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## The Parable of The Children's Game

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OLOF LINTON

# THE PARABLE OF THE CHILDREN'S GAME

BAPTIST AND SON OF MAN (MATT. XI. 16-19=LUKE VII. 31-5):  
A SYNOPTIC TEXT-CRITICAL, STRUCTURAL AND  
EXEGETICAL INVESTIGATION

The parable of the children's game belongs to those so-called 'Q'-texts where there is a considerable agreement between the version of Matthew and that of Luke. Such texts often appear together as is also the case here.<sup>1</sup> In three passages which follow immediately or almost immediately after each other, the conformity between Matthew and Luke both as to structure and vocabulary is very striking:

Matt. xi	Luke vii	
4-6	22-3	Jesus' answer to the Baptist's question
7-11	24-8	Jesus' testimony to the Baptist
16-19	31-5	The parable of the children's game

To this may be added that the Baptist's question is exactly the same in both Gospels, and that the transitions in Matt. xi. 7 and Luke vii. 24 clearly betray that they emanate from the same source, i.e. the connection was there before Matthew and Luke and was taken over by them.<sup>2</sup> In Matt. xi. 12-15 as compared with Luke the conformity is, however, radically broken. For surely the logion in Matt. xi. 12-13 has a counterpart in Luke xvi. 16, but this parallel is to be found in another context and differs widely from Matthew. Likewise there is a Matthean parallel to Luke vii. 29-30, but it does not appear until Matt. xxi. 31-2 in a Markan context and the discrepancy between the versions is great. Then, in Matt. xi. 16 = Luke vii. 31 the close affinity reappears as abruptly as it disappeared some few verses before. How to explain these facts is a difficult question. The simplest solution seems to be that Matthew and Luke - independent of each other - have inserted a logion *ad vocem Joannis*. But there are of course other possibilities, e.g. that either

<sup>1</sup> Cf. my article 'The Q-problem reconsidered' in *Studies in the New Testament and Early Christian Literature*, Essays in Honor of Allen Wikgren = *Novum Testamentum*, Suppl. 33 (1972), pp. 43-59; and my survey 'Den synoptiske forsknings dilemma' in *Dansk Teologisk Tidsskrift* xxxv (1972), 47-62, which will soon appear, revised and translated, in *Theologische Literaturzeitung*.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. W. Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, 2nd ed. (1961), p. 162: 'Lukas fügt seinem Evangelium wieder ein Stück aus der Spruchquelle ein, die vierte Folge, in der er sowohl im Wortlauf wie in der Wortfolge am stärksten mit Matthäus übereinstimmt. Gemeinsam gehören ihnen zu: Luk. 7, 19. 22 f. = Matth. 11, 2b-6; Luk. 7, 24-28 = Matth. 11, 7-11; Luk. 7, 31-35 = Matth. 11, 16-19'. Cf. also Bultmann, *Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, 2-5 ed., p. 22.

Matthew or Luke here adheres to the source appearing in what precedes and in the sequel, whereas the other evangelist prefers to introduce another logion.<sup>1</sup> In any case we have to do with a series of pericopes in which the agreement between Matthew and Luke is remarkably great. Even in such cases, however, scholars have been particularly preoccupied by the few differences, which they have noticed and tried to explain in various ways, e.g. by the assumption of different translations from Aramaic.<sup>2</sup> But even in cases where the agreement is remarkably close, such a hypothesis is very unlikely.

Matt. xi. 16–19 and Luke vii. 31–5 thus depend on the same Greek source. That does not, however, imply that Matthew and Luke had exactly the same *Vorlage* before them. All sources – be they oral or written – display variants. In some cases a pre-evangelical, in other a post-evangelical revision might be most probable. But it seems reasonable to start with the popular idea that the evangelists introduced most divergences themselves. However, it is hardly appropriate to ascribe all alterations either to Matthew or to Luke. In some cases Matthew, in others Luke might be responsible. Furthermore, it is also possible that both evangelists introduced alterations in the same place. In this case neither of them has preserved the original. This possibility must be held open even though any reconstruction must be regarded with great scepticism.

## I

In the introduction to the parable, Matt. xi. 16, Luke vii. 31, it seems possible to attribute all the divergences to the evangelists themselves. Matthew may here as in many other places have inserted δέ as Luke οὖν.<sup>3</sup> But we cannot be sure of course. The words τοὺς ἀνθρώπους in Luke were very likely introduced by the evangelist himself. There is indeed a quite analogous instance in Luke xi. 31 as compared with Matt. xii. 42. There Luke has μετὰ τῶν ἀνδρῶν τῆς γενεᾶς ταύτης, Matthew only μετὰ τῆς γενεᾶς ταύτης. In this case it is the more evident that the longer text is due to 'Luke' himself since in the corresponding passage in xi. 32 he has the same text as Matt. xii. 41. If, as seems reasonable, the motive is the same in both cases, we may have to do with a reaction against a too collective conception of responsibility. In fact Luke probably thinks that the rebuke of Jesus does not concern the Jews in

<sup>1</sup> Another hypothesis – that Luke uses an amplified edition of 'Q' – was promoted by E. Hirsch and acknowledged as possible by Grundmann (*op. cit.* p. 162).

<sup>2</sup> Our pericope also has given rise to such ideas, see below, p. 164.

