

Great Texts Reconsidered.

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

BY N. P. WILLIAMS, D.D., LADY MARGARET PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY IN THE
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.

THE close similarity between the versions of this great Saying preserved by Matthew and Luke respectively approaches so nearly to verbal identity that the text may conveniently be exhibited in the form of a reprint of the Matthaean passage, the Lucan variants being noted in brackets where they occur.

ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῷ καιρῷ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς (Lk. ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ ὥρᾳ ἠγαλλιάσατο ἐν τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίῳ καὶ) εἶπεν·

ἐξομολογοῦμαί σοι, πάτερ, κύριε τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ τῆς γῆς, ὅτι ἐκρυψας (Lk. ἀπέκρυψας) ταῦτα ἀπὸ σοφῶν καὶ συνετῶν, καὶ ἀπεκάλυψας αὐτὰ νηπίοις· ναὶ ὁ πατήρ, ὅτι οὕτως εὐδοκία ἐγένετο (Lk. ἐγένετο εὐδοκία) ἔμπροσθέν σου.

(Lk. καὶ στραφεὶς πρὸς τοὺς μαθητὰς εἶπεν·)

πάντα μοι παρεδόθη ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρός μου, καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐπιγινώσκει (Lk. γινώσκει) τὸν υἱὸν (Lk. τίς ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς) εἰ μὴ ὁ πατήρ, οὐδὲ τὸν πατέρα τις ἐπιγινώσκει (Lk. καὶ τίς ἐστιν ὁ πατήρ) εἰ μὴ ὁ υἱὸς καὶ ᾧ ἐὰν βούληται ὁ υἱὸς ἀποκαλύψαι.

No textual variations of any serious importance are given by the MSS. or other authorities, apart from the reversed order in which some early writers quote the last two clauses of the second Logion ('No man knoweth the Father save the Son . . . no man knoweth the Son save the Father').

I. Any discussion of the meaning and the authenticity of the Sayings themselves must be preceded by some inquiry into the mutually interrelated questions of the occasion on which and the context in which they were, or are alleged to have been, pronounced, of the source from which Matthew and Luke derived them, and of the relative degrees of fidelity with which the Evangelists respectively have reproduced that source. The second of these problems need not occupy us long, because it is

generally agreed that, occurring as they do with such striking verbal similarity in Matthew and Luke but not in Mark, the Sayings are indubitably derived from Q; nor need the third detain us, as it seems most probable that the minute points in which Luke differs from Matthew (especially the substitution of the indirect questions *τίς ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς . . . ὁ πατήρ* for the blunt accusatives *τὸν υἱὸν . . . τὸν πατέρα*) are conscious stylistic improvements. The question of the precise occasion to which the utterance of the Sayings should be assigned is one to which, in the light of our modern conception of the Synoptic Gospels as largely pieced together out of independent *pericopae*, of which the present sequence in our Gospels was determined by devotional and literary rather than scientifically historical considerations, it seems less and less possible to give a definite answer. In St. Matthew's Gospel the Sayings are assigned to the Galilean period of our Lord's Ministry, and follow immediately upon the woes pronounced upon Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum; but too much cannot be built upon this, even if we confine ourselves to the task of reconstructing the intentions of St. Matthew; for the phrase with which he introduces the first Saying ('At that season Jesus answered and said') is a vague, colourless, and conventional formula, which cannot be taken to convey any real indication of the chronological relation of what follows to what precedes it. Much more important is the fact that, in Matthew's version alone, the two Sayings which are reproduced by Luke are followed by a third, penetrated by the same tone of mystical exaltation, but drawing a practical conclusion from the concluding clause of the second Logion ('Neither doth any know the Father,' etc., which affirms the Son to be the sole revealer of the Father) and con-

sequently appearing to be organically bound up with it. This is the wonderful invitation (vv. 28-30):

δεῦτε πρὸς με, πάντες οἱ κοπιῶντες καὶ πεφορτισμένοι, καὶ ἄναψω ὑμᾶς· ἄρατε τὸν ζυγὸν μου ἐφ' ὑμᾶς, καὶ μάθετε ἀπ' ἐμοῦ, ὅτι πρῶτος εἰμι καὶ ταπεινός τῇ καρδίᾳ· καὶ εὐρήσετε ἀνάπαυσιν ταῖς ψυχαῖς ὑμῶν· ὁ γὰρ ζυγός μου χρηστός, καὶ τὸ φορτίον μου ἕλαφρόν ἐστιν.

