

*AN ANALYSIS OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT
AS GIVEN IN THE FIRST GOSPEL*

MODERN criticism of the synoptic Gospels enables us to state that the version of our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, as we have it in the First Gospel is a compilation, and it further enables us to point out how the writer of that Gospel, whoever he may have been, gathered up much of this beautiful collection of the sayings of our Lord and added a great many sections to the original discourse. Before entering upon any attempt at analysing Matthew's account of the Sermon, I must make a few preliminary remarks.

1. The common matter in Matthew and Luke was probably derived from a source (Q) which consisted mainly of discourses of our Lord, with the record of a few incidents or occasions which gave rise to or led up to the discourses.

2. The second source of Matthew and Luke was St. Mark's Gospel, a brief and vigorous account of the events of our Lord's life, written apparently for Roman Christians, and giving comparatively few of the discourses of Jesus probably because Q was already in the hands of Mark's readers.

3. After this, Matthew had another source—probably Palestinian tradition, and Luke also had other sources. It is not necessary for our inquiry to assume anything concerning these sources, of which little apparently can be found out.

Matthew and Luke are real Gospels, real biographies or interpretations of Christ's work and teaching, of his Person and character. We see in them the intentions of the biographers and the colour of their minds and ideas. Matthew obviously writing for Jewish Christians and Luke for all men. St. Luke tells us he intended to embody and supersede what went before, or at all events to give a well-authen-

ANALYSIS OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT 147

ticated, connected and chronological account "of those matters which have been fulfilled among us." Neither Matthew, nor Luke, however, can be regarded as an exhaustive account of Christ's life and teaching such as any modern writer would give. They rather aimed at edification and were probably confined to a certain length by custom as to the size of books or scrolls.¹

Between the two Gospels they embodied all of Mark save a few verses (611 out of 661), and inasmuch as Q has not survived we may conjecture that between them they embodied the greater part of it also.

Now a question important to our analysis arises, namely, how probably did Matthew and Luke treat this matter common to them both? How did each use his Q? Did he copy it exactly or not?

To answer this question, I ask another. How did they treat Mark, their other chief source?

Roughly the answer is, Matthew takes little account of the order of Mark at first; he departs from it freely, he selects what he wants, combines it with other matter, omits what does not suit his design, and transposes the narrative freely. After Mark vi. however he for the most part preserves its order.

St. Luke, on the other hand, is more like a modern historian in that he preserves St. Mark's order, with a few exceptions apparently arising from the fact that he had another parallel source for those particular cases. He takes Mark's narrative and prefixes to it two or three chapters containing the account of the births of Christ and John Baptist and the temptation of our Lord; he adds an account of the resurrection differing from Mark's broken off account, and in the account of the Passion and Death of Christ he departs freely from St. Mark's account, clearly

¹ See *Studies in the Synoptic Problem*, edited by Dr. Sanday, p. 26.

showing he has another source for that part of Christ's life. He leaves out 1½ chapters of Mark, probably for the reason that they contain events very like others he elsewhere gives. Into this framework of narrative St. Luke fixes one great block of nine or ten chapters (called "the great insertion"—ix. 51 to xviii. 14) containing the report of long discourses of our Lord, and which the argument of this paper and other similar arguments go to show was mostly part of Q.¹ A great part of this is unique, found only here. Finally, he inserts one lesser block in St. Mark's framework of story, viz., Luke vi. 20—viii. 3. Now, besides those portions of "the great insertion" which are unique, there are in it many sayings parallel to Matthew's account of the Sermon on the Mount. Concerning these the question is, Are they in their right historical connexion in Luke or in Matthew? I believe the answer to be, Luke.

Because 1. no editor finding sayings in one block more or less connected would scatter them up and down, but, on the other hand, scattered sayings might by an editor be grouped under headings or subjects.²

2. If Matthew treated the subject matter of his other source (St. Mark) freely, he is likely to have done the same with Q. Moreover, he has put a saying from St. Mark (ix. 50) and also a saying of John the Baptist into the Sermon (Matthew vii. 19).

