

LOISY UPON THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

THE Sermon on the Mount raises two problems. Or, rather, the problems which it starts fall into one or other of two classes. The first set of questions relates to its origin, and may be described as "critical." The existence of two versions in Matthew and Luke denotes the presence of a literary problem which demands an exercise of documentary analysis and an application of certain general principles involved in the wider synoptic question, in order to determine the precise relation of these two versions to each other, with their respective value and their comparative amount of redaction, as well as to reconstruct an outline of the original sermon, as that may have lain in some earlier document behind both Matthew and Luke. The other class of problems relates to the ethical value and meaning of the discourse. Here the question is one of "applied" Christianity,¹ and the task of the expositor is to determine the exact bearing of the Sermon upon such matters as marriage, oaths, and retaliation,² or to ascertain the authoritative and unique elements in the mind of Jesus.

Both problems have their own difficulties, and yet the very statement of the second shows that it really runs back to the first. This does not mean merely that, before taking Christ at His word, one must do one's best to find out what His word is. The point is that the history of these words, the history of them in action as well as of their interpretation, forms a useful clue to many problems which beset the

¹ See the article by L. Goumaz on "Le Sermon sur la Montagne: constitue-t-il tout l'évangile," in *Revue de Théol. et Phil.* (1908), pp. 105-135.

² "Strictly observed, the golden rule involves the negation of law by the refusal to put it in motion against law breakers; . . . it can be obeyed, even partially, only under the protection of a society which repudiates it" (Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics*, p. 32). All hangs on the phrase, "Strictly observed."

student who essays to find out what they meant and mean. In other words, although to render Christ's Sermon on the Mount merely antiquarian is as bad as to modernize it, the discussion between the two classes of questions upon the Sermon, to which I have alluded, is generally a ruinous procedure. Rays of light are thrown upon the real meaning of the discourse, and upon the sense in which it is to be taken as a permanent standard of Christianity, if it is first of all set in the early Christian tradition. I do not suggest, of course, that the interpretation or interpretations of the Church in and after the second century (or, for the matter of that, within the first century) are to be accepted as normative, for some circles of the early Church soon came either to misconstrue or to evade, as really as ¹ modern Christianity, several cardinal principles in the ethical teaching of Jesus. The general consideration which I would urge, is this: Supposing we find the early Church apparently oblivious to some difficulty which presses on a modern mind in the interpretation of the Sermon, is it not fair to ask whether the difficulty may not be due after all to a wrong standpoint? ² May not some part of our problem be gratuitous? or, if we choose to call it so, subjective? This applies especially to the question of the literal fulfilment of counsels such as those upon retaliation, for some of the confusion here may easily be the result of reading Oriental and unqualified statements in a prosaic, Western fashion, so that the vitality and spirit of the counsel is lost or blurred in a vain, if creditable, endeavour to preserve the letter. Thus it is more than interesting to

¹ Perhaps even more so; see von Dobschütz's *die urchristlichen Gemeinden* (1902), pp. 252 f.

² Thus the Sermon seems to have been originally designed as a catechism for the mutual intercourse of Christians within their own societies. A change of standpoint was inevitable when the problem widened, under the exigencies of history, to embrace the relation of Christians, either individually or as a Church, to outside society.

trace the Sermon in the apostolic and post-apostolic literature. To watch it at work in that early age, to see how it struck and moulded people in almost the same *milieu* as that of Jesus, is to gain some real insight into its direct heroic message of unselfishness, simplicity, and inwardness, as practical and urgent bases for existence. No doubt, before the last quarter of the first century, it is impossible to suppose that the Sermon was circulated in the fuller Matthean form in which it makes its impact on the modern mind. But the substance of its logia, and certainly the more characteristic of the logia themselves, must have been current in the catechetical instruction of the Churches, and even in Paul we can feel the vibration of an evangelic tradition homogeneous with that of our canonical Sermon.¹ Both in Paulinism and in the later Christian literature, where a literary acquaintance with the Gospels becomes visible, any traces of the Sermon show its authority within the Churches, and also the elastic, sensible, and loyal fashion in which its precepts were applied or its principles followed out.