<sup>3</sup> οὖν does not, however, seem to fit very well in the Lukan context. For in the foregoing 'all the people' – except the Pharisees and the lawyers – accept John's baptism. Now πᾶς ὁ λαός – mentioned in a positive (or at least neutral) way – is a favourite expression in Luke, cf. ii. 10; iii. 21 (ἐν τῷ βαπτισθῆναι ἅπαντα τὸν λαόν); ix. 13; xi. 53; xviii. 43; xix. 48; xx. 6, 45; xxi. 38; Acts iii. 9, 11; iv. 10; v. 34; x. 41; xiii. 24. It is therefore very possible that Luke introduced this expression in vii. 29 – the certainly very divergent version in Matt. xxi. 31–2 mentions not only the tax-gatherers, but also the prostitutes, and says nothing about the people.

general but only the Pharisees and the lawyers. For, according to the preceding verses, 'all the people' like the tax-gatherers accepted John's baptism while the Pharisees and the lawyers refused it (*vv.* 29–30). And in what follows Luke does not refer to a common rumour as Matthew does: λέγουσιν 'people say' ('*man sagt*'), but to what some listeners say: λέγετε (see below). The double question in Luke: τίνι οὖν ὁμοιώσω... καὶ τίνι εἰσὶν ὅμοιοι does on the other hand probably – as many scholars propose – come from the source. The double question is a common old pattern<sup>1</sup> which also appears in Mark iv. 30 (cf. Luke xiii. 18). In the parallel to this Markan text (Matt. xiii. 31) Matthew has simplified the question, and he might have done the same here since on the whole he likes short and stereotyped introductions (cf. e.g. Matt. xiii. 24, 31 and 33).<sup>2</sup> The plural in Luke: ὅμοιοι (Matt. ὁμοῖα) is perhaps a consequence of the addition of τοὺς ἀνθρώπους. But it is also possible that the source already had an abrupt transition to plural forms: τίνι ὁμοιώσω τὴν γενεὰν ταύτην καὶ τίνι εἰσὶν ὅμοιοι; That would be quite acceptable in a popular style. In this case the addition of τοὺς ἀνθρώπους also serves the purpose of smoothing the clause. There are thus many possibilities. My main intention is not to propose a certain 'reconstruction', which anyhow must be questionable, but to demonstrate that there is little to prevent the assumption that the source is the same. The differences can even be accounted for in more than one way.

In the transition to the children's rhyme – from παιδίους to λέγουσιν – there are two divergences, often observed and discussed: Matthew has the plural, ἐν ταῖς ἀγοραῖς, Luke the singular, ἐν ἀγορᾷ; Matthew ἐτέροις, Luke ἀλλήλοις.<sup>3</sup> As to the first deviation, commentators very often, almost stereotypically, assert that 'Matthew prefers the plural forms'.<sup>4</sup> Such a formulation seems to imply that Matthew himself has altered the text. That is very possible, not only because Matthew 'prefers plural forms', but also because in this case we have to do with a common scene, and Matthew admittedly has a predilection for common scenes and general rules as he often harmonizes kindred stories and logia. But as Luke can be said to have a sort of 'historical' interest in concrete pictorial scenes,<sup>5</sup> we cannot be sure. The preference for pictorial details is, however, no Lukan speciality. The whole tradition of Jesus – both stories and words – is full of details. It is therefore very likely that the Lukan singular does – as many scholars think – derive from the source. But it is also possible that motives which are unknown to us are behind many alterations.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Isa. xl. 18 and Strack-Billerbeck II, p. 8, n. 5 (to Mark iv. 30).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. also the very common short introductions with προσέχεσθαι.

<sup>3</sup> Thus according to the best attested texts. There are, however, several variant readings, see below, part II.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. McNeile, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, p. 157: 'Mt. often prefers a plural', Klostermann, *Das Matthäusevangelium* (1927), p. 99: 'Mt. liebt den Plur.', etc. etc.

<sup>5</sup> A. H. McNeile, *op. cit.* p. 157: 'ἐν τ. ἀγοραῖς implies that the children's games were a frequent spectacle; ἐν ἀγορᾷ (Lk) pictures a single scene'.

The other instance, the Matthean ἐτέροις as against the Lukan ἀλλήλοις, is of some importance for the question how the game proceeded. If we keep to Matthew, we probably have to do with one active group first proposing to play at weddings, then to play at funerals, and another passive one rejecting both proposals. If Luke is right there are also two parties, but probably one wanting to play at a wedding, another preferring to play at a funeral. Since it is much easier to follow the Matthean conception most scholars admit that this must be the original version and I see no reason to disagree on this point. The prototype probably had ἐτέροις – or perhaps ἄλλοις?<sup>1</sup>

In addition to these well-known and often-discussed divergences there are some differences between Matt. xi. 16 and Luke vii. 32, which have been almost totally neglected, namely those concerning the grammatical constructions. But since it is impossible to deal with these problems without reference to text problems – so much neglected – I must postpone this discussion to the next part of the present paper.