3. Matthew's Gospel, as a matter of fact, consists very largely of groups of sayings of Jesus—e.g., in chapter x. he has a group gathered from our Lord's discourse to the Twelve when He sent them forth, from His discourse to the Seventy

¹ So Mr. Streeter. Sir John Hawkins also shows that 52 close parallels exist between the two insertions of Luke, and collected sayings in Matthew v.—vii., ix., x., xi., xii., xiii., xviii., xxiii.—v., besides many less strictly parallel. *Oxford Studies*, p. 113 ff.

² So Mr. Streeter, *Oxford Studies*, pp. 145–8.

as found in St. Luke, and from His eschatological discourse as found in Mark and Luke, and from several other sources.

Assuming these preliminary positions as highly probable results of recent criticism, we now proceed with our analysis.

We have in St. Luke (vi. 20-42) an account of the Sermon on the "level place." We have most of the substance of this, together with amplifications, in St. Matthew's Sermon on the Mount; over and above this, we have numerous and large sections, all in Matthew gathered together into this one discourse, but in Luke scattered about and occurring in what we might call the bedrock of history.

In St. Luke's account every saying almost without exception rises naturally from some question put to Jesus or following some incident which gave rise to it (see Luke xi. 1-4, and Luke xii. 13), or enforcing some lesson given in a parable (Luke xvi. 17 or Luke xi. 5-13). In other words, St. Luke records the true historical occasion which gave rise to the saying; in his Gospel we have Christ's various sayings lying in the original bedrock of history as they naturally occurred. In Matthew's collection of the sayings and teachings of Jesus we have the same sayings quarried from their original position and each hewn into a unit of teaching, or an aphorism, and built into a systematic discourse.

The best instance and the largest I can give of this is the section forbidding anxiety for the things of this world, and commanding men to seek first the Kingdom—Matt. vi. 25-33, Luke xii. 22-32. In Matthew it has no close connexion with what went before it. In Luke, where it is almost verbatim the same passage with no greater verbal alteration than Luke makes when incorporating a section of Mark, we find recorded the original occasion of this discourse. A man comes to our Lord and asks Him to compel his brother to divide the inheritance with him. This leads our Lord, after refusing to be a judge, to give a solemn warning

against covetousness, part of which was the parable of the rich fool, from which this splendid discourse goes on uninterruptedly. "Therefore I say unto you, Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, etc." All the anxiety of the rich fool about his fruits and goods had failed to add even one day to the length of his life, and in the following discourse we have the question, "Which of you by being anxious can add to his age one span?" This is in logical connexion. There is also verbal connexion when, after it has been said in the parable that the rich man's ground brought forth abundantly and that he pulled down his *barns* and built larger ones, we have the mention of sowing and reaping and gathering into *barns* in connexion with the ravens.

I maintain that this whole discourse is given by St. Luke, and derived by him from Q, as it arose naturally in the history of our Lord's dealings with men, and that Matthew, in accordance with his custom, has plucked this flower of teaching, and placed it together with many more in the framework of the Sermon on the Mount.

I must now try and briefly indicate the lines on which an analysis of the Sermon as given in Matthew should proceed.

I. We find a good deal of the Sermon *common to both* Matthew and Luke. (1) Four beatitudes Matthew v. 3, 4, 6, 11, 12; Luke vi. 20-23. (2) Matthew v. 39b, 40b, 42, and 44-48; Luke vi. 27-36 (two sections of exposition of the Law in Matthew, combined into one in Luke, and joined with "the golden rule" in its true context). (3) Omitting the whole of Matthew vi., we come to Matthew vii. 1-5, "Judge not," and the parable of the mote and beam. Compare Luke vi. 37-42. (4) The tree and its fruit, Matthew vii. 17-20; Luke vi. 43, 44. (5) "Lord, Lord," and the wise and the foolish man building his house (Matt. vii. 21, 24-27, Luke vi. 46-49), this forming the natural conclusion of the Sermon.

