

Some Recent Trends in New Testament Study*

I Textual Study

MANY textual critics, particularly in the U.K. (e.g. G. Zuntz, G. D. Kilpatrick, J. N. Birdsall, K. Elliot) are adopting what is known as the 'eclectic' method (or 'rational criticism'). This involves a refusal to accept the reading of what may be deemed the "best" MS (e.g. Vaticanus in the estimate of Westcott and Hort) and an insistence that each reading must be considered on its merits. Thus a "poor" MS may preserve the true reading in a given instance; a "good" MS may not always preserve the correct reading. The "cult of the best MS" has thus been called in question.

Thus e.g. (i) in Mark 1.41 the reading "moved with anger" is only offered by one Greek MS (D), but this is more likely to be the original than "moved with compassion".

(ii) The RV and RSV follow Vaticanus (B) at 2 Cor. 10.10 in reading the plural "they say". Other Greek MSS have the singular "he (i.e. the leader of Paul's opponents) says . . .". The RV and RSV have followed the good MS, but the plural probably represents an attempt to improve the text because there was more than one person involved in the attack on Paul. The singular should be preferred.

(iii) At Heb. 2.9 do we accept "by the grace of God" with most MSS or "apart from God" with only M (9th century), the corrector of 424, and 1739? Origen knew of both readings. "Apart from God" is the harder reading, could evoke the cry of dereliction and is more likely to have been altered to "by the grace of God" than vice versa.

(iv) To follow P 46, D, P, Upsilon, 69, 1739, 1912, at Heb. 11.11 in having "Sarah barren" makes Abraham the subject of *eis katabolen spermatos* (i.e. the male sexual function). The word barren could have been omitted through homoteleuton. "Sarah barren" would then be a nominative pendens, to be translated "Although Sarah was barren, Abraham . . ."

(v) At 1 John 4.3 the variant "whoever dissolves Jesus" is not attested by any Greek MS (it occurs in the margin of 1739, a tenth century MS), but it is attested by Irenaeus, so that it must have been in existence somewhere around the second half of the second century. Rudolf Schnackenburg in his great commentary on the Johannines accepts this as the original reading. It is certainly more pungent and sharp than the colourless "confesses not" (which is also grammatically incorrect!).

There has also been something of a move away from the "genealogical" method—the approach of constructing types of texts, e.g. Alex-

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andrine, Western etc. (Those acquainted with Streeter will recall how he grouped types of MSS in the major centres round the Mediterranean). This older assumption that a text type can be reconstructed ("the cult of the genealogical method") has been challenged. A text type is rather a process. This has been clearly shown in respect of B (fourth century) by the discovery of Papyrus 75 (which is dated circa 175-200 A.D.): P75 includes a good deal of Luke and John and its kinship is with B. P75 thus represents an earlier form of the text type found in B. Therefore the scribe of B did not create the type of text which B contains, but transmitted it.

Along with P75, another papyrus has recently been discovered—P66 which contains John with some gaps and is dated to circa 220-225 A.D. P66 is a 'mixed' text whose affinity is with Sinaitic and W (Washington).

II Background Material

Since the end of World War II there have been two discoveries which have had their effects on New Testament study.

(a) *The Qumran documents*

Although some extravagant claims have been made—and often these have found their way into the popular press—the value of these documents for New Testament study may be assessed as follows:

1. They help to fill in a 'missing' part of the Jewish background of the New Testament era. We knew of the existence of the Essenes from the works of Josephus and Philo. Assuming that the Qumran community was Essene, we now have first-hand information about them. Alongside the Sadducees, the Pharisees and the Zealots, we now have a type of "non-conformist" Judaism. The Qumran sect, dominated by its priestly members, believed itself to be the true Israel, and was convinced that it was living in the last days. Some had withdrawn to the desert from what it deemed corrupt Israel, though other communities existed throughout Israel. In some of the writings there is a deep sense of sinfulness before God together with a conviction that God has provided or will provide forgiveness and pardon through his grace.