In the rhyme there is only one divergence: Matthew has ἐκόψασθε, Luke ἐκλάυσατε. The Matthean version is obviously the original one. But why then has Luke altered the text? Very few scribes seem to have revolted against ἐκόψασθε in Matthew (W has εκλαυσασθαι) and Luke has used κόπτομαι in viii. 52 and xxiii. 27 (cf. also κοπετός in Acts viii. 2). But in those cases the construction is different (with the accusative) and the context makes the meaning quite clear. Here Luke possibly found the word ἐκόψασθε – used about children – ambiguous, and by the strict form of the rhyme he was bound to use only one word: therefore ἐκλάυσατε.<sup>2</sup> In fact the ἐκόψασθε in Matthew has given ancient translators as well as modern ones much trouble.<sup>3</sup>

Structure and vocabulary are still the same in the application of the parable in Matt. vv. 18–19 and Luke vv. 33–5. There are, however, differences, some of which belong together. Thus Matthew has ἦλθεν of both John and Jesus while Luke uses ἐλήλυθεν in both cases. Furthermore Matthew intro-

<sup>1</sup> An alteration into ἐτέροις in Matthew would be quite natural. Matthew distinguishes clearly between ἕτερος and ἄλλος (except in xvi. 14) and might have introduced ἐτέροις here in order to stress the distance between the two groups; in xi. 2 Matthew has ἡ ἕτερον προσδοκῶμεν (Luke vii. 19, 20 ἄλλον), which might also depend on an intention in Matthew. Luke is less cautious in the use of ἕτερος. In the parable of the Sower (Luke viii. 6, 7, 8) Luke has ἕτερον (Mark ἄλλο, Matth. ἄλλα) although the idea that the seed differed in quality would spoil the parable completely. If the prototype had ἄλλοις the Lukan ἀλλήλοις would be yet more natural. But this of course is only a guess.

<sup>2</sup> It is perhaps worth mentioning that Mark only uses κλαίω three times, in v. 38, 39 about mourning over a dead girl, and in xiv. 72 about Peter (ἐπιβαλὼν ἐκλαiven), and that Matthew uses the word twice only, in ii. 18 in a quotation from Jer. xxxi. 15 and in xxvi. 75 like Mark of Peter, whereas Luke has the word 11 times. This does not mean that it is a 'Lukan' word – in John it appears 8 times, in Acts only thrice. But in the Gospel it appears relatively often, which is hardly accidental.

<sup>3</sup> Most ancient Latin MSS have: *lamentavimus (vobis) et non planxistis*. *d* has *flevimus et non lamentastis*, *k*: *planximus et lamentati non estis* (sic!), Vulg.: *lamentavimus, et non planxistis*. Translators into modern languages were faced with a dilemma: an exact rendering 'and you have not beaten your breast (through grief)' was too verbose in the rhyme. Most editions therefore acquiesce in a freer translation often inspired by the Lukan version, Luther: 'und ihr wolltet nicht weinen' (in Luke: 'und ihr habt nicht geweint'); RV: 'and ye have not lamented, or 'and ye have not wept'. NEB even has: 'we wept and wailed, and you would not mourn' in both Gospels.

duces both what is said of John and what is said of Jesus with λέγουσιν: 'people say', whereas Luke has λέγετε 'you say'. According to the context in the synoptic Gospels John was 'now' in prison, i.e. he had accomplished his work while Jesus was still active. You might thus expect ἦλθεν about John and ἐλήλυθεν about Jesus.<sup>1</sup> But in both Matthew and Luke the congruence – which is essential in the present passage – has prevailed. Matthew's chief point is that both are messengers from God. Therefore the 'theological' ἦλθεν<sup>2</sup> (cf. Matt. xvii. 12 ἤδη ἦλθεν of Elijah = the Baptist, the parallel in Mark ix. 13 has ἐλήλυθεν). In Luke the grammatical forms are adapted to the concrete situation. Therefore, since both were alive, Luke has ἐλήλυθεν of both John and Jesus. The variation λέγουσιν–λέγετε corresponds to the same difference. Matthew refers to common rumours (still current?), therefore λέγουσιν. Luke intends to tell us whom Jesus addressed as he uttered this or that logion, cf. Luke xviii. 9: 'And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.' So we know what sort of people these words were – and are – intended for. Luke therefore has λέγετε: Jesus speaks to those present as ἐλήλυθεν stresses that He himself is present. Strictly speaking, however, the present tense (it may be λέγετε *or* λέγουσιν) is more consistent with the perfect ἐλήλυθεν than with the aorist.

In other words, the version of Matthew is 'Matthean', that of Luke 'Lukan'. This fact makes it of course difficult to decide who has rendered the prototype and who revised it. Perhaps the source was as 'theological' as the version of Matthew. Possibly, however, it presupposed that both John and Jesus were active at the same time – as is the case in the fourth Gospel – and therefore had ἐλήλυθεν in both places (cf. the foregoing witness of Jesus concerning John, where Matthew has ἐξήλθατε, many good Lukan MSS ἐξεληλύθατε.<sup>3</sup>) It is thus possible that the perfect was in the prototype (or only in Luke's prototype?). Against the Lukan λέγετε I am more sceptical. It seems to correspond to the addition τοὺς ἀνθρώπους in Luke vii. 31, which in any case is secondary. Later on I hope to be able to present a yet better argument in favour of the Matthean λέγουσιν.