All this common matter we must look upon as part of the original Sermon.

II. The second part of the original Sermon is *that which there is evidence belonged to it but which is not recorded by Luke*. He plainly omits one long passage (Matt. v. 21-37), containing four sections of our Lord's exposition of the contrast between the laws of His kingdom and the laws of Moses (with one or two added passages) each beginning with the words, "It was said to them of old time, but I say unto you"; for how does St. Luke's sermon read? Luke vi. 26-27, "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well with you! for in the same manner did their fathers to the false prophets. But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, etc." Where is the connexion? Dr. Plummer ("St. Luke," *Intern. Crit. Com.*) says: "'Αλλα. What is the contrast which this *ἀλλα* marks? The emphatic position of the *ὑμῖν* seems to show that the contrast is between those on whom the woes have been pronounced and the faithful hearers now addressed." Is not this somewhat forced? Surely the connexion is lost or omitted by St. Luke; in fact, he omits "Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye," and "Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy." The words "*But I say unto you which hear*" are a plain indication that St. Luke has omitted these sections and the contrast drawn in them between the Christian and the Jewish law. He was not writing like Matthew for Jewish Christians, and therefore he omits the reference to the Law and also the whole of four of the sections in which Jesus corrects, enlarges or hedges it.

III. The third part of the original Sermon is *that which is given in Luke and not in Matthew*.

1. There are the four Woes (vi. 24-26). 2. The passage concerning the blind leading the blind," and "the disciple is not above his master" (vi. 39-40). 3. "The good man

and the good treasure of his heart, etc.” (vi. 45), and a few phrases of amplification in some passages recorded in both the reports of the Sermon. Matthew must have omitted these if they belonged to the original discourse, as I believe they did, and it is noteworthy that he records some of them in other groups of sayings (see Matt. x. 24, xiii. 52, xv. 14).

IV. We come now to the matter *which is found in Matthew's account but is not recorded anywhere in Luke.*

1. We have four or five more beatitudes (v. 5, 7-10). some critics maintain that these were added by Matthew from the Psalms and elsewhere, but this seems a violent supposition. The existence of them here and the variations in the other beatitudes have been explained in different ways.¹

2. Matthew v. 16, “Even so let your light shine, etc.” This is an amplification of the passage which precedes it and which will be considered later.

3. Matthew v. 17. This may well have been the introduction to the five sections on the Law.

4. v. 19, “Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, etc.” This does not agree with our Lord's own treatment of the law in qualifying it and repudiating parts of it in verses 21-44. It is probably a Jewish-Christian gloss.

5. v. 20, “For I say unto you, except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, etc.” This passage is surely in very close connexion with chap. vi. 1-8, 16-18, “Take heed that you do not your *righteousness* before men to be seen of them, etc.,” where our Lord, in contrasting the righteousness His disciples are to have with that of the hypocrites, gives three examples (vers. 2, 6 and 16), alms, prayers and fasting. The rendering *alms* in verse 1 for *righteousness* in A.V. obscures this. Verse

¹ For a simple explanation see *Oxford Studies*, p. xxii.

1 is a heading comprehending the three classes of good works.

We shall see that this section on good works is out of its true place in Matthew vi. If it be part of the original Sermon, as seems probable, should it not follow at the end of Matthew v. 20 and precede the five sections on the Law, and v. 17, which introduces them ?

6. vii. 6, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, etc." This has been called "an erratic bolder" (*Encyclopaedia Biblica*, art. "Sermon").

7. vii. 13, 14. The two ways.

8. vii. 15, "Beware of false prophets, etc." We have not much means of knowing whether these two sections (7 and 8) were part of the original discourse or not.

V. The fifth division of the Sermon in Matthew is the large quantity of matter found in it *to which there occur parallels in totally different contexts in St. Luke*. These do not belong to the original Sermon. They lie far more naturally where Luke has them.

