and most crucial of the problems which face us in connexion with this passage. Given that it is derived from Q, that it stood in Q as reproduced by Matthew, with three stanzas, that its meaning is as we have just defined it—is it possible to regard this Saying as an *αὐτοφωνία* of Jesus Himself? The answer of Norden and Dibelius is an unhesitating 'No.' This negative, however, is based upon purely *a priori* grounds, consisting in what these scholars deem to be the improbability, or rather impossibility, of the contents of the Logion on the lips of Jesus. No *a posteriori* evidence whatsoever has been produced against it (other than Harnack's argument against the authenticity of the second clause of the second stanza, which, as we have seen, is antiquated by the recognition of the poetical and rhythmical structure of the passage). The Saying admittedly comes from Q, and the practical identity of the Matthæan and Lucan versions of the first two stanzas suggests that however much different forms of Q might vary in other respects, the verbal form of this Logion was common to them all; and, by consequence, that during the oral stage of the transmission of Jesus' Sayings, this Logion had been memorized and transmitted with peculiar precision—which, again, suggests that it had been recognized from the first as of unique and cardinal importance amongst the words of the Lord. If, then, there were no question of its compatibility or otherwise with any one's doctrinal *præiudicia*, it is reasonable to suggest that it would have been unquestioningly accepted as one of the best authenticated and most precious relics of the Lord's own words; at any rate, if a Saying derived from Q, and apparently so carefully preserved by exact memorization through the oral phase, could not be relied upon, no more could any other Logion, and

it would become waste of time to attempt to form any picture of the teaching of Jesus at all. It is therefore necessary to scrutinize very closely the *a priori* grounds which are alleged to cancel a conclusion for which there appears to exist so high a degree of *a posteriori* testimony. The nature of these grounds may best be learned from Norden's *dictum* that the personal claims put forward in the second stanza are incompatible with the humility alluded to in the third. (It will be remembered that Norden interprets those personal claims on minimizing lines, as an assertion of the Speaker's position merely as a unique, but still purely human, Revealer of God). But, if Jesus really was the unique Revealer of God, why should He not say so? ¹ Our present gracious Sovereign would not be accused by any reasonable person of doing anything contrary to Christian humility when he describes himself in his proclamations as 'King of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the seas, Emperor of India'—for that is precisely what he is. Clearly, the assumption in Norden's mind is that Jesus was not the unique Revealer of God, and therefore (being a devout and humble man) cannot have claimed to be such. That the grounds on which this assumption itself rests lie outside the sphere of historical research is suggested by the naïve contention, quoted above, that the second stanza, if admitted as authentic, 'would introduce a false *trait* into the picture of His manner of speech which attested Logia compel us to build up.' But what are 'attested Logia'? Those which we have been considering are as well 'attested' by objective criteria as any, and far more so than some. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that by 'attested Logia' Norden means Logia which do not conflict with his own preconceived picture of the Person of Christ. The circular nature of the argument will be obvious to the eye. We need not deal with Dibelius, save to

¹ It is interesting to compare with this argument of Norden the impression produced on the mind of Seeley (*Ecce Homo*, 177 ff.) by the passage under discussion. Seeley's conclusion seems broadly to agree with our own—namely, that if Jesus really did hold the position which the second paragraph of our Logion represents Him as claiming, there is nothing inconsistent with humility in the claim.

draw attention to his condemnation of the third stanza on the ground that it employs 'the totally unevangelical idea of "rest."' Few observations could illustrate more vividly the fantastic arbitrariness and the humourless pedantry which in Germany are too often the companions of monumental erudition.

A more subtle form of the argument, and one which deserves to be treated with all respect, is that which finds difficulty in the apparently Johannine character of the passage ('a Johannine thunderbolt from a Synoptic sky'). This difficulty, which is based upon literary and historical factors alone, and does not necessarily presuppose any particular doctrinal assumptions, is specially felt by those who hold, in one form or another, the theory of the *Messiasgeheimnis* or 'Messianic mystery,' according to which the historical Jesus, as depicted in the Synoptic Gospels, followed the deliberate policy of concealing His Messianic character from the world in general, and permitting even His disciples to realize it only by slow degrees; a view with which it is extremely difficult to reconcile the course of the Johannine narrative, which makes Jesus claim something like full divinity from the outset of His ministry, not merely in private but occasionally in public. The same difficulty, though in a lesser degree, is said to apply to the text which has been the subject of our discussion. The questions thus raised cannot now be discussed in full detail: yet the following considerations may help to mitigate, if not altogether to resolve, the difficulty.