2. The thought forms and language have shown a similarity to the gospel and epistles of John and to Ephesians. In particular their dualism (light-darkness, truth-error etc.) and their predestinarian thought have helped us understand Johannine dualism and predestination. Expressions like "to do the truth" (cf John 3.21) and the two spirits of I John 4.1-6 find parallels in Qumran. Within the Pauline corpus, Ephesians has some striking parallels with Qumran in terms of style, language and expressions like "power of his might", the light-darkness antithesis, etc, while "mysteries" (plural) is a frequently appearing idea.

3. Certain specific passages have received illumination. I give three examples:

(a) Luke 2.14 "peace among men of God's good pleasure". The expression "sons of his good pleasure" has turned up for the first time in Hebrew: Qumran Hymns 4.32-33; 11.9. The former states that God alone makes man's way perfect "that all his creatures might know the might of his power, and the abundance of his mercies towards all the *sons of his grace (bene resono)*"; the latter says that "Thy mercy is towards the *sons of Thy good will*". The Qumran texts suggest therefore that the RSV is wrong to translate Luke 2.14 as "among men with whom He is well pleased": the phrase refers rather to the will of God to confer grace (peace) on those whom He has chosen.

(b) Matthew 18.15-17. The three stage process of church discipline is similar to the procedure in the Manual of Discipline 5.25—6.1 (cf Damascus Document 9.2). W. D. Davies believes that the Matthew passage represents "a direct importation, although possibly Christianised, of a bit of discipline from the Sect into the Christian tradition".

(c) Hebrews 7.3 asserts that Melchizedek remains a priest forever (also that he was without father and mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life but made like the Son of God). It has often been argued that Hebrews is here deducing 'facts' from the *silence* of the Bible. However a fragment has turned up (given the siglum 11 Q Melchizedek), in which it is clear that Melchizedek is regarded as an archangel who at the end of time will be the heavenly deliverer of God's faithful people and the executor of God's vengeance on the wicked. The assertion of Heb 7.3 suggests, therefore, that our author regarded Melchizedek as an (arch-) angel who appeared to Abraham long ago and who was inferior to the Son of God, though like him in some respects. The similarity between the Son and Melchizedek is found in their "remaining forever" (cf Heb. 7.16-17, 21, 23-24, 25 where Jesus' living or abiding forever or his eternal priesthood are stressed).

Similarities of thought and expression notwithstanding, there are *considerable* differences between Qumran and the New Testament. The latter is centred on Jesus to whom the Teacher of Righteousness does not really offer a parallel, and it is convinced that in Jesus the 'end' has come (and will come) whereas Qumran is still waiting.

(b) *The Nag Hammadi documents*

These are the documents of a second century gnostic library in the upper reaches of the Nile. They have illuminated our knowledge of second century gnosticism—and therefore of the spiritual struggle between it and Christianity—and helped us to assess the claims made by certain New Testament scholars that Paul and John leaned heavily on gnosis/gnosticism. In connection with this, it is interesting to note that the Valentinian Gospel of Truth has no descending and ascending redeemer myth.

The Gospel of Thomas contains sayings of Jesus, heavily gnosticised in many cases, and affords parallels for eleven of the synoptic parables. In some cases, some scholars are prepared to admit that the source used by 'Thomas' was superior to the sources used by our synoptics (Thomas may have used the Gospel to the Hebrews as the source of

many of his parables), but others reject this view and believe that Thomas depended on our canonical tradition.

In documents like the Gospel of Thomas we have what claims to be a gospel and what is composed entirely of *logia*. J. M. Robinson has traced what he calls a *gattung* of *logoi sophon* (sayings of the wise) from within the Jewish tradition through early Christianity to second century gnostic works like Thomas. He puts Q in this *gattung* (note that in Q Jesus is the messenger of Wisdom cf Luke 7.31-35; 11.49ff) and thus may have helped to explain one feature of Q which has been a stumbling block to some critics—the fact that it is almost entirely composed of sayings of Jesus.