That this is regarded by Matthew as forming part of the same *pericope* is shown by the fact that, immediately after it, the conventional phrase 'At that season' is once more employed in order to introduce a new paragraph (12¹). Luke's setting of these Logia is quite different. He places the occasion of their utterance in the course of his 'Travel-Section' (9⁵¹-18¹⁴), immediately after the triumphant return of the Seventy, with their story of victory over the demons. The impression produced by a perusal of the Lucan version is that it was this triumph over the spiritual forces of wickedness which produced in Jesus the state of exalted joy from which this cry of jubilation (*Der Jubelruf*, as German scholars call it) proceeded (though the statement that Jesus 'rejoiced in the Holy Spirit' is probably an inference from the character of the Saying which it introduces, just as the note that He 'turned to His disciples' is probably an editorial inference from the character of the second Saying). Moreover, the sequel of the Sayings in St. Luke's Gospel is, not the invitation 'Come unto me' addressed to suffering humanity in general, but a private felicitation of His disciples in particular—'Blessed are the eyes that see the things that ye see,' etc. (Lk 10^{23, 24}); this (with slight variations) occurs in St. Matthew's Gospel, but in a totally different context (Mt 13^{16, 17}—the explanation of the *rationale* of parabolic teaching, and of the Parable of the Sower). It is clear that Matthew and Luke cannot both be right (in a strictly historical sense) with regard to the setting in which they have placed these Logia; the impression, indeed, borne in upon us by the facts just set out is that neither of them can claim (or, most probably, intended to claim) exact objectivity for the precise chronological location in which he has placed the text. Though we must remember that we are not entitled to speak in terms of dogmatic

certitude but only in those of very high probability, we must conclude, for the purposes of this inquiry, that the Logia originally existed, during the oral stage of the transmission of the Dominical Logia, and were subsequently embodied in Q, as an independent, self-contained *pericope*, not attached to any particular event; and that Matthew and Luke have severally inserted it into those contexts which seemed to them appropriate, without any strictly historical warrant, such as would be required by a modern biographer, for so doing. Given the editorial methods of ancient historians, this conclusion does not involve, in the case of either Evangelist, any accusation of consciously falsifying history. Our typographical device of separating paragraphs by a line of dots, in order to show that they are printed as independent paragraphs and not necessarily exhibited as having any logical or historical connexion one with the other, was not known to ancient scribes; but, if it had been, it might well have been employed by Matthew to indicate that he does not mean to assert that there was any close chronological connexion between the utterance of the woes upon the Galilean cities and the utterance of the *Jubelruf*, and by Luke to show that he is giving us three separate incidents (a) the return of the Seventy, (b) the utterance of the *Jubelruf*, and (c) the felicitation of the disciples, all of which really occurred, but without committing himself to the implied assertion that they occurred in that particular order, or in immediate chronological contiguity.

II. It would seem, then, that we must renounce the attempt to find a precise setting for these Logia; they come to the modern student as an isolated excerpt from Q, without any indication of the time at which or the circumstances under which they were spoken, apart from the fact that the first Logion implies that some, at least, had accepted our Lord's message; from which it may be inferred that the Saying was not uttered (or, if it is unauthentic, does not claim to have been uttered) until our Lord's public Ministry had lasted for some considerable time. Many will, doubtless, feel that the contents of the text are so sublime that our ignorance of the precise situation which called it forth involves

little loss, at any rate in the devotional sphere. But we are now faced by a question which has an intimate bearing upon the ultimate problems of the authenticity of the Sayings and of the doctrinal import to be assigned to them. This is the question of the connexion with the two Logia which are reproduced both by Matthew and by Luke of the third Logion (the invitation to the weary and heavy laden), which appears in Matthew only and not in Luke. Did our Lord's prophetic cry appear in Q as a hymn of three strophes, of which Matthew has faithfully reproduced all, whilst Luke has suppressed the last? Or is the Lucan, two-strophe version the original one, to which Matthew has added the 'Invitation,' derived by him from some other source?