Thus "no retaliation" is from the very outset a cardinal principle of early Christian ethics (1 Thess. v. 15), as is plain from Paul's own conduct (1 Cor. iv. 12, cf. Didaché i.); yet he judges sharply when occasion demands (1 Cor. iv. 19, 21), and evidently has no idea of allowing gentleness to degenerate into amiable inefficiency in managing his own or other people's affairs. He interprets broadly (that is, if he knew it) the logion prohibiting litigation (Matt. v. 39, 40 = Luke vi. 29f., cf. 1 Cor. vi. 1, etc.), suggesting the appointment of a Christian as arbiter, if the Christian rule proved too high and hard. He also checks the tendency to take advantage of people's unlimited good-nature (Matt. v.

¹ See Titius, *der Paulinismus unter dem Gesichtspunkt der Seligkeit* (1900), pp. 8-18. For a parallel to the beatitudes from an extra-canonical gospel underlying the κηρύγματα Πέτρον see Hans Waitz in the *Zeits. für die neuest. Wiss.* (1903), pp. 335-340.

39f.); no *extortioner* is to inherit God's realm. The spirit of Romans xiv. 17 is akin to that of Matthew's beatitudes, and "love, the fulfilment of the law," reappears in Romans xiii. 8-10, etc. Other instances might readily be multiplied.¹ But these will suffice to bring out the general principle, that, while the ethical ideal of the Sermon shines paramount in all the reminiscences which can be traced throughout Paul (and the same applies to the later writers, in more or less fulness), there is no thought of making the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus a rigid formula of conduct, nor is there any attempt to conserve the letter at the expense of the spirit. As Harnack points out, those who tried to restrict the moral code of Christianity to the sayings of the Sermon on the Mount "and turned aside from the Jewish-Greek inheritance, landed in Marcionite or Eucratite doctrines" (*Hist. of Dogma*, i. 154). And this was not because the Sermon was inadequate, but because its real function was to yield a fund of motive, principle, and stimulus.

The bearing of this has seldom been recognized by expositors of the Sermon, and even in its most recent² and distinguished interpreter there is little or no sign that he is conscious of the vital function of early Christian tradition in the exegesis of the discourse. Loisy's lucid, frank, and ingenious monograph³ deals now and then with the ethical application of the Sermon as well as with the critical

¹ Thus, as Bugge puts it, *Zeitschrift für die neuest. Wissens.*, 1903, p. 106), the epistle to the Hebrews is really a commentary on Matt. v. 18. On oaths, see Holtzmann's *Hand-Commentar*, I. i. (1901), pp. 211 f., 279 f.

² I have not been able to see the essay on "die Bergpredigt" (Frankfurt, 1901) by a Nicht-Theologen, J. Vitalis, or the French work by Lacroix on "Le discours de Jésus sur la Montagne. Trad. avec commentaire" (Chambéry, 1904). What is badly wanted is a monograph on the Sermon similar to Dr. Chase's well-known essay on the Lord's Prayer in the Early Church.

³ *Le Discours sur la Montagne* (1903), a reprint of four articles contributed by the Abbé to the *Revue de l'histoire et de littérature religieuses*, during 1903.

problem of its origin. But his interests in the former line are mainly absorbed by the old antithesis of Protestant and Roman Catholic interpretations. Thus he frankly admits (pp. 58f.) that the Greek interpretation of Matthew v. 22 is true to the meaning of the passage, but at the same time it has also "toute chance de n'être pas celui de Jésus." To introduce such an exception to the law as the justification of divorce for adultery would imply, is to supplant the Gospel by the Law, and consequently Loisy agrees with those who see in *παρεκτός λόγου πορνείας* an editorial gloss, due to the spirit of practical accommodation in the Jewish-Christian Church which quailed before the absolute ideal of the Master. He thus bravely defends the Council of Trent by a bold critical attitude to the text of Matthew. The Council was true to the real principle laid down by Jesus, but this principle, he avers, cannot be truly grasped except by those who are prepared to follow historical criticism and separate the original sayings of our Lord from their evangelic accretions. This is thoroughly characteristic of Loisy. Dr. Johnson once told with evident approval of how Arnauld struck out something which Boileau had written in a moment of theological daring, with the prudential remark: "Vous gagnerez deux ou trois impies, et perdrez je ne sais combien des honnêtes gens." There is a fine ring of the time-server in a caution of this kind, but fortunately the Abbé Loisy is of another mind, and his French fearlessness is all to the good in handling New Testament criticism.

