

The Arrangement of Materials in St. Matthew viii.—ix.

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ONE of the two crucial difficulties in the study of the internal arrangement of the Synoptic Gospels—the other of course being that presented by St. Luke's 'great interpolation' (9⁵¹⁻¹⁸¹⁴)—is to be found in the way in which the Marcan and other materials are arranged in Mt 4²³⁻¹³ generally, but especially in chaps. 8-9; or, to speak more exactly, in 8^{1-9³⁴}, for vv. 35-38 of chap. 9 admittedly form the introduction to the mission of the Twelve, which is the subject of the next division of the Gospel. Upon the whole, the most satisfactory account of the matter that I have seen is that which was given by my friend Mr. W. C. Allen in THE EXPOSITORY TIMES last year (vol. xi. p. 279 ff., 'The Dependence of St. Matthew i.—xiii. upon St. Mark'). But in the course of a prolonged and careful examination of that valuable 'Study,' it has seemed to me that there are a few points in which it might be supplemented, so as to cover the whole ground of chaps. 8^{1-9³⁴} more completely than was there attempted, and also that there are a very few points as to which a more probable hypothesis might be suggested. And when I showed my notes on these points to Mr. Allen, he expressed a wish, which he has since repeated, that they should be submitted to the readers of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, who might thus form their judgments on the details as to which he and I differ.

Let me state, then, my own view as to the plan and procedure of Matthew—*i.e.* of the compiler of our First Gospel—in these two chapters. As Mr. Allen's 'Study' will be quoted so often, the references will be made merely to the page and column of it (*e.g.* 280a), without naming it on each occasion.

I agree substantially with the preliminary assumptions that Matthew's scheme in 1-16²⁰ was such as is drawn out on p. 280a, that 'throughout his Gospel' he 'copied and enlarged Mark's narrative' (*ib.*), and that now 'in accordance with his plan, he is to give illustrations of Christ's miracles' (281a). He had already given an intimation of this purpose in an 'anticipatory sketch of Christ's activity' (p. 280b, referring to Mt 4²³), the words of which are repeated almost exactly

when the section which we are now to consider is concluded (Mt 9³⁵). (This anticipatory sketch does not, however, cover the Stilling of the Storm, for here, as elsewhere, the general summaries of Christ's wonderful works are confined to miracles of healing, it being apparently implied that those which we now call 'nature-miracles' were only wrought on those few occasions which are recorded in detail.)

I can perhaps best explain the account of the matter which seems to me least unlikely, if I first make some general suggestions as to the principles and purposes which seem to have guided this compiler; and afterwards, in the second part of this article, call attention to some particular points as to his selection and arrangement of miracles.

I.

The subject-matter of the division of the Gospel before us may be conveniently divided into thirteen sections.

| Sec. | Miracles. | Matthew. | Subject. | Apparent Source. |
|-------|-----------|-------------------|--|--|
| i. | 1 | 81-4 (? 2-4) | Healing of Leper | Mk 1 ⁴⁰⁻⁴⁵ . |
| ii. | 2 | 85-13 | Healing of Centurion's Servant | ? <i>Logia</i> ; cf. Lk 7 ²⁻¹⁰ . |
| iii. | 3 | 814. 15 | Healing of Peter's Wife's Mother | Mk 1 ²⁹⁻³¹ . |
| iv. | | 816. 17 | Healings at Eventide (Is 53 ⁴) | Mk 1 ³²⁻³⁴ . |
| v. | | 818-22 | The Two Aspirants | ? <i>Logia</i> ; cf. Lk 9 ⁵⁷⁻⁶⁰ . |
| vi. | 4 | 823-27 | Stilling of the Storm | Mk 4 ³⁵⁻⁴¹ . |
| vii. | 5 | 828-34 | Healing of Gadarene Demoniacs | Mk 5 ¹⁻²⁰ (? also 1 ²¹⁻²⁸). |
| viii. | 6 | 91-8 | Healing of Paralytic | Mk 2 ¹⁻¹² . |
| ix. | | 9 ⁹⁻¹⁷ | Call of Matthew, etc. | Mk 2 ¹³⁻²² . |
| x. | 7 | 918. 19. 23-26 | Raising of Jairus' Daughter | Mk 5 ^{22-24. 35-43} . |
| xi. | 8 | 920-22 | Healing of Issue of Blood | Mk 5 ²⁵⁻³⁴ . |
| xii. | 9 | 927-31 | Healing of Two Blind Men | ? ? Mk 10 ⁴⁶⁻⁵² . |
| xiii. | 10 | 932-34 | Healing of Dumb Demoniac | ? ? <i>Logia</i> ; cf. Lk 11 ^{14. 18} . also Mt 12 ²²⁻²⁴ . |

But the origin of the sections numbered xii. and xiii. is very obscure; they may perhaps be merely echoes of oral tradition, or they may be unverified memories of Matthew's own records of miracles, which he may have prepared or set apart for insertion in Mt 20²⁹⁻³⁴ and 12²²⁻²⁴ respectively.