Some other small differences are less difficult: ὁ βαπτιστής is obviously a

<sup>1</sup> Wellhausen (*Das Evangelium Matthaei*, p. 55) says as to the Matthean version: 'Die Tempora sind in 11,18 und 11,19 völlig gleich... Wenn also Johannes hier der Vergangenheit angehört, so auch Jesus.' But Matthew surely took ἦλθεν more seriously. Jesus did not come once, but once for all.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Joh. Schneider, art. ἐρχομαι etc. in Kittel's *Theologisches Wörterbuch*, II, 664 f.

<sup>3</sup> If we take the perfect seriously, it would imply that both Jesus and John actually dwelt in the wilderness, cf. Klostermann, *Das Lukas-evangelium* (1929), p. 90: 'ἐξεληλύθατε. var. lect. weshalb seid ihr jetzt hier draußen?' But according to the Gospels the Baptist was in prison when Jesus uttered the words here recorded, which Matthew asserts in the introduction to the Baptist's question (Matt. xi. 2) and which Luke mentions already in iii. 20 (before Jesus was baptized!). But the idea that Jesus succeeded the Baptist is probably Markan, and the source here in question may not have shared this idea. Still it is hard to imagine that Luke wrote ἐξεληλύθατε if he combined it with such a strict sense of the perfect form as Klostermann thinks.

Lukan addition. Such determinations are inserted both by evangelists and copyists. Also the words ἄρτον and οἶνον are evident additions, probably introduced by Luke himself. Certainly it could only be a simple pedantic correction and as such added by anybody: of course John did eat and drink, only not bread and wine. But the difference may imply more. Luke does not, like Matthew (iii. 4) and Mark (i. 6), mention John's extraordinary dress and food. But he tells us: οἶνον καὶ σίκερα οὐ μὴ πίῃ (i. 15). In this way the strangeness of the figure<sup>1</sup> is reduced and John incorporated into a most respectable Old Testament category of pious people (like his father Zacharias, Simeon and Hanna). If so it is the more evident that the addition stemmed from Luke himself. But the words may also be later additions, for although it must be admitted that some MSS without these words (D and others, Latin MSS, syr<sup>sin</sup> and syr<sup>cur</sup> and Origen?) are under the suspicion of harmonization, there are also other testimonies, namely MSS with another word-order: μήτε ἄρτον ἐσθίων μήτε οἶνον πίνων (A, Θ and the Koine text, etc.).

It is not of great significance that Matthew in v. 19 has the word-order τελωνῶν φίλος καὶ ἁμαρτωλῶν, Luke the more common φίλος τελωνῶν κτλ.<sup>2</sup> Such small stylistic transpositions are not uncommon in Matthew.<sup>3</sup>

The most startling and most discussed divergence, however, does not appear until the last words of the passage. According to a few, but good MSS and the best modern editions Matthew has καὶ ἐδικαιώθη ἡ σοφία ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων αὐτῆς, Luke: . . . ἀπὸ τῶν τέκνων αὐτῆς. Many efforts have been made to account for this remarkable divergence. It is a popular hypothesis that we have to do with different renderings of a Semitic original.

עבד can be associated with עבד 'work' or עֶבֶד 'slave', 'servant'; Aramaic עבדי is said to mean both ἔργα and τέκνα. This idea might appear ingenious, but it is nevertheless – as Wellhausen already observed<sup>4</sup> – a failure. But we may go further. The whole idea of translation-variants is out of place here. Certainly we have to do with a translation from Aramaic or at least a Semitic background – there are many indications in favour of that<sup>5</sup> – but not different translations, only one and the same. Otherwise structure and vocabulary would differ more than is now the case.

<sup>1</sup> This point is often underlined by the Fathers, cf. Origen, *Homilies in Luke*, xi. 125: 'Erat igitur in deserto Ioannes et nutriebatur novo et extra humanam consuetudinem modo.'

<sup>2</sup> Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* iii, ch. 6, § 52. 4) has a remarkable variant: φίλος τελωνῶν καὶ ἁμαρτωλός. This could be the original Jewish rumour – still heard in Clement's days? Anyway it does not, like the common reading, allow a Christian interpretation (cf., however, John ix. 16, 24).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. e.g. μου ὑπὸ τὴν στέγην in Matt. viii. 8 (cf. Luke vii. 6).

<sup>4</sup> Wellhausen, *Das Evangelium Matthaei* (Berlin, 1904), p. 55: 'Lagardes Versuch (Agathangelus 1887, p. 128), beides auf עבדי zurückzuführen, scheitert daran, daß dies nur mit δούλοι oder höchstens mit παῖδες, aber nicht mit τέκνα wiedergegeben werden konnte.'

<sup>5</sup> ἡ γενεὰ αὕτη, the double question, recorded in Luke, the parataxis in the rhyme, the use of ἦλθεν (or ἐλήλυθεν) of a prophet or of Messiah, δαιμόνιον ἔχει, υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, ἀνθρώπος φάγος (cf. M. Black, *An Aramaic Approach*<sup>2</sup>, p. 250), the characteristic use of τελῶναι and ἁμαρτωλοί, τέκνα σοφίας (so Luke), σοφία = the Wisdom = the wisdom of God, ἀπό, if it renders an Aramaic *min* (see below, p. 177).