The symbolic methods, e.g., which he has applied recently with equal thoroughness to the Fourth Gospel is employed here as frankly (but less happily I think) to explain Matthew v. 1. No one doubts that in the mind of the man who composed our Gospel of Matthew there was an implicit idea of suggesting that Jesus promulgated in the Sermon the new law of the new kingdom, like a second Moses.

But this does not necessarily imply that the "mountain" is purely ideal and symbolic in Matthew (pp. 8, 9), even in view of xxviii. 16. As Strauss pointed out long ago (§ 76), the very discrepancy between Luke's *level spot* and Matthew's *mountain*, proves that both evangelists were aware of a technical connexion (which is at least corroborated by topography) between this sermon and a mountain. Only, while Matthew considered that a mountain formed a suitable elevation for getting a crowd within earshot, Luke thought that Jesus must have descended in order to address His audience.¹ It is one thing to hold that the author of Matthew read into the mountain-setting of the sermon a meaning which invested it with the character of a *mise en scène* analogous to that of the Sinaitic delivery of the law. It is quite another thing, for which there seems neither necessity nor justification, to conjecture that the mountain-setting was a novel and imaginative touch which we owe to the final editor of Matthew. An equally precarious application of the allegorical method is the suggestion (p. 35) that in the saying upon light, Luke substitutes *those who enter* for Matthew's *those who are within the house*, "parce-que, dans l'interprétation allégorique, la lumière chrétienne est destinée à éclairer les gens du dehors?" This is much too subtle. Before people are in a house they must enter it.

The original sermon in Loisy's reconstruction consisted of the beatitudes, in a form which must have approximated to that of Luke vi. 20-23; the bulk of Matthew v. 17-24,²

¹ In the *Encyclopaedia Biblica* (4389) I argued that the sermon was originally addressed to "disciples," and I am glad to have Loisy's independent, if partial, support on this point (pp. 10-12), although he does not define "disciples" in the exact sense which such a hypothesis seems to necessitate.

² Matthew v. 23, 24, he suggests, would lie better in the vicinity of vi. 14, 15 (so Heinrich). He seems to admit its authenticity, though allowing that it might have been a Jewish-Christian saying, designed as an evangelic interpretation of Hosea's well-known oracle (Matt. ix. 13, xii.

27-28, 31-48 (Luke vi. 27-36); Matthew vii. 1-5 (Luke vi. 37, 41, 42); Matthew vii. 12 (Luke vi. 31); Matthew vii. 17-20 (Luke vi. 43-45); Matthew vii. 21-23 (Luke vi. 46, xiii. 26, 27); and Matthew vii. 24-27 (Luke vi. 47-49). Even in this form, or in any similar reconstruction, the sermon is obviously more or less of a compilation, and this lack of entire homogeneity is increased by the editorial processes to which it has been subjected in Matthew and Luke. "The transpositions and other modifications which the evangelists permitted themselves, show plainly that they took up a didactic standpoint, and that they were specially concerned for the meaning of the various counsels as well as for the use which could be made of them in edifying their readers, quite apart from any regard to the special circumstances in which each sentence might have been uttered. They were either indifferent to such circumstances, or else ignorant of them" (p. 5). Loisy does ample justice to this influence exerted by the later period of the evangelists, and in particular by the Jewish-Christian *milieu* of Matthew's tradition, upon the form and contents of the sermon (e.g. in Matt. v. 11, 12, Luke vi. 24-26,¹ Matt. vii. 15f, and Matt. vii. 22f²), in which the rays of Christ's Galilean thought and work reach us through the atmosphere of neo-legalism and practical apostolic interests. In the closing parable (Matt. vii. 24-27), certain details

7). Verses 25, 26 are of course regarded as an intrusion. Literally, they would be "Mieux dans la bouche d'un paysan rusé"; while the allegorical sense given them by Matthew does not even agree exactly with the context. Perhaps, too, verse 36 is a redactional gloss, or else 36, 37, represent the original nucleus round which the previous words gathered (p. 65).