Now in selecting and compiling materials for these thirteen sections, Matthew seems to have had *three purposes* (A, B, C) more or less distinctly in view.

A

In no part of his Gospel, from 1²² to 27¹⁰, does he forget his purpose of *exhibiting the correspondences between Christian history and Jewish prophecy*. In this division of the Gospel he takes the only opportunity of doing this which presents itself to him. He retains a brief general account of activity in healing on a certain evening, which he finds in Mk 1³²⁻³⁴ in connexion with one of specialized miracles which it is his main business (see C, below) to record in detail; and having, after his manner, further abbreviated it by the omission of certain repetitions, and of the picturesque incident of 'all the city' being 'gathered at the door,' he declares these works of power and mercy to be a destined fulfilment of Is 53⁴. So we may account for our sec. iv., Mt 8^{16, 17}.

B

Matthew also bears in mind here that the next of the five bodies of collected sayings, which he has planned to insert into the Marcan framework of his Gospel, will relate to the *mission of the Twelve Apostles*, and will necessarily be prefaced by an account of that mission. Therefore he includes in the division now before us any details he can find as to the 'calling of those who were to become apostles, or at least members of that body of disciples out of whom the apostles were to be chosen. He had already described the calling of the four fishermen in the course of that earlier part of his narrative in which his order agrees with that of Mark (Mt 4¹⁸⁻²², Mk 1¹⁶⁻²⁰); and the Johannine tradition of the call of Philip and of Nathanael (Jn 1⁴³⁻⁵¹) does not seem to have been known to him. So there are only two such passages which he finds reason to introduce here.

(a) One of them is the call of Levi-Matthew (Mt 9⁹⁻¹³ = Mk 2¹³⁻¹⁷), which he has preserved in its Marcan sequence after the healing of the paralytic. This he has done, not because there was any very close connexion (p. 281b) between the two incidents—for it is only he himself who supplies such a close connexion by his addition of the word *ἐκεῖθεν*,—but merely because there was no reason for removing the second of them from the place in which he found it. Naturally this

compiler would be especially desirous to preserve the record of the call of that apostle whose *Logia* (if we adopt provisionally the hypothesis now very largely held) he was using so constantly in his Gospel, that it came to be known by the very name of Matthew. It is no doubt surprising that the discussion on fasting (Mk 2¹⁸⁻²² = Mt 9¹⁴⁻¹⁷) is also retained here, instead of being relegated, with the rubbing of the ears of corn, and the healing of the withered hand (Mk 2²³⁻³⁶), to what may be termed the anti-Pharisaic division of the Gospel in chap. 12. But probably the connexion in Mark appeared in this instance to be too close to be broken: there we read that the disciples of John *ἦσαν νηστεύοντες* (2¹⁸), *i.e.* not 'used to fast' (A.V.), but 'were fasting' (R.V.) at the time of this particular feast, which therefore they were unable to partake of. So in this place at least Matthew's *τότε* expresses an exact identity of time, and there seems to be no reason for regarding this as one of the cases in which Matthew 'makes a temporal connexion of what in Mark is merely topical' (*Expositor's Gk. Test., in loc.*), though no doubt there are several such cases elsewhere.