Professor R. McLean Wilson has suggested that we ought to use “Gnosis” of the first century religious phenomenon which emphasised knowledge as the way of salvation, and “Gnosticism” for the flowering of this viewpoint in the various systems which church leaders like Irenaeus and others combated so strenuously. This is a useful and sound suggestion (though the adjective gnostic would still have to be employed), as it is surely methodologically unsound to read back the fully developed systems of the second century willy-nilly into the first. There is clear evidence, however, from I Corinthians that “wisdom” and “knowledge” were important concepts for some in that turbulent church (see C. K. Barrett, *Christianity in Corinth* and his commentary on I Corinthians), while Colossians (whether by Paul or a ‘pupil’ of his) combats a form of “philosophy” (2.8) whose rules and tenets had a “reputation for wisdom” (2.23), by claiming that in *Christ* “are hidden all (God’s) stores of wisdom and knowledge” (2.3) and that in him Christians “are complete” (2.10).

III Methods of Study

(a) *Redaction Criticism*

The last decade has seen a swing to a consideration of the theological intention of the evangelists. Proponents of the form critical methods, especially Dibelius, tended to regard the evangelists as transmitters of the tradition. Redaction criticism has shown that, far from just handing on the material which came to them, the evangelists are creative handlers of that tradition: they adapt and mould it for their purposes and even add to it.

Like all new approaches redaction criticism can be abused. Over-zealous proponents push the method to extremes. Theological intentions can be discerned where none really exist. Nevertheless the approach has been fruitful.

To discern the theological intention of the evangelists it is important that we should know how they used their sources. If we assume the priority of Mark and the existence of Q (see 4 (1)), we are in a position to check how Matthew and Luke use these two sources. The position is more complicated with Mark, as we cannot be absolutely certain of the state of the tradition as it came to him. (It might also be added here that we have far less ‘checks’ on Luke in his second volume than in the case of the gospel, though for Acts, data supplied by Paul

can often help—see 4 (6)). We defer further comment on the evangelists till Section V.

(b) *Midrash*

Old Testament scholars have recently been pointing to the fact that “oracles and sayings originally delivered by a prophet in the specific religious and historical situation in which he ministered *were ever and again interpreted and applied by those who transmitted them to situations which arose in the particular age in which they themselves lived*” (E. W. Nicholson, *Preaching to the Exiles*. Italics mine). The same could be said of material other than prophetic oracles, e.g. the Deuteronomist’s editing of previous material in his history; the Chronicler’s use of Kings. This re-application may be styled “midrash”—i.e. a devotional expansion of a story to edify and instruct, or the giving of a new twist to a saying in a new situation. Even the translations of the Old Testament into Greek (the LXX) and Aramaic (the Targums, for use in the synagogues) fall into this category.

We illustrate the process as follows:

Stage one: Psalm 68.18 celebrates *Yahweh’s* ascent to Zion where he *receives* gifts (a symbol of his absolute sovereignty).

Stage two: The Aramaic Targum so ‘translated’ this as to make it refer to *Moses* ascending Sinai (which was mentioned at verses 8 and 17) and (on his descent) *giving* gifts, i.e. the Law.

Stage three: Ephesians 4.8-12 where the Psalm is quoted and applied to *Jesus*. The idea of ascent is expounded in vv 8-10 and the idea of giving gifts is explained in vv 11-12—Christ’s gifts of men to hold certain offices in the church. Thus it is claimed that Christians have the true “key” to this Old Testament verse in their faith and experience.

An Old Testament passage can afford the springboard into a discussion about Jesus. Thus Exodus 16.4/Psalm 78.24 is quoted in John 6.31. More than one Palestinian passage can be quoted to show that the rabbis were fond of saying that God had so loved the Israelites that He reversed the natural order for them in the desert: instead of causing bread to grow from beneath and water to descend from heaven, He caused water to come from the earth (Num. 21.17) and bread to rain down from heaven. In John 6.31-35 there is a unit which clearly reflects knowledge of this exegetical tradition:

a) it begins by denying that in fact *Moses gave* bread from heaven v.32a

b) and asserts that God *is now giving* that bread v.32b.

c) this bread is equated with a person in v.33—“he who descends . . .”

d) and after the typical Johannine misunderstanding (v.34), the person is revealed as Jesus himself in the *ego eimi* claim v.35.