Many scholars assume that the Lukan ἔργων is original, and I think they are right. But πάντων probably is an addition. Certainly πᾶς is a favourite word in Luke, but many others have the same predilection, and 'the shorter text' must be preferred here (who would omit 'all'? ). Moreover πάντων appears at the end of the clause in many MSS.<sup>1</sup> Why then was the word inserted (irrespective of who added it)? Possibly because some (gnostics?) pretended to be 'children of wisdom' in a special sense and adapted the logion for their own sake. πάντων will then ensure that all Christians are intended. It is possible that the correction into ἔργων (irrespective of who introduced it) has a kindred purpose: what matters is not pretensions but works. This would surely be in accordance with Matthean 'tendencies': prophets are recognized by their fruits (Matt. vii. 16). So it is possible that Matthew himself is responsible for the alteration: it is τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Χριστοῦ (Matt. xi. 2 ff.) that legitimize Jesus himself. But the reading could as well be due to a very early correction.

## II

Where does the history of a text begin and where does it end? When we speak of an 'original text' what do we mean? Are the earliest Gospel text-forms we may possibly arrive at only some archetypes? Or are we bold enough to think that what we read is actually what the Evangelists wrote? Theoretically we know that we can never be sure, but in practice it would be too cautious always to write 'Matthew' or 'Luke' – even apart from the problem of authorship. But in a case where the versions of 'Matthew' and 'Luke' are especially closely related, it could be reasonable to ask for the common prototype of both (as I have tried to do above), even though I think that we should be reluctant to produce reconstructions and even more reluctant to believe in them. But this is not the beginning. Behind the oldest Greek texts there is often an Aramaic (*or* Hebrew, to be very cautious) 'original', which it might also be tempting to reconstruct. There are further the problems of oral tradition and the authenticity of a logion. In this paper, however, I am chiefly concerned with the texts of the Gospels and their nearest prototype although it is of course questionable if the evangelists really read the same copy of the same source or heard quite the same version of a story (there are of course more possibilities, e.g. that one of the evangelists read the passage, the other listened to it). Thus the term 'original' may mean different things.

Some variant readings with synoptic implications have been discussed above, and some will also be dealt with later. Here I shall begin with a mention of some readings which have little to do with the interrelation between Matthew and Luke. Many Matthean MSS have ἑταίροις instead of ἐτέροις, a variant which makes very good sense and therefore has had an

<sup>1</sup> πάντων is omitted in D Θ Ψ fam. 1, etc.; syr<sup>c</sup>, A and the Koine MSS have ἀπὸ τῶν τέκνων αὐτοῦ πάντων. The standard text of modern editors appears in B, W, fam.<sup>13</sup> and some few other MSS.



immense influence (Old-Latin MSS and Vulgate: *coaequalibus*, etc., etc.). What I would like to stress, however, is that many Greek MSS which have ἑτέροις should, in spite of this, probably be reckoned among those MSS in which the scribes meant 'comrades'. The addition αὐτῶν which is quite appropriate to ἑταίροις does in fact appear also in many MSS that have ἑτέροις. But this may be only a spelling variant since 'their others' (even 'others of them') is an odd expression, and αἱ and ε are often confused in the MSS (there are many samples in the context, e.g.: ἐκοψασθαι and πεδίοις). No doubt the pronunciation was very similar. The best argument in favour of ἑτέροις is that αὐτῶν seems to be an addition. But as an addition it is a testimony to the *understanding* ἑταίροις.

The second ὑμῖν, after ἐθρηνήσαμεν, in many MSS in both Matthew and Luke (thus the koine-text), in others only in Matthew (C W Θ) or Luke (A, fam.<sup>13</sup> and some other minuscules) is probably secondary in both, and from a formal point of view the addition feels very natural. But scholars mostly fail to notice that the difference also makes some real sense. That somebody should play in order to make others dance is a human attitude so common that the ὑμῖν feels quite natural. That somebody laments is not such a very obvious reason for others to beat their breasts. If, however, we accept that the original version hinted at funeral customs, the ὑμῖν is not out of place. Perhaps we may have to consider it in a more serious light than a formal analysis would recommend. The rhythm and the balance of the rhyme must also be considered.

The addition of πρὸς ὑμᾶς after ἦλθεν γάρ in Matt. xi. 16 (Θ fam.<sup>13</sup> pc) is embarrassing. It would be less astonishing in Luke, who has λέγετε in vii. 33 and 34.

As to Matt. xi. 19 it is worth mentioning that the testimony for ἔργων is not so strong as often maintained. For surely B\* and W have this reading, but it was corrected in B<sup>2</sup>. And Sinaiticus has ἔργων not only in Matthew, but also in Luke. The reading in Matthew ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν ἔργων is only (?) to be found in  $\aleph$  prima manu. In  $\aleph^2$  πάντων is deleted, and other MSS which have πάντων (fam.<sup>13</sup>, *k*) have it in combination with τέκνων (filiis).

So far I have mostly treated those divergences and variant readings which have been observed and debated for a long time. As pointed out above there are, however, some differences that have been almost totally neglected, namely those concerning the grammatical constructions in Matt. xi. 16 and Luke vii. 32. Surely there are two reasons for this: (a) the divergences between Matthew and Luke only concern formal matters of little or no consequence for the interpretation; (b) the readings presented in our best modern editions seem to be very well established. According to my opinion, however, the text-problem is more intricate than usually assumed, and an analysis yields more than might be expected, not only for the understanding of the pericope here concerned, but also for the problem of textual history in general.