(b) There is a less strong probability, but still, I think, a considerable one, that another passage was inserted here among the miracles, because it also prepared the way for the selection and mission of the Twelve, which were to be recorded in chap. 10. I refer to our sec. v., which contains the (probably Logian) records of the 'Two Aspirants,' and of the receptions that they met with (Mt 8¹⁸⁻²² = Lk 9⁵⁷⁻⁶⁰). Mr. A. Wright (*Gospel of St. Luke*, p. 93) suggests that 'perhaps St. Matthew thought that both these aspirants became apostles, for "Follow me" generally led to that.' And it certainly is a remarkable support to this suggestion that Luke connects at least the second case with evangelistic work—'but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.' (In Luke, however, the connexion, if any, would be with the mission of the Seventy, which he is just going to relate, rather than with that of the Twelve.) But at any rate, even if neither of these particular men was thought by Matthew to have become an apostle, he might well think that the records of both of them would serve to show how Jesus tried and sifted each member of that whole band of disciples out of whom the Twelve were to be selected. And if he did wish, for this or any similar reason, to insert these two Logia into this portion of his Gospel,

certainly the most appropriate place for them would be that which he has chosen. He places them at the time when the disciples were to pass over with their Master from the neighbourhood of their homes, and from the populous plain of Gennesaret to the rougher, wilder, thinly inhabited country on the other side of the lake; and that is the time at which there would be seen, as there probably had not been seen before, the likelihood both of physical hardships and of the necessary omission or postponement of domestic and family duties, for those who would follow Jesus whithersoever He went.

Thus, then, we may account for our secs. ix. and v., as we had previously accounted for our sec. iv.; and, accordingly, there remain only ten of the thirteen sections for consideration under the third and most important heading.

C

Each of these ten sections contains a single miracle, which is recorded with more or less fulness of detail, in pursuance of what we have seen to be Matthew's primary purpose in this division of his Gospel, namely, the purpose of giving *examples and illustrations of the miraculous activities of Jesus Christ*, especially in the early part of His ministry. So prominent was this purpose of his here that he has placed in these two chapters exactly as many separate records of miracles as we find in the whole of the rest of his Gospel.

As to the *ten* miracles thus collected here, the first question must be, Is the number of them accidental or designed? And in attempting to answer that question, I come to the only points of any importance as to which I am unable to agree with Mr. Allen. There are two such points; closely connected with one another.

(a) He regards these miracles, as nine, not as ten. He is entitled to do this only by including the healing of the issue of blood with the raising of the daughter of Jairus (9¹⁸⁻²⁶). But is there any adequate reason for doing so? Surely the former miracle is a distinct and separate one, and none the less so because it took place between the request of Jairus and the fulfilment of that request. And as such Matthew appears to have regarded it when he concluded his record of it with his formula, 'was made whole from that very hour,' which is such as he uses also as the conclusion to other similar narratives of healing (8¹⁸, 15²⁸, 17¹⁸).

(β) Taking, then, the number of these illustrative miracles as nine, Mr. Allen suggests, as an account of their position and order, that they are arranged in three 'triplets' (pp. 281a, 282a). And certainly a considerable amount of probability is given to this suggestion by the reference which follows to Matthew's habit, now generally acknowledged, of 'grouping his incidents in numerical groups' (p. 281a), combined with the appended list of instances in which he 'shows a predilection for the number *three*' (see note on p. 284). I should be disposed slightly to shorten that list; at any rate I should omit Mt 4⁸⁻¹¹, because Luke also records three temptations, which therefore must have been found in the source common to both evangelists. And when that excision is made from the list, Mt 12¹⁻²⁴ (containing three instances of Pharisaic hostility) is the only passage, except those now under consideration in chaps. 8 and 9, in which *incidents* are arranged in a triad. All the other cases, except of course the genealogy which stands by itself, are instances of the arrangement of matter in *discourses*. To this distinction reference has to be made again presently.

I feel that there is not a little to be said for the first two triplets of miracles having been arranged intentionally, namely, 'the three miracles of healing of typical diseases (leprosy, paralysis, fever)' in 8¹⁻¹⁶ (p. 281a), and the 'triplet of miracles (p. 282a) illustrative of Christ's authority over forces natural (8²⁸⁻²⁷), demoniacal (8²⁸⁻³⁴), and spiritual (forgiveness of sins, 9¹⁻⁸).' In both cases it will be noticed that the triad is followed by a kind of break in the catalogue of special miracles, *i.e.* by the sections numbered above as iv. and ix. And in the second triplet the ascending scale from insensate nature upwards is very remarkable; the only question is whether it is not too subtle and (in no bad sense of the word) too artificial to have been designed by any of the Synoptists, though in the Fourth Gospel we should have been more prepared to find it. But when we pass to the third of the triplets, the theory seems to me to break down altogether. Not only, as we have seen above, are there *four* miracles remaining to be reckoned; but if we get rid of that difficulty by ignoring the healing of the issue of blood, the three miracles which remain are hardly such as could be congruously grouped together as a 'triplet' (see 9¹⁸⁻³⁴). It is suggested that they are chosen as 'illustrative of Christ's power to

restore life, sight, and hearing' (p. 282a). But they are miracles of such very different degrees of importance, that the idea of restoration seems quite insufficient to distinguish them as a special class. And when we look at the order of the three items in this supposed class, there is in the descent from 'life' to 'sight' and 'hearing' an anti-climax which we cannot easily attribute to the compiler who *ex hypothesi* arranged so skilfully the ascending scale of miracles in the second triplet.