John 6 has proceeded by way of correction: the idea of bread from heaven is claimed for Jesus, not the manna. Since the Torah was often called bread from heaven too, there may be a secondary contrast of Torah (*Moses*)—Jesus.

The Jewish scholar Dr. M. Gertner has used the terms “overt” and “covert” midrash. The Ephesians 4 and John 6 units would be examples

of the former. What of the latter? Certain passages from Matthew may help us here:

a) 14.28-33 Peter walking on the water. This does not occur in Mark 6.45-52 which is Matthew's source. Where then did Matthew get this from? Did he have another tradition (oral or written) available to him with this 'extra' in, or is this "midrash" (here we would have to say that the midrashic approach 'creates' the story to illustrate the truth to be taught)? Bearing in mind that traces of a new Moses Christology have been found in Matthew's Gospel, the following midrash on Exodus 14.22-25 may be quoted as a *possible* source which suggested the idea to the evangelist.

"R. Judah says, When the Israelites stood at the sea, one said: "I do not want to go down to the sea first" and the other said "I do not want to go down to the sea first" . . . While they were standing there deliberating, Nahshon the son of Amminadab jumped up first and went down to the sea and fell into the waves . . . At the same time Moses was standing and reciting long prayers before the Holy One, blessed be He. Then the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: "Moses, my friend is sinking in the water and the sea is closing in upon him; the enemy is pursuing and you stand there reciting long prayers". Said Moses before Him: "Ruler of the world and what then can I do?" And He said to him: "And lift thou up thy rod". Now what did Israel say then at the sea? "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever" (Exodus 15.18). The Holy One, blessed be He, therefore said, "He who was the cause of My being proclaimed king at the sea, him will I make king over Israel." (Nahshon was an ancestor of David).

Just as Moses saved the first Israelite to plunge into the Red Sea, so the New Moses saved his first disciple who had come on the water. When we examine vv. 28-33 carefully, we see that a theme of which Matthew was fond emerges in vv. 30-31—that of "little faith". Peter becomes a prototype: he ought to have had greater faith. Through Peter, Matthew preaches to his congregation—they need greater faith!

So, too, the washing of his hands by Pilate (27.24) *may* be "covert" midrash. Here Deut. 21.6 may be in mind. Even so conservative a scholar as David Hill has remarked in his commentary (ad. loc.) that it is difficult to imagine the Roman governor acting like this. If we look carefully at vv. 24-25, we see a striking contrast between the Roman governor who recognises the righteousness of Jesus and who refuses to be accounted guilty of shedding his blood, and the Jewish nation (note how now Matthew subtly uses *laos*, not *ochloi*) which accepts blood-guilt for the murder of its messiah. This is what the evangelist is saying—and he is locked in bitter conflict with the synagogue. The historian would probably have to judge the incident unhistorical, but it would be entirely erroneous to ignore these verses and set them aside as worthless.

Let us turn to an incident in the opening chapters – the star of Bethlehem (2.2). Was this a literal star or a 'theological' one? Did Matthew have Num. 24.17 in mind, but how explain the story as a whole in that case? Was it the midrashim on the Moses story (that the house

where Moses was born was filled with a great light)? Or might it be that the midrash on 1 Kings 10. 1.13 was influential in Matthew's thinking? "As the queen of Sheba approached the Holy City, reclining in her litter, she saw at a distance a wondrous rose growing at the edge of a lake. But when she came near she saw to her astonishment the rose suddenly transformed into a floating star. The closer she came the more dazzling was its light".

Matthew 12.42 recalls the visit of the queen to hear the wisdom of Solomon—"and, behold a greater (or something greater) than Solomon is here". As the queen of Sheba visited David's son, so magi came to visit the Son of David; as she brought gifts, so did they.

These examples come from Matthew, a writing long recognised as coming from a Jewish milieu and evincing clear contacts with Palestinian Jewry. Such an author could well be acquainted with rabbinic teaching (many scholars see 13.52 as autobiographical) and could not unreasonably expect his congregation to know of it, if, as seems likely, many were converted Jews.