Two grammatical constructions are involved. The first concerns a case of word-order: the best Matthean MSS have the text: *παιδίοις καθημένοις ἐν ταῖς ἀγοραῖς*, almost all Lukan ones: *παιδίοις τοῖς ἐν ἀγορᾷ καθημένοις*. In Luke there are very few exceptions. D\* has *τοῖς* both before and after *παιδίοις* and *ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ*, a few others (F Δ) *ἐν ἀγοραῖς*. In Matthew on the contrary many MSS deviate from the standard reading. In fact *ἐν ταῖς ἀγοραῖς* is to be found only in a few MSS (but amongst them Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, Z and some distinguished minuscules); *ἐν ἀγοραῖς* is the commonest reading (not only koine-texts, but also e.g. C and W), *ἐν ἀγορᾷ* appears in several minuscules, *ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ* in D (as D in Luke). A very common reading is *παιδίοις ἐν ἀγοραῖς καθημένοις*. This comes near to the Lukan reading, in so far as *καθημένοις* comes after *ἐν ἀγοραῖς*. But an essential part of the Lukan construction, the article *τοῖς* after *παιδίοις*, does not appear in any (?) Matthean MS. Therefore it is no use speaking of a 'harmonization' (which in this case would imply an unusual correction of Matthew after Luke). In fact both constructions are quite good. Of course it is possible that 'Matthew' corrected the text now to be found in Luke, and yet more probable that the Lukan text is the result of an emendation of the 'Matthean' text. It is, however, as likely that both 'Matthew' and 'Luke' (or very early scribes) corrected a less good earlier construction, presumably: *παιδίοις τοῖς καθημένοις ἐν ἀγορᾷ καὶ κτλ.* This reading could also like the whole pericope be a rather close translation from Aramaic; cf. Syriac versions:

ܡܠܝܬܐ ܕܡܬܝܬܐ ܕܡܬܝܬܐ

The other difference concerns the grammatical relation between the verbs. In this respect there are many variants both in Matthew and in Luke, in Matthew at least the following:

α προσφωνουντα τοις ετεροις <sup>1</sup>	λεγουσιν (B x D Θ Z etc.)
α προσφωνουσιν τοις ετεροις	και λεγουσιν (C)
και προσφωνουσιν τοις ετεροις	και λεγουσιν (E F G W etc.)
qui atclamant	aliis dicentes (k =
α προσφωνουσιν τοις ετεροις	λεγοντες)

In Luke *καὶ προσφωνοῦσιν ἀλλήλοις* dominates completely, but then there are many divergences: *α λεγει* (B x\*, fam. 1 and some others), *λεγοντες* (D L fam.<sup>13</sup>), *λεγοντα* (x<sup>corr</sup> W pc), *οι λεγουσιν* (Λ 262) and *και λεγουσιν* (A Θ and the koine group, etc.).

There are – as in other cases – two methods to deal with this text-problem. One way is to be guided by an average evaluation of the MSS and to follow those that have been proved to be generally the best ones. The other method is to prefer the text which in any present case may be reasonably assumed to

<sup>1</sup> In this connection I leave aside the variants *ἐταίροις* and the addition of *αὐτῶν*. The MSS mentioned are for the most part only samples.

be the variant from which most or – possibly – all other variants are derived. Tischendorf has in Luke vii. 32 preferred the variant λεγοντες using this second method: *qua e scriptura explicandae sunt ceterae omnes*. But the first method has in this case as elsewhere dominated the field.<sup>1</sup> This looks very reasonable, especially in Matthew, where not only B, but also several other distinguished MSS (ⲁ D Z Θ and others) have the construction α προσφωνουντα... λεγουσιν. This reading has, therefore, according to common principles, been accepted in most modern editions (from Tischendorf to the Bible Societies edition of 1966). In Luke the reading of B, supported by Sinaiticus prima manu, fam.<sup>1</sup> and some others, has not been quite as unanimously accepted. Tischendorf did, as we saw, prefer the reading λεγοντες and this text appears, e.g. in Huck's Synopsis.

But if we accept the reading of B and its supporters, it seems difficult to disentangle the history of the text – both in Matthew and in Luke. The popular theory of harmonization may, it is true, offer some help, for προσφωνουσιν, which appears in many Matthean variants, represents the standard text of Luke, and the word-order is in many MSS the same as in Luke. But why should anybody correct the good text of B and why should anybody borrow insignificant items from Luke while neglecting the much more characteristic ones, τοις after παιδιοις and αλληλοις which do not appear in any Greek MSS (though many Latin ones have *ad invicem*, *ad alterutrum* and it must be admitted that these Latin texts possibly go back to lost Greek readings). The harmonization theory hardly suffices here. And this being the case the result must be that if we accept the readings of B, it is very difficult to account for the many variant readings.