As I have elsewhere pointed out (*Horæ Synoptice*, p. 134), but as I would now explain more fully, I believe that if any of those numerical arrangements of which Matthew was undoubtedly fond is to be detected here, it will be found in the use of the number *ten*, and not of the number three. No doubt three was a number in frequent use among Jewish writers. Hershon, in his *Talmudic Miscellany*, which I understand to be a trustworthy compilation, gives (pp. 36-67) 64 instances of 'The Threes of the Talmud,' but none of these (or indeed of the other favourite numbers, such as 4 and 7) refer to collections of miraculous or exceptional occurrences, while a very large number of the 'Threes' are concerned with moral and practical teaching, as we saw just now to be mainly the case with what we may call 'The Threes of St. Matthew.' But when we turn to the 51 'Tens of the Talmud,' which Hershon has collected (pp. 128-147), we find some of them referring to matters similar to those which Matthew is collecting in these chapters. Not only is ten a favourite number for computations generally, as is naturally and obviously the case among all nations, but in Hebrew sacred literature there seems to have been a tendency, from the records of the Ten Plagues onwards, to collect into decades the accounts of any unusual appearances or interventions of supernatural power. Thus, as is well known, we read in *Pirqe Aboth*, v. 5 (p. 81, ed. Taylor, or Hershon, p. 144), 'Ten miracles were wrought for our fathers in Egypt, and ten by the sea'; and as Dr. Taylor shows in his note *ad loc.*, the 'ten by the sea are made up in various artificial ways from the account of the passage of the Israelites through the sea, and the drowning of the Egyptians.' [There is perhaps also an attempt in the next verse, *P.A.* v. 6, to enumerate a second decade of plagues brought upon the Egyptians by the sea, but the saying is of doubtful genuineness, being perhaps a gloss on the preceding verse (Taylor's

Crit. Note].] Again, we read in *Pirqe Aboth*, v. 8 (p. 81 ff., ed. Taylor; or Hershon, p. 132), 'Ten miracles were wrought in the sanctuary.' They are such proofs of divine interposition and preservation as these, 'The holy meat never stank; a fly was not seen in the slaughter-house; a defect was not found in the sheaf, nor in the two loaves, nor in the shewbread; serpent and scorpion harmed not in Jerusalem.' Again, Hershon (p. 145) quotes from another source, 'Ten times the Shekinah came down into the world'; *i.e.* at the Garden of Edom, at the time of the Tower, . . . on Mount Sinai, . . . in the pillar of cloud, etc. And another saying, 'Ten things were created during the twilight of the first Sabbath eve' (Hershon, p. 132), though it does not at first appear to bear upon our present point, really does so. For the 'ten things,' when the list of them is examined, appear to have been mainly, if not exclusively, preparations for future miracles or for what were regarded as specially divine gifts; they consist of 'The well that followed Israel in the wilderness, the manna, the rainbow, the letters of the alphabet, the stylus, the tables of the law, the grave of Moses, the cave in which Moses and Elijah stood, the opening of the mouth of Balaam's ass, the opening of the earth to swallow the wicked.'

Without unduly pressing these few instances of decades of supernatural occurrences, I think that, unless some set-off against them can be produced from the similar use of other numbers in Jewish literature, they are enough to show that, if any number was aimed at by the Jewish-Christian compiler of this list of miracles, the number is likely to have been *ten*. As to whether any number at all was aimed at I am much less certain; and yet, unless there was some reason for making up a list of a certain length, it is very difficult, as we shall see in the second part of this article, to account for the inclusion in that list of the two brief miracles with which it ends (9²⁷⁻³¹, 32-34). Of course my hypothesis does not necessarily require that Matthew should have compiled this list of ten miracles for the purpose of this division of his Gospel. I should think it quite as likely, if not more likely, that he had previously made for catechetical purposes, or had adopted from some other teacher, such a list in accordance with the conventional Jewish number, and that now he utilized it, or at least referred to it, again.

(To be continued.)