1. Matt. v. 18, "Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all things be accomplished." This saying is given in Luke in an historical setting in the form "But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one tittle of the law to fall."¹ It is a rebuke to the Pharisees and has reference to the Law forbidding divorce. Plummer (*Internat. Crit. Com.*, Luke) states that this is a condensed discourse, and the connexion is rather lost. "The law and the prophets (the O. T. dispensation) were until John. The law is now superseded. The Kingdom of God is open to all; all can force their way into it and to salvation. But the moral elements in the law are indestructible. You cannot abolish them as you Pharisees try to do by frequent divorce," and

¹ Luke xvi. 17.

we may add, by their upholding Herod's divorce and remarriage, unlike John.

2. Matt. v. 25, "Agree with thine adversary quickly, etc." This saying is given in Luke in another connexion. Jesus has just said to the multitudes, "When ye see a cloud arising in the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower, etc., for as thou art going with thine adversary before the magistrate, etc."; that is, "When you see the signs, act at once, and see that you are on the right side. Make your peace with God now; the time for payment is before judgment is given."

3. Matt. v. 31, 32. The second verse in this enlargement or correction of the law, "every one that putteth away his wife, etc.," is parallel to a passage in Luke xvi. 18, where Jesus utters the same prohibition (though without the exception which is added by Matthew) speaking to the Pharisees, who derided Him and upheld Herod. It applies there exactly in both its clauses to a *particular act of putting away*, viz., Herod's divorce of the daughter of Aretas and his marriage of Herodias, and therefore we have a true historical setting for it in Luke and not in Matthew—though it may, on the other hand, be a true doublet in Christ's teaching, and have been spoken twice or oftener. It occurs again in Matthew xix. 9 (from Mark x. 11, 12).

We come now to Matthew vi. There is evidence in St. Luke which connects Matthew v. 44 closely with vii. 1. If this is so, then the whole of chapter vi. is either an interpolation into the Sermon gathered from elsewhere, or part of it is out of its true order in the Sermon. Luke vi. 35-37 reads thus: "Love your enemies and do good . . . and ye shall be the sons of the Most High, for He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful, and judge not, and ye shall not be judged, etc."

Of the connexion between Luke vi. 36 and 37, Plummer

writes (*Luke*, p. 189): "Judge not" is a further development of the principle of Christian love. Having told His disciples to cherish no personal animus against those who injure them, He now warns them against judging others . . . censoriousness is a transgression of the royal law of love, and an invasion of the Divine prerogatives; not only vengeance but judgment belongs to God." Now *Luke* vi. 36, "Be ye merciful" (or "be ye perfect, etc."), is the last verse of *Matthew* v., and "Judge not" is the first verse of *chap. vii.*; if, therefore, "Judge not" is part of the subject "love your enemies" and the perfection urged, the whole of *chap. vi.* in *Matthew* is out of place.

4. Passing over *Matthew* vi. 1-8, 16-18, which have been already treated of, we come to *Matthew* vi. 9-15, the Lord's Prayer. *St. Luke* gives the historical setting of this—*Luke* xi. 1-4. It was after seeing Christ pray that the disciples asked for and were given a model prayer. (We note that *Matthew's* account adds to *Luke's* "Thy will [be done as in Heaven so on earth," and "Deliver us from the evil one.")

5. *Matt.* vi. 19, "Treasure in heaven," cf. *Luke* xii. 33, "Sell that ye have and give alms; *make for yourselves* purses which wax not old, *a treasure in heaven* which faileth not, where no *thief* draweth near neither *moth* destroyeth . . . for where your treasure is there will your heart be also." In *St. Luke* this saying is put directly at the end of the long passage forbidding anxious thought for earthly things, and it is a *positive* conclusion from the forbidding of anxiety, a method of seeking the Kingdom. *Matthew* puts it at the beginning of the same passage, but not so directly in connexion with it, but with "the light of the body, etc.," intervening. This is surely a very inferior setting to give it.