If instead we assume that the paratactic readings – both in Matthew and Luke – are primary, the history of the text at once becomes perspicuous. To begin with it is easier to understand that a hypotaxis was substituted for a parataxis than the reverse. Surely there are exceptions to this rule. But in the present case we are especially well justified in keeping to the rule. For if we accept the paratactic readings as the original ones, we may easily observe what caused the great confusion in the texts. προσφωνουσιν is grammatically an ambiguous form and so to be sure is λεγουσιν. Both may be taken for finite verbs: 'and they call unto the others and say', or as present participles: 'and calling to the others (their fellows, each other) and saying'. This ambiguity evidently troubled many copyists. When some MSS in Luke do not have α λεγει or και λεγουσιν but λεγοντες (D L, etc.) or λεγοντα (W ⲁ<sup>corr</sup>), it is evident that the scribes thought προσφωνουσιν a finite verb. In Θ (in Luke) there is a point before και προσφωνουσιν to warn us not to combine it

<sup>1</sup> Cf. E. C. Colwell, *Studies in Methodology in Textual Criticism of the New Testament* (New Testament Tools and Studies) (1969), p. 2: 'He (Hort) based his claim (the superiority of the Beta text-type) on the argument that what has been shown to be superior in part may be assumed to be superior in the whole', cf. also p. 6: 'He (Klijn) pleads for following codex Vaticanus even where the evidence is not clear – on the grounds of its general excellence.'

with καθήμενοις but to start a new sentence: 'Like children sitting in the market. And they shout unto the others and say.' Yet more elucidating, however, is the Latin tradition in view of the fact that the translators somehow betray how they interpreted the ambiguous verb-forms. There are many different solutions.

Many Old Latin MSS have (not only in Luke but sometimes also in Matthew): *sedentibus...et (ad)clamantibus* (both in Matthew and Luke) (or *loquentibus*, in Luke) *et dicentibus*, i.e. all three verbs were taken for participles. This construction is also to be found in the Vulgate (in Luke): *sedentibus in foro et loquentibus ad invicem et dicentibus*, and from hence it was taken over by the English translation tradition (likewise only in Luke): 'They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace, and calling one to another and saying' (RV). In Matthew the arrangement of B and its supporters has been taken over by several MSS: *sedentibus in foro qui clamantes coequalibus dicunt* (aur ff<sup>1</sup> and Vulgate, in Matthew). But we also find another way to amend the text: *qui atclamant aliis dicentes* (k in Matthew) or: *qui clamant ad alterutrum dicentes* (a in Luke). However, some translators have not succeeded in managing the grammar, but present quite impossible constructions: *sedentibus in foro et loquentibus...dicentes* (ff<sup>2</sup> q). This can hardly be anything but a mechanical translation of a Greek text like this: καθήμενοις ἐν ἀγορᾷ καὶ προσφωνοῦσιν... λέγοντες. The Greek scribe naturally took προσφωνοῦσιν for a finite verb in this case. But the Latin translator first interpreted it as if it were a participle and then in spite of this rendered λέγοντες literally: *dicentes*.<sup>1</sup> A more instructive case of mechanical translation, 'word for word', can hardly be imagined.

Could so much trouble have arisen if from the beginning the texts of Matthew and Luke had been as unambiguous and clear as those found in B? I wonder. It is much easier to think that the paratactic readings are original and that *all* other readings represent independent attempts to correct them, either by relative clauses or by participles. The readings of B (both in Matthew and Luke) are no exceptions to this rule. On the contrary they fit very well into the main pattern of the history of the texts. This result of the analysis does of course involve that in one place more we shall have to challenge the witness of Codex B. And this result may be difficult to accept. For B is here – especially in Matthew, in Luke it is less embarrassing – very well supported, among others also by D. The text resulting from the analysis is moreover almost the same as the *Textus Receptus*, a text which has been

<sup>1</sup> Surely this is a nonsense reading, and it should according to E. C. Colwell (*Studies in Methodology in Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, 1969, p. 105) not be counted. I am not quite sure that Colwell is right here. Certainly we cannot as a rule accept nonsense readings as originals, but they often betray something of the history of the text, e.g. if they are the result of a combination of text-forms, cf. my article 'Evidences of a second-century revised edition of St Mark's Gospel', *N.T.S.* xiv (1967–8), 347, in which I have shown that the reading of D in Mark xiii. 10 is a combination of the original and a revised text.

depreciated by almost all modern scholars. But I see no way out. The analysis given above must be accepted as quite stringent and inevitable. Certainly B is one of our best MSS. But it is not without its faults, and this is in fact acknowledged in our best editions, which in many places deviate from B.<sup>1</sup> And what we here have before us are some almost inevitable emendations of an extraordinarily ambiguous text. It is not astonishing that such simple corrections were undertaken *very early* and with much success, nor that other emendations took place.

The difference between the history of the Matthean and the Lukan texts can be elucidated on the same premises. For, as just pointed out, many good Matthean MSS have the word-order: καθημένοις ἐν ταῖς ἀγοραῖς, whereas the Lukan text runs: τοῖς ἐν ἀγορᾷ καθημένοις. That means: in Luke καὶ προσφωνοῦσιν followed immediately after καθημένοις. It was therefore very naturally taken as a participle. The trouble did not arise until καὶ λέγουσιν. Was it possible to interpret this word also, so well known as 'they say,' as a participle? Yes, but it would be better to emend it to ἃ λέγει. In that case προσφωνοῦσιν would be no problem. It could still be taken as a participle. A less good emendation was to change καὶ λέγουσιν into λέγοντες or λέγοντα (the subject being τὰ παιδία). This alteration implies that προσφωνοῦσιν should be read as a finite verb. But the decision came a little too late in the text. In the probably oldest text in 'Matthew' the problem was a little different. Since προσφωνοῦσιν was separated from καθημένοις by ἐν ταῖς ἀγοραῖς it was easier than in Luke to take it for a finite verb. However, the text was ambiguous here too. The lesser alteration was simply to put ἃ instead of καί.<sup>2</sup> Thus C: ἃ προσφωνοῦσιν . . . καὶ λέγουσιν. A more elegant solution was to alter the text in the way of B: ἃ προσφωνοῦντα . . . λέγουσιν. Will it be too audacious to imagine that the amendments in B, both in Matthew and Luke, analogous in method, are due to the same scribe or reviser?