"Covert" midrash may not necessarily concern 'incidents' or 'events', but may be involved in sayings or arguments. It is clear that Paul in places either makes use of existing rabbinic midrash, employing them for his own, Christian, purposes (1 Corinthians 10. 1-5 with the comment "the rock was Christ" would be a classic illustration of this) or creates his own midrash (e.g. 2 Cor. 3. 7-18—so far as we know, the rabbis did not speculate on Moses' veil. Of course Paul interprets the veil in a way which has no support in the Old Testament story of Exodus 34 and which would have been unacceptable to the rabbis). In passages like Romans 4, Galatians 3 and Romans 9-11, Paul is clearly indebted not only to the Old Testament but also to rabbinic techniques of exegesis and interpretation (e.g. the use of *logizesthai* in Psalm 32. 1-12 permits the use of that psalm to help understand Genesis 15.6 where the same verb occurs—see Romans 4. 1-9).

Recently A. T. Hanson has argued that in certain of Paul's letters, light is shed on the way he conducts his argument if we realise that Paul has certain Old Testament texts or passages in mind and these influence his thought and language. Professor Hanson may have overstated his case, but his fundamental stress on Paul's knowledge of and respect for the Old Testament (see e.g. Romans 4.23-24; 15.4; 1 Corinthians 9. 9-10; 10. 6, 11) is sound. Nearly thirty years ago W. D. Davies convincingly showed the fundamentally rabbinic cast of Paul's mind and theology.

The big question, in the last analysis, is not whether the technique of midrash is employed, but *how much* it is employed. The danger is that midrash becomes the in-phrased and that we see it lurking behind every paragraph and pericope. We need constantly to remember the comment of E. Earle Ellis (himself a conservative scholar, favourably disposed towards the midrashic approach): "In the absence of a clear allusion or an explicit quotation it is, in the nature of the case, difficult to establish a midrashic background for a New Testament passage".

IV Old positions challenged or reversed: new positions adopted

(a) Markan priority, and especially the existence of Q have been attacked, but have, I think, successfully withstood the onslaught. Pupils and admirers of the late Austin Farrer probably comprise the majority of those who attack Q. They see Matthew's Gospel as a creative rewriting of Mark, and Luke's Gospel as a creative rehandling of Mark and Matthew. *A priori* I do not see why we should credit such brilliant creativity to the evangelists but not to Jesus! The verbal closeness of most of the non-Markan material common to Matthew and Luke demands some literary relationship, but the difficulties attending the view that Luke used Matthew seem to me to be far greater than those attending the view that both used a now lost written source plus independent oral material. This view attempts to do justice to the material where virtually verbal identity obtains and material where verbal closeness is slight, though the sayings are obviously originally the same.

It is doubtful whether the view that Q is a catechetical document can stand. More probably it is the product of a community expecting an imminent end and deeply committed to a mission to Israel.

(b) The view that Mark is "simple" history or "bare" reporting is now generally abandoned. His Greek may not be first-rate, but to him belongs the credit of creating the "Gospel" form and of offering a powerful theological presentation of Jesus as Messiah and Son of God destined to suffer.

(c) A more theological than historical assessment of Luke-Acts is characteristic of recent writing on Luke. This does not mean that Luke-Acts is completely worthless from an historical standpoint. We ought however to see Luke as grappling with the theological problems of his day.

(d) John's independence of the Synoptics has been maintained by many recent studies. He may have had access to traditions not merely independent of the other three, but at points more primitive: e.g. a ministry of Jesus in the south, contemporaneous with the Baptist; Jerusalem visits (which are *a priori* likely and of which the synoptics themselves give hints); a near "revolt" in the desert 6.14-15.

(e) The willingness of many German scholars to build a bridge between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith (often called the "new" quest for the historical Jesus) characterised the late fifties and early sixties, but this has been pushed somewhat into the background by the interest in redaction criticism. Interested readers, however, should note the works by Betz, Jeremias and Vermes. The last named draws on Jewish sources to illuminate the outlook and the teaching of Jesus. Though it should be used with care, it is a work that cannot be ignored.