6. This last passage (*vi.* 22, 23, "the light of the body") is found in *St. Luke* (*xi.* 34-36) in the discourse regarding

“an evil generation seeking after a sign”—we shall speak of its bearing on that subject when treating of another similar passage which occurs there with it, “no man when he hath lighted a lamp putteth it in a cellar.” It is a good example of how St. Matthew sometimes even breaks a saying into two pieces and combines each of them with other matter elsewhere.

7. Matt. vi. 24, “No man can serve two masters, etc.” . . . In St. Luke vi. 13 this saying (word for word the same) is part of the lesson drawn from the parable of the Unjust Steward—Let your use of the mammon of unrighteousness be made entirely subservient to your Master’s service, for no man can be a slave to two masters. “This verse” (says Plummer, *Luke*, p. 387) “forms a natural conclusion to the comments on the parable; and if it was uttered only once we may believe that this is its original position, rather than in the Sermon on the Mount, where it is placed by Matthew (so Schanz, Weiss).”

8. vi. 25–33. This long passage forbidding anxiety, I have already shown to be in its right setting as a corollary from the parable of the rich fool as given in Luke xii. 22.

Thus all of Matthew vi., except the three sections on good works, is found in an historical setting in Luke and must have been collected by Matthew from the same or a similar source from which Luke derived it. Matthew then grouped them in the collection of sayings which we call the Sermon on the Mount in his Gospel. Its verbal similarity suggests that the same Greek original source was used by both Matthew and Luke for this section.

9. In Matthew vii. there are only two passages which are found in St. Luke in different contexts. Vers. 7–11, “Ask and it shall be given you, etc.” This section, in very similar words, together with the additional illustration of the egg and the scorpion, is found in Luke xi. 9–13 as the lesson

enforced by the parable of the Friend at midnight. There (Plummer says) it is "an exhortation to perseverance in prayer based on the preceding parable and confirmed (vers. 11-13) by personal experience." . . . "And *I also* say unto *you*, Ask, etc."; the parable teaches them, and *Jesus* also teaches them the same. The parable shows how the urgent suppliant fared; the disciples may know how *they* will fare. The three commands (*Ask, seek, knock*) are obviously taken from the parable and they form a climax of increasing earnestness." (*Luke*, p. 299.)

10. Chap. vii. 13, "Enter ye in by the narrow gate," found in St. Luke xiii. 24 as an answer to the question: "Lord, are there few that be saved?" in the form "Strive to enter in by the narrow door." The two ways—broad and narrow (vers. 13, 14), and the warning against false prophets (ver. 15), are peculiar to Matthew; but in the same section of St. Luke following the words quoted, comes the passage Luke xiii. 25-27, "Lord, Lord, open to us . . . we did eat and drink in Thy presence, and Thou hast taught in our streets, and He shall say, I tell you, I know not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity" (*ἀδικίας*). St. Matthew has further on, under the heading as it were of the tree and its fruit, a very parallel passage, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Thy name . . . works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (or lawlessness, *ἀνομίας*). The last clause is, of course, a quotation from Psalm vi. In Luke's version of the Sermon we have also the words "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" cf. Matt. vii. 21. This case is not so conclusive as the others, and it may be a real doublet. The *gate* to the way may not be the same as the *door* into the house.

I have passed over three other parallels, one of them

with Mark, because they may be examples of sayings uttered by our Lord more than once, and in different connexions, and if so, we cannot build much upon them in our argument. These are Matt. v. 13; cf. Luke xiv. 34, 35, Mark ix. 50; and Matt. v. 15 and v. 29.