¹ On the maledictions, see pp. 26, 27 ("en tous cas, il est invraisemblable, que ces malédictions aient existé dans la source où ont été consignées d'abord les béatitudes; elles ont du être ajoutées par Luc à la tradition documentaire dont il dépend").

² "Cette gloss a pris la place d'une texte authentique dont la teneur est conservée par Luc en un autre endroit [xiii. 26 f.]"; cf. pp. 138, 139, and Pfeleiderer's *Urchrist.* ² (1902), i. 444, 568.

of which are more primitive in Luke than in Matthew, Loisy argues that the resemblance to R. Elisa's well-known parable show that "si l'on n'admet pas l'existence d'un thème commun, exploité d'abord par Jésus, la dépendance des Évangiles à l'égard de la parabole rabbinique sera beaucoup moins vraisemblable que l'hypothèse contraire" (p. 142).

In his treatment of the beatitudes Loisy is much more restrained than e.g. J. Weiss. The latter restores their original form in Q (the pre-canonical source) as follows:—

Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are the mourners, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.

Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Loisy also adheres to the canonical order of the second and third beatitudes, and he admits that Matthew's version is a didactic paraphrase with some Old Testament colouring, although it is truer to the spirit of Jesus than Luke's version, in which the original has been materialized (pp. 16, 19). But he does not think that any importance attaches to the number of the beatitudes in Matthew (which seems rash in view of Matthew's numerical pragmatism), or that it is possible to detect Matthew's additions or Luke's omissions. This is cautious, almost gratuitously cautious. But it is nearer the mark at any rate than the subsequent attempt (pp. 32 f.) to transfer the ideas of Matthew v. 13-14 from Jesus to the catholicism and universal outlook of a later evangelist, an attempt which, like most of its fellows, is propped up on a purely *a priori* conception of the limitations attaching to Christ's outlook.

The long section upon the gospel and the Jewish law (Matt. v. 17-48) opens with three verses which have long been a crux of criticism (see Mackintosh's *Christ and the*

Jewish Law, pp. 25 f.), the main difficulty being to reconcile the apparent conservatism of 18-19 with the freer spirit of v. 20. K. Manchot has recently (*Protest. Monatshefte*, 1902, 211-27) proposed to read $\xi\omega\varsigma \ \delta\upsilon\ \pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\alpha \ \gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\eta\tau\alpha\iota$ with ver. 17, ver. 18 otherwise being a genuine saying which followed ver. 19 originally, both lying between vii. 12 and vii. 13. This undoubtedly gives a fairly smooth connexion, besides furnishing an interesting basis for a defence of the authenticity of the entire passage, vv. 17-20. Simultaneously Wiesen (in the *Zeitschrift für die neuest. Wissens.*, 1902, pp. 336-52) proposed to interpret ver. 18 in the light of its original (Lucan) context,¹ but he fails to give an unforced interpretation of the verse as it stands in Matthew, and he is obliged to take ver. 19 as a statement of inclusion and exclusion, not of various degrees within the kingdom itself, the scribes and Pharisees of ver. 20 being the individuals alluded to in 19a. Loisy approximates more nearly to Pfeiderer (i. pp. 563 f.), who takes 17-19 as an unauthentic insertion, although the substance of 17-18 may well be a genuine idea of Jesus. As the French critic observes, the keynote of the passage is $\pi\lambda\eta\rho\acute{\omega}\sigma\alpha\iota$ in ver. 17. On the lips of Jesus (pp. 40 f.) this denoted the idea that by His teaching and attitude towards the law, Jesus "re-discovered the Divine meaning of the law and the higher meaning of Providence which it contained." But in vv. 18-19 the redactor, pre-occupied with the notion of the prophecies and their fulfilment in the gospel,² supplements and safeguards this idea with another, viz. that none the less there would be a typological or mys-

¹ E. Rodenbusch (in the same journal, 1903, pp. 244 f.), taking Matthew v. 18-19 as an unauthentic Jewish-Christian interpolation, ejects Luke xvi. 17 also from its present context as an interruption of the passage in its original current.