(f) Many years ago the late Johannes Munck insisted that Paul's letters must be the primary source for the person and work of Paul, and Acts must be treated as a secondary source. This methodologically correct procedure (plus the current interest in Lukan theology) has led to a hotly debated issue—is the Paul of Acts the same as the Paul

of Paul's letters? Is Luke's picture of Paul a "second generation" idea of him much as (assuming the Pastorals to be pseudonymous) this is true of the portrait of Paul in the Pastorals (cf. too the glimpse afforded by 2 Peter 3.15-16)? We can focus this debate on one particular issue—would the Paul who wrote Romans 1 have given the Areopagus speech?

(g) If between the Wars Paul was "hellenised" by scholars, the pendulum swung the other way with W. D. Davies' work. More recently the German scholar, W. Schmithals (whose works have been translated in America) has claimed a heavy gnostic influence on Paul. It is doubtful whether this can stand, though probably Schmithals is right to some extent to see a "gnosis" influence at Corinth.

(h) The alleged Platonism of Hebrews has been severely called in question. The eschatological standpoint of the letter—a combination of the now and not yet (see the concepts of "rest" and "city")—is in line with other New Testament authors. In addition we know that the rabbis and Philo elaborated on Exodus 25.40 and spoke in varying ways of a heavenly tabernacle of which the earthly was a copy.

The structure of this letter can be seen as a series of mini-sermons on certain Old Testament passages: Psalm 8 (plus a series of quotations in chapter 1) in chapters 1-2; Psalm 95 (plus Genesis 2.2) in chapters 3-4; Psalm 110.4 (plus Genesis 14) in chapters 5-7; Jer. 31. 31-34 and Psalm 40. 6-8, in chapters 8-10—in order to demonstrate not merely that the Old Testament was incomplete but that it was self-confessedly incomplete. The same idea underlies the famous roll-call of chapter 11 (see vv. 39-40). This fits in with the summons to the readers to "go outside the camp" (i.e. Judaism) and really commit themselves wholeheartedly to Jesus.

(i) From time to time, certain topics seem to evoke a spate of articles and books, e.g. baptism in the late fifties and early sixties, and more recently, the resurrection and the idea of heresy/orthodoxy in the New Testament and sub-apostolic era.

V. The Theology of the Evangelists

We sketch here in a little more detail what has been hinted at in 3(a) and 4(b, c).

(a) *Mark*

So far as we know, Mark was the first to write a "Gospel", a term previously applied to the preaching of Christ crucified and risen (cf 1 Cor. 1.17-2.5, where to preach the gospel and the word of the cross are in parallelism). Now Mark uses it to describe the events of Jesus' ministry in addition to the Passion. Why did he conjoin the events of chapters 1-10 to the (extended) Passion story chapters 11-15? Was it to safeguard the history of Jesus over against those who overstressed the exalted, heavenly Christ? (The "Jesus be damned" in 1 Corinthians 12.2 probably refers to a depreciation of the *earthly* Jesus).

Yet equally we have to ask why within the gospel there is such an emphasis on the Passion, especially from 8.27 onwards? Why also the

triple pattern – prediction of the passion, disciples' misunderstanding, instruction on the true nature of discipleship – thrice repeated in 8.27-10.45? Why also a motif of secrecy – a secrecy which is penetrated only at the *cross* (15.39)? Though Jesus commands secrecy after miracles, report of these miracles still circulates, great crowds gather and see his works: yet they do not penetrate his secret (cf 6.15; 8.28). The disciples are secretly instructed (cf 4.10-12, 13-20 etc.), even confess him as messiah (8.29), but radically misunderstand this (8.32-33; 9.32) and get no further than messiah. Even when he speaks "openly" (8.32a), they do not grasp the way he goes. His own relations think him mad (3.20-21), his townsfolk take offence at him (6.3); the religious leaders brand him as in league with the devil (3.22) and a blasphemer (2.7; 14.64). Yet paradoxically in the moment of his deepest humiliation and a sense of lostness (15.34), he is seen to be the son of God (v. 39). Mark has grasped the scandal of the cross in an almost Pauline fashion.