11. In the middle of the section Matthew vii. 13-23 we have a saying already recorded by Matthew as part of the preaching of John the Baptist (v. 19). "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire" (Matt. iii. 10b, and Luke iii. 9b= part of Q). It is here brought in by Matthew to enlarge the teaching of Jesus on the tree and its fruits. This whole section is very composite and is a good example of Matthew's method of producing a grand effect—comparable to the original effect of our Lord's teaching when the people were astonished at it—by conflating our Lord's sayings and dove-tailing one into another.

12. Lastly, the golden rule is part of the original Sermon; but when we compare its position in Matthew and Luke we see at once that the latter is its correct connexion, and that St. Matthew has transposed it. It is puzzling to see any connexion with what preceded it as it stands in Matthew, although he introduces it with the word "Therefore." It runs thus: "How much more shall your Father who is in Heaven give good things to them that ask Him? All things, therefore, whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, even so do ye also unto them: for this is the law and the prophets" (vii. 12). There is absolutely no connexion. St. Luke vi. 31 has it much earlier in the discourse, thus: "Love your enemies. . . . Give to every one that asketh thee, and of him that would take away thy goods ask them not again. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. And if ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? etc."

Here, again, Plummer, whom I always quote as a standard commentator, and one who has not expressed any opinion on the subject of whether Matthew's or Luke's account of the Sermon is the more historical, says (*Luke*, p. 186) : " The *καὶ* introduces the general case which covers all these cases ; ' and in short, in a word,' How would one wish to be treated oneself if one was an aggressor ? How ought one to wish to be treated ? But obviously the principle covers a great deal more than the treatment of aggressors and enemies."

To sum up, I have taken twelve separate passages from Matthew v.-vii., and have found that ten of them are to be found in the " great insertion " of nine chapters which St. Luke has placed in one block in the framework of narrative which he derived from St. Mark.

One of these, v. 13, No. 3, Matt. v. 32, may be a real doublet in Christ's teaching, i.e., an habitual saying of His which occurs in different connexions.

The first ten passages all occur in St. Luke in logical (and often verbal) connexion with some parable or discourse, or in a natural connexion with some incident, or as an answer to some question put to Jesus, or an illustration of some warning or doctrine ; and with regard to two other sayings, parts of the original Sermon and reported in both accounts, viz., " Judge not, etc.," and the " golden rule," the context in which they occur in Luke's version of the Sermon is clearer and more logical and connected than that in which Matthew has placed them in his report of it.

On the other hand two separate sections of the contrast between the new law and the old have been combined into one in Luke, and three or four other such sections entirely omitted. Here Matthew adheres more closely to the original Sermon in his report than Luke.

There is also in the Sermon in Matthew one other saying

(Matt. v. 29) derived from Mark (ix. 43-8), and there occurring in another connexion. This is given again by Matthew in xviii. 8-10, and so may come from or be a real doublet—besides one saying (11) derived from the account of the preaching of John the Baptist.

If my contention is the true one, it is plain that the Sermon on the Mount as given in Matthew is a conflation of Christ's teaching grafted upon the original discourse. St. Luke's report of the Sermon is nearer to the discourse as given by Jesus, though he has certainly omitted some considerable sections on the Law, and perhaps some of the beatitudes, and probably also the section on Christian righteousness contrasted with the outward righteousness of the Pharisees vi. 1-8, etc., as well as one or two other brief sayings. In both cases we must of course remember that what we have is rather a brief summary than a detailed account of our Lord's words. Some have supposed that the Sermon in Matthew is really a kind of summary of elementary Christian teaching, a brief compendium of Christian ethics and practical teaching, a sort of manual of the early Church, which Matthew introduced into his Gospel. This would be to push the collector further back and make him a source of our Matthew; but this is an unnecessary hypothesis when we see that the writer of Matthew, who is "a born teacher" has collected many other groups of the sayings of Jesus. If my analysis is at all correct, the systematic nature of the Sermon in Matthew is derived from the Editor's skill in grouping sayings under single headings and fitting our Lord's scattered teachings into a continuous whole, while St. Luke gives us the sayings and their occasions together, thus connecting them with individual incidents and facts.

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