² "Il attribue au mot *accomplir* un sens qui permet de faire intervenir l'écriture entière non seulement comme règle divine de la conduite, mais comme recueil de prédictions formelles ou typiques dont l'Évangile apporte la réalisation" (p. 39).

tical fulfilment of the law. The phrase *ἕως ἂν πάντα γένηται* refers to "ces choses-là qui ne passeront pas sans accomplissement"—an adventitious gloss of the redactor. Apart from this, Loisy is thoroughly right in adding that ver. 18 is to be read in the light of ver. 19, the idea being "not the evangelic sense of a perfect realization for those Divine commands which are expressed in the law, but the observation of the law in the Jewish sense of the term." To ease the contrast between the principle of ver. 19 and that underlying sayings like Matthew xx. 23 and xxii. 40, the editor further appended ver. 20, which serves as a transition from 17 f. to the details of 21 f. The whole passage is regarded by Loisy as in the main foreign to the general spirit and teaching of Jesus, and he falls back on the hypothesis of its origin within some early Jewish-Christian circle, which wove its anti-Pauline prejudice into the synoptic tradition. Finding the passage in their common source, both Matthew and Luke felt themselves unable to omit it; but they dealt comparatively freely with it as in some respects a puzzling logion, Luke re-setting it, while Matthew edited it for his own purposes of edification. The question of the law, says Loisy very frankly, never presented itself to Jesus in the terms of our text. But when the controversy over the law arose in primitive Christianity, the Judaizing or conservative party could appeal to the negative fact that Jesus had never announced the abrogation of the law. This they converted, in all good faith, into the positive assertion that He must have maintained its eternal validity.¹ The remarkable thing is that the first recension of the sermon is not infected with the spirit of this circle of Jewish Christians, perhaps, among other reasons, because no gloss could be added to the text during the lifetime of the original disciples (p. 46). Loisy

¹ On this see Bousset's *Die Religion des Judentums*, pp. 87-89, where the Philonic background of Matthew v. 18-19 is brought out.

thus agrees with Wernle in regarding ἕως ἄν πάντα γένηται (omitted by Luke) as an editorial gloss (like the "iota" in ver. 18 also), though he goes beyond the German critic in seeing an anti-Pauline reference in the context. Naturally he sees Jesus (in the subsequent series of utterances) giving a complete form to the law itself, and not correcting any false Pharisaic interpretation of its precepts.¹

Two points at least in this line of argument seem fairly sound. One is the refusal to attempt any solution of the problem by introducing the hypothesis that in the consciousness of Jesus a traditional view of the law was struggling, even ineffectively, with a purely religious view (see Wiesen, pp. 338 f., for a refutation of this idea). The other is the recourse, however tentatively, to the hypothesis of different recensions and editorial manipulation of the original text. Apart from some application of the latter theory, it seems almost hopeless to gain any coherent idea of what was the mind of Jesus upon the Jewish law in relation to His gospel, or any satisfactory exegesis of the passage under discussion. Where I do not feel so sure of Loisy's exposition is the explanation which he gives of the psychological standpoint assumed by Matthew.

Maldonatus the Jesuit, in warning his readers that the sayings and deeds of Jesus are not always reported in chronological order throughout the Gospels, refers to the Sermon on the Mount as a case in point. "Credibile est haec verba (Matt. vii. 1) in concione quam Matthaeus c. v.

¹ Manchot, again, declares that the vital antithesis of Christ's preaching might be summed up thus: "The law and the prophets" versus "the law—the Pentateuch + the Pharisees." He rightly thinks that "the law and the prophets" are an expression deliberately chosen by Jesus to denote the direct revelation of God (cf. Jer. vii. 22), in contrast to "the law," which had been associated with angelic media, etc. Consequently πληρῶσαι (cf. 1 Kings i. 14) on the lips of Jesus had not the connotation which it afterwards acquired in Paulinism, but meant the effect produced upon the law and its recognition by Christ's free, deeper treatment of its precepts, which He at once supplemented and enlarged in part. Cp. Meyer's *Jesu Muttersprache*, pp. 79 f.