It does not seem possible to decide this question by any *a priori* considerations of the relative degrees of exactitude with which Matthew and Luke are accustomed to reproduce Q. For that is a subject on which agreement does not at present appear to exist amongst scholars. C. F. Burney¹ thinks that Matthew, being a Rabbinit, would naturally attach great importance to the literal reproduction of the exact words of a great teacher, whilst Luke, being of a more Hellenic and therefore more philosophical turn of mind would attach primary importance to the meaning, and would permit himself a greater liberty in regard to the verbal form. Streeter,² on the other hand, thinks that Luke is the more faithful follower of Q, both in respect of order and of literal form. The question can, therefore, only be solved by a consideration of the contents of the three Matthæan Logia, in order to decide whether the third is so intimately connected with the first two that it must be deemed always to have constituted a single organic whole with them.

This problem is the subject of a minute and laborious investigation by the German scholar Eduard Norden,³ in his treatise on the forms assumed by religious addresses and harangues in the mystical, theosophical, and magical literature of the Hellenized Orient during the centuries im-

mediately preceding and following the birth of Christ. One of these forms he finds to be the revelational *ῥῆσις*, or solemn, impassioned speech, which normally consists of three members, namely, (a) Assertion that the speaker has received, or is the unique vehicle of, a revelation; (b) Thank-giving for the revelation so imparted; (c) Appeal to mankind to submit themselves to the speaker's instruction, and so to secure for themselves the benefits of the revelation. The revelation is naturally and usually described as 'wisdom' (*σοφία*) or 'knowledge' (*γνώσις*); it is to be observed that, from the instances of such *ῥῆσις* which he quotes, Norden concludes that the order (a) (b) (c) is not absolutely fixed, but may be varied at the discretion of the speaker or author. The earliest and most typical instance of this he finds in 'The Prayer of Jesus the son of Sirach' which concludes the book which we know as Ecclesiasticus (51). This, according to him, falls into the three divisions just set out, namely, (a) a Prayer of Thanksgiving (vv. 1-12) beginning *ἐξομολογήσομαι σοι, κύριε βασιλεῦ* (cf. the *ἐξομολογούμαι σοι, πάτερ, κύριε τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, κ.τ.λ.*, of our first Logion); (b) Assertion that the speaker has after long search attained to wisdom (vv. 13-22); (c) Appeal to the unlearned to accept the speaker's instruction (vv. 23-30). This, Norden thinks, corresponds roughly to the threefold structure of the *ῥῆσις* ascribed to Jesus by Matthew. And he draws attention to some verbal similarities in the last strophe of both passages; these may be exhibited as follows:

Sirach.

- li. 23. ἐγγίσατε πρὸς μέ, ἀπαίδευτοι . . .
26. τὸν τράχηλον ὑμῶν ὑπόθετε ὑπὸ ζυγόν,
καὶ ἐπιδεξάσθω ἡ ψυχὴ ὑμῶν παιδείαν.

Matthæan Logion.

- xi. 28. δεῦτε πρὸς με πάντες οἱ κοπιῶντες . . .
29. ἄρατε τὸν ζυγόν μου ἐφ' ὑμᾶς . . .
καὶ εὐρήσετε ἀνάπαυσιν ταῖς ψυχαῖς ὑμῶν.

He does not, however, regard the Matthæan Logion as directly dependent upon the Sirach passage, but thinks that both alike are examples of a common form; which, as Ecclesiasticus must have been written between 190-170 B.C., must

¹ *The Poetry of our Lord* (1925).