(1) If a preconceived theory conflicts with an established fact, the scientific procedure is to modify the theory, not to deny the fact: and the *Jubelruf* is a fact, in the sense of being a section of the Synoptic record possessing the highest degree of external attestation which is available in this connexion.

(2) If the existence and the high authority of the *Jubelruf* conflict with a rigid theory of the 'Messianic mystery' and of an absolute contrast between the Synoptists and the Fourth Gospel, it is these theories which need modification.

(3) Though no one will deny the existence of a large interpretative element in the Fourth Gospel, or the extent to which the writer's own meditations

have worked their way into the warp and weft of his report of our Lord's discourses, it is extremely improbable (to say the least) that this report is the product of pure invention, containing no Dominical substratum whatsoever. To suppose that the peculiar tone and impressiveness of the Johannine discourses—which by themselves seem to call forth the judgment, 'Never man spake like this man'—are due solely to the genius of the Fourth Evangelist would involve the ascription of something like a supernatural character to him. We must, therefore, postulate at least some sayings of the Lord, perhaps addressed to the inner circle of the disciples, or prayers and soliloquies overheard by them, of a more intimate and more mystical nature than those preserved by the public tradition eventually crystallized in Q. What more likely than that the *Jubelruf* (though it did in fact find its way, as an exception, into Q) should have belonged to this category?

(4) Even if the truth of the *Messiasgeheimnis* theory (with its corollary, that the historical perspective of the Johannine narrative is in part idealized) be admitted to this extent, that the mystery of our Lord's Person dawned upon the

minds of the disciples only by slow degrees, it is not to be supposed that this process was one of pure, unaided discovery on their side, and that Jesus Himself gave them no help. On the contrary, it would seem that such help was provided by the use of the title 'Son of Man,' which, in virtue of its double meaning (*a*) 'human being' (*b*) the Apocalyptic Judge depicted in 1 Enoch, would stimulate their intellectual curiosity, without too abruptly unveiling the secret. It is, therefore, not unlikely—it may, indeed, be claimed to be antecedently probable—that He would, on occasion, endeavour to accelerate their gradual divination of the mystery by allowing them to overhear some impassioned utterance expressing His deepest consciousness of oneness with the Father; and such an utterance the *Jubelruf* is.

If these considerations are well founded, the 'Johannine' character of our Logion should be regarded as constituting it, not a stumbling-block but a stepping-stone between the Synoptists and St. John, and, as such, one of the most precious of the words of Christ which Divine Providence has willed to be preserved for our edification and joy.

Literature.

AN ENGLISH INSTITUTION.

'No description of England,' says Lord Stamp, 'would convey much sense of reality without an account of its formative and sustaining institutions, and of those institutions the Established Church would come into the "short list" of any exponent. And yet the average man has but the sketchiest notions of the true positions and characteristics of the Church.' It is well and justly spoken. The words are to be found in the General Editor's Preface to the latest issue of the series, 'English Institutions': *The Church of England* (Cambridge University Press; 7s. 6d. net), by the Right Rev. Herbert Hensley Henson, sometime Bishop of Durham.

As one would anticipate, we have here set before

us an able and learned, frank and outspoken exposition of the history and place of the institution which Dr. Henson has served and adorned during a long lifetime. He explains, however, in the Author's Preface that his book does not claim to be a history of the Church of England, nor a treatise on ecclesiastical law, but a 'speculum' or mirror in which the working institution is displayed. 'Only so much history has been introduced, and so much law, as appeared in my judgment indispensable for a just estimate of the existing situation.'

In the Historical Introduction the story of the Church is carried as far as the reign of James II. Then follow the chapters—Church and State, The Via Media, Of Subscription, The English Bishop, The English Clergy, The Parochial System, and National Education. The subject of the Trans-