recitavit, dicta fuisse, esseque cum ver. 48 c. v. jungenda . . . et quia hoc modo sententia sententiae, verba verbis bene cohaerent, et quia Lucas ita conjungit." This remark, which anticipates some of the axioms of modern criticism upon the Sermon, is endorsed by Loisy (pp. 76 f., 113 f.), who naturally regards ch. vi. as a long interpolation, which may have existed independently as a small evangelic catechism or cycle of sayings drawn up to elucidate the new Christian praxis. Neither here nor elsewhere, however, does he do justice to the eschatological element¹ in βασιλεία and δικαιοσύνη, to which J. Wein (*die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes*,² 1900, pp. 145 f.) and Wernle have rightly called attention. Like Achelis, he takes the Sermon in Matthew to be a discourse on Christian "righteousness," but this "righteousness" is merely and vaguely defined as "la perfection de vie par laquelle on plait à Dieu."

But if Matthew vii. 1-5 represent a natural pendant to the ideas of v. 48, the sayings in vii. 6 f. are plainly erratic boulders. The difficult apostolic saying in vii. 6 is singularly isolated, for the connexions of thought which are sometimes constructed for it with what precedes and follows are generally artificial. Even its meaning is obscure. Loisy, who rejects the ordinary interpretations, inclines to fall

¹ He derives ἐπιούσιος from ἐπείναι—"notre pain suffisant," "le pain de suffisance," "la nourriture indispensable." "Tous les jours nous avons besoin de pain pour notre corps et de pardon pour notre âme." He objects to the usual renderings of ἄρον τὸν ἐπιούσιον as implying the risk of forgetfulness upon the part of the heavenly Father (p. 93). But this would tell equally against any form of prayer. Cf. A. Wabnitz in the *Revue de Théol. et de quest. religieuses*, 1902, pp. 380-85.

² As Karl Lühr argues (*Protest. Monatshefte*, 1903, pp. 64-77), even when the force of such eschatological constructions as those of Baldensperger and others is admitted, this does not remove Jesus from modern Christianity. For, e.g., (i) this hope of the future is not necessarily supra-naturalistic. It is implicit in Christian faith. It does not depend either on a belief in catastrophes or upon a non-moral attitude of passive expectation. And (ii) the inward, ethical moment of Christ's teaching is unimpaired. He may be a herald of the kingdom to come, but He is a preacher and a reformer, to boot.

back, curiously enough, upon that given in the *Didaché* (ix. 5), which makes the logion forbid the eucharist to unbaptized persons. In any case, he observes, the evangelist sees in *what is holy* "une sorte de mystère chrétien, qui n'est pas la simple doctrine de l'Évangile, et c'est ce mystère du culte chrétien dont il défend de livrer la connaissance et, à plus forte raison, la réalité aux païens" (p. 121).

The parable (Luke xi. 5-8) introducing the logion on prayer (Matt. vii. 7-11; Luke xi. 9-13) in the original source, was deliberately omitted by Matthew, we are told, in order to guard against a possible materializing of prayer (pp. 83 f. 122). This theory does not seem very convincing. But at any rate Matthew vii. 7-11 is a detached fragment as it lies in the present Sermon. Like several other passages, it "shows us that the discourses of Jesus, like fragments of granite, could not be dissolved by the flood of oral tradition; but they were not seldom torn from their natural connexion, floated away from their original situation, and deposited in places to which they did not properly belong" (Strauss). Loisy's treatment of the critical presuppositions, however, is not searching enough. He does not penetrate far enough into the problem of the common source or sources upon which both Matthew and Luke depend. Nor does he, I think, allow enough for the possibility of Jesus having spoken at length, in a prophetic harangue,¹ even although most of the extant logia have naturally been preserved in a somewhat isolated form. These considerations, like those of possible translations from the Aramaic, or of the Jewish background, or of the interesting phenomenon of transposition (cf. *Encycl. Biblica*, 4382), are practically ignored in his vivid pages.

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¹ One of the merits of Professor Bacon's incisive monograph on the Sermon is to have brought out this feature with convincing clearness.