² *The Four Gospels* (1931), 291.

³ *Agnostos Theos* (1912), 277-308.

have been of considerable antiquity at the period when the materials of the Gospels were being reduced to written form.

III. Other examples of the 'form' of the three-membered *ῥήσις* given by Norden are taken from Pagan or syncretistic sources. The most important of these occurs in the *corpus Hermeticum*, lib. i. (*Poimandres*), 31, 32, 27-29 (ed. W. Scott, i. 130 ff.). The three members which Norden discerns in this passage are—(a) Praise of God for the impartation of revelation (the hymn beginning 'Holy is God, the Father of all'); (b) Claim to possess the revelation at the end of 32—Wherefore I believe and bear witness that I enter into Life and Light: blessed art Thou, Father; Thy Man seeks to share Thy holiness, even as Thou hast given him all authority (*καθὼς παρέδωκας αὐτῷ τὴν πᾶσαν ἐξουσίαν*): (c) Appeal to mankind (27, 28—'Hearken ye folk, men born of earth . . . awake to soberness, cease to be sodden with strong drink,' etc.). Norden finds a close parallel between the concluding phrase of (b) *καθὼς πα ρέδωκας, κ.τ.λ.*, and the *πάντα μοι παρεδόθη ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς μου* of Matthew, interpreting the verb *παρεδίδωμι* in each case as indicating the 'handing over' of a *παράδοσις* or 'tradition,'¹ that is, mystical lore or *γνώσις*, which, as imparting 'authority' in the spiritual sphere, is in the Hermetic passage described as *ἐξουσία*. He quotes also a tractate, of which the date is not given, bearing the title 'Isis the prophetic to her son' (*i.e.* Horus). Here, a divine Mother (not Father—but this, according to Norden, is an unessential difference) is represented as imparting the knowledge of all mysteries to her son, who in his turn transmits it to those of mankind who are found worthy to receive it. Reference is also made to the Asclepius of Pseudo-Apuleius, in which the Prayer of Thanksgiving for the revelation comes at the very end of the treatise, after the mystic lore has been expounded '*gratias tibi agimus, summe exsuperantissime. tua enim gratia tantum sumus cognitionis tuae lumen consecuti.*'² For the claims said to have been made by Oriental prophets or Gnostic adepts, to be 'sons' or 'powers' of God and so depositaries of revelation, Norden compares

the formula placed in the mouths of the pagan prophets of Phœnicia and Palestine by Celsus (*ap. Orig. c. Cels. vii. 9*)—*ἐγὼ ὁ θεὸς εἰμι ἢ θεοῦ παῖς ἢ πνεῦμα θεῖον*: he reminds us of Simon Magus, the Gnostic prophet of Samaria, who, according to Ac 8¹⁰, was believed to be the incarnation of 'that power of God which is called Great,' and suggests that some such formula as that caricatured by Celsus may have been the opening phrase of one of his characteristic *ῥήσεις*. There are also attempts to discover the triple form of the revelational *ῥήσις* in the Johannine discourses and the Pauline epistles; these, however, reveal no more than what can at best be called vague traces and echoes of the 'form,' and do not add appreciably to the strength of the argument, such as it is.

IV. It is on the basis of the data just summarized that Norden concludes in favour of the Matthean, three-membered version of the Logion, including the invitation to the weary and heavy laden, as against the Lucan, two-membered version. It will conduce to clearness if, before subjecting his strictly *formgeschichtliche*³ argument to a critical examination, we subjoin at this point a summary of this scholar's opinions with regard to the meaning and the asserted Dominical origin of the passage. The first paragraph extols the inscrutable wisdom of God, which has brought it about that the revelation (*ταῦτα*) has been received by the humble and uninstructed (*νήπιοι*), and has been rejected by 'the wise and understanding,' whom Norden identifies with the Rabbinical caste. With the substitution of Greek philosophers for Jewish Rabbis, the thought is identical with that of 1 Co 1¹⁸⁻²⁵—'seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe.' So far, no one will challenge this exegesis; and there is equally little disagreement as to the significance of the third paragraph of the Logion, the invitation of the weary to receive instruction from the Speaker, coupled with the promise of rest and refreshment

¹ Cf. 1 Co 11^{2, 23}, 15³.