(b) *Matthew*

The use of the Old Testament, the interest in the Law, the fact that Jesus' opponents are in Matthew, preeminently the Pharisees and Scribes (treated as one group, though in Jesus' day not all scribes were Pharisaic in sympathy), all point to a Christian community in close touch with a Judaism of the post-70 era, now dominated by the Pharisaic Rabbinate. The evidence within the gospel for a separation from the synagogue seems to me to outweigh 23.2-3, on which Bornkamm rests his case for Matthew's community still belonging to the synagogue.

I think that we should see Matthew's church as locked in bitter conflict with the synagogue, though still feeling a missionary responsibility towards Israel and though claiming to be the true Israel. As far as the internal life of the church goes, Matthew seems to be concerned at the low moral standards of some members (cf 22.10-14 etc.) and their lack of love and pastoral concern for the "weaker" brethren (e.g. 18.10-14, 21-35). Against a Rabbinate which stressed the validity of each and every law, Matthew stresses the double love commandment as the key to the law (and prophets), as his editing of Mark 12.28-34 in 22.34-40 shows; against those who have a tendency to moral laxness, he emphasises that not a jot of the law shall lose its validity till heaven and earth pass away (see 5.18, over against Luke 16.17).

Matthew's redaction of the miracles is most interesting. Let one example suffice – the healing of the epileptic boy. In Mark 9.29 the failure of the disciples to cast out the demon is attributed to lack of prayer. Matthew 17.20, however, attributes it to their "little faith", a motif Matthew elsewhere introduces (see 8.26; 14.31; 16.8 and compare the Markan parallels), and then draws in the saying "If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain 'Be removed from there to here' and it will be moved, and nothing will be impossible for you" (an edited version of 21.21 which comes from Mark 11.23, cf Luke 17.6). The message is – 'You need greater faith!' It could with justice be claimed that Matthew's procedure is

not arbitrary, since lack of prayer presumably goes back to lack of faith, and sayings on the need for greater faith like Mark 11.23 were already in the tradition.

(c) *Luke*

Much recent scholarship has stressed that Luke was seeking to cope with the problem of the delay of the parousia. Yet it has also dealt with evidence which appears to conflict with this view in a quite arbitrary or cavalier manner. We should perhaps be prepared to admit that there are two strands in Luke: (a) one where the eschatologically imminent stress is toned down: see Luke's use of Mark 9.1 and 14.62 at 9.27 and 22.69 respectively, plus passages like Acts 1.6-8, etc. (b) another where Luke retains sayings with the imminent stress e.g. 18.8 and 21.32. Can we work out an hypothesis to cover both strands? S. G. Wilson thinks so and suggests that Luke is trying to deal with two fronts: the first strand emphasises the delay against those who expect an imminent end, since the generation of Jesus' contemporaries must have been dying off by now; the second strand emphasises the fact of the parousia against those who were abandoning such a belief altogether (cf 2. Peter 3.3-4 for such an attitude). This suggestion has the merit of trying to do justice to all the evidence and also of not assuming a uniform reaction to a given problem in a specific church or churches in a given area.

Among Lukan interests which obtrude in the gospel we can name (i) the emphasis on Jesus' political innocence (chapter 23); (ii) the place of prayer in the life of Christians (see 11.1-13; 18.1-14; 21.34-36; while he holds up Jesus as a model 3.21; 5.16; 9.18, 28; 11.1); (iii) the concern for the poor (4.18; 6.20, 24; 7.22) and the right use of wealth by Christians (6.27-35; 12.13-21, 22-34; 14.12-14; 16.1-13, 19-31; cf 18.18-30 and 21.1-4 from his Markan source); (iv) the need for patient persistence in the Christian life amid troubles (8.15 over against Mark 4.20), and (v) the help of the Holy Spirit (cf Luke 11.13 over against Matthew 7.11).

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