² W. Scott, *Hermetica*, i. 374.

³ Norden uses this adjective of his own researches, writing more than a decade before the application of 'form-criticism' to the Gospels.

to their souls. It is the second paragraph which is the crucial one: and on this the views of our author must be expounded in some detail.

The simple believer, reading the opening words of this paragraph, 'All things have been delivered unto me of my Father,' naturally interprets them as referring to the Messianic rule of the Universe which was already assigned to the Son of Man, in respect of His humanity, by the Father's decree, was destined to be actualized at the Ascension and perfected at the Consummation of all things; he would regard it as identical in content with Mt 28¹⁸, 'All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth,' and Jn 3³⁵, 'The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand,' and 13³, 'Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands.' As we have noted above, however, Norden is constrained by his theory of the revelational *ῥῆσις*, concerned only with the origins of *γνώσις*, to reject this interpretation and connect *παρεδόθη* strictly with the idea of *παράδοσις* in the technical sense of 'tradition.' The phrase will then mean, 'All my tradition—the whole of my teaching—was revealed to me by the Father; it is not derived from any chain of Rabbinical divines and casuists'; in other words, our Lord here asserts of Himself the judgment which was formulated about Him by His hearers 'He speaketh with authority, and not as the scribes.' It may well be thought in view of the subsequent claim to be 'meek and lowly in heart,' that the speaker intends to classify himself amongst the *νήπιοι* of v.²⁵ as contrasted with the Rabbinical *σοφοὶ καὶ συνετοί*. It is desirable to make it quite clear that, according to Norden, the authority here represented as having been claimed by Jesus is *intellectual* authority only, consisting in a power to impart to others the knowledge which has been revealed to Him by God, and not governmental authority over the Cosmos.

This tradition, or teaching, or *γνώσις*, consists in the knowledge of God, which is possessed only

by the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to impart it (second paragraph, last clause)—that is, presumably, the *νήπιοι* of paragraph 1. But what is meant by the second clause of the second paragraph (*οὐδείς ἐπιγινώσκει τὸν υἱόν, εἰ μὴ ὁ πατήρ*)? Here we come upon the very core of the whole problem. As we have already observed, there is a certain amount of authority in the quotations of this Logion by early Christian writers for reversing the order of this and the following clause, and on the basis of this fact Harnack has founded a case for eliminating as spurious the affirmation that only the Father has full knowledge of the Son.¹ Norden, however, cannot avail himself of this expedient, for the excision of the second clause would destroy the structure of the *ῥῆσις*, which consists of three stanzas, each of four lines, and the proposed excision would leave the second stanza consisting of three lines only. But he is able to explain the phrase as it stands and in its present place, by invoking the conception of God's 'foreknowledge' of His chosen messengers, or His elect. Such instances of this use of the word *γινώσκειν* as Gal 4⁸ (*νῦν δὲ γνόντες θεόν, μᾶλλον δὲ γνωσθέντες ὑπὸ θεοῦ*) and 1 Co 13¹² (*τότε δὲ ἐπιγνώσομαι καθὼς καὶ ἐπεγνώσθην*) are well known. The clause then means, according to Norden, that the Father foreknew—that is, in effect, selected or appointed—Jesus as His chosen messenger; and it contains no metaphysical or theological implications whatsoever concerning the ontological relations of the Father and the Son.

The whole stanza may, therefore, according to our author, be paraphrased as follows: 'The whole of my teaching was imparted to me by God. It was He alone—and no subordinate being—who foreknew and appointed me to be His messenger; and, consequently, it is I alone who possess the knowledge of Him, and can impart this knowledge to those whom I find worthy.'

¹ *The Sayings of Jesus* (Eng. tr. 1908), Excursus I.
(To be continued.)