If this analysis is correct we are bound to accept that the originals were in fact ambiguous, which may seem a bold proposition. But if we realize a fact just pointed out, the different position of the words ἐν ἀγοραῖς and ἐν ἀγορᾷ, respectively, I think that a solution will be at hand. A *listener* would easily have understood the text in this way: 'like unto children sitting in the market-places: and they shout. . .'. We have then – so to speak – merely an example of the common phenomenon that a clause begins with καί. And Matthew was a sort of 'Rhetor' who thought of those listening to his work.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. G. D. Kilpatrick, 'Western Text and Original Text in the Gospels and Acts', *J.Th.St.* XLIV (1943), 36: 'We may then conclude our inquiry by suggesting that the textual criteria require a rigorous eclecticism and indicate that, although the Alexandrian text and especially B are our best authorities, yet all the early types and witnesses contribute something of value and none can be rejected. A modern reconstruction of the text will differ much from D, but it will also differ not a little from B.'

<sup>2</sup> This correction is not unique. Cf. Mark ii. 15 in Θ 565 where 'The substitution of οἱ for καὶ is an elegant amendment' (cf. my article: 'Evidences', etc., *N.T.S.* xiv, 328).

In Luke καὶ προσφωνοῦσιν followed immediately after καθημένοις and was therefore probably or at least possibly meant as a participle. With the text before one, one is prepared to take the following ambiguous words as participles, and Luke was a writer who thought of Theophilus and other *readers* of his book. It is possible that even the different position of ἐν ἀγορᾷ(ς) was intended to give a hint as to the understanding of the verbs.

But which arrangement is the pre-evangelical one? This is a difficult question and it cannot be answered immediately. But I shall venture a guess. If we assume that the text of the passage here concerned is a literal translation from Aramaic (or Hebrew?) – and there are many indications in that direction<sup>1</sup> – the original may have sounded as follows: (τοῖς) παιδίῳ τοῖς καθημένοις ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ καὶ προσφωνοῦσιν... καὶ λέγουσιν. Such a construction – introduced by *d<sup>e</sup>* – would be natural in Aramaic, and – we might add – after the first participle there were in Aramaic two possibilities: to go on either with participles or with finite verbs.

The analysis of the text history has also another rather startling result: the texts of Matthew and Luke were more alike at the beginning than they were at later stages of their history. This is in contrast with common assumptions according to which the texts were often assimilated. Now harmonizations have indeed played a prominent role. But already in the earlier days when the different Gospels circulated as separate books,<sup>2</sup> amendments were introduced – and naturally they were no ‘harmonizations’. And in our case it is evident that the texts of Matthew and Luke are dependent on a common prototype. If we accept this, it follows that the congruence of the texts must be great, especially at the beginning. The only revision of the analysis given above I can think of, is that already Matthew introduced ἃ προσφωνοῦντα and already Luke ἃ λέγει. But how are we then to explain the appearance of the paratactic readings? Was the prototype that Matthew and Luke used known also later? This is no unlikely assumption seeing that it was known to both Matthew and Luke, who probably lived in very different ecclesiastical surroundings. But I think it will be more reasonable to keep to the analysis given above.

### III

The *structure* of the passage discussed here is commonly assumed to be extraordinarily bad. The introduction to the children's rhyme is in particular very often totally rejected, and it is often said very categorically and bluntly, e.g. by J. M. Creed: ‘The comparison is not exactly expressed. It is John

<sup>1</sup> See above, page 164, note 5.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Colwell, *op. cit.* pp. 21 f.: ‘The Gospels must be studied one by one. Enough single-gospel papyri are available now to demonstrate that the gospels existed as single books for some time.’ In an article in *N.T.S.*, ‘Evidences of a second-century revised edition of the Gospel of Mark’, I have demonstrated that very early there must have existed a separate revised edition of the Gospel according to St Mark (*N.T.S.* xiv, p. 321–55).

and Jesus – not this generation – who are the counterparts to the children who invite their fellows to joy or to mourning – in each case without success.<sup>1</sup> A. H. McNeile is, if possible, even more categorical: ‘Strictly speaking “this generation” was similar, not to the children who uttered their complaints but to those who refused to play; for the προσφωνοῦντα can hardly be the Pharisees, demanding this and that manner of life from the Baptist and Jesus: they made no such demand.’<sup>2</sup> Many other scholars are of the same opinion even if they do not express it so definitively. Klostermann thinks the present version corrupt, but holds back as to the reconstruction. He ends with the resigned question: ‘Ursprünglicher Sinn?’<sup>3</sup>

There are certainly many scholars who at least discuss the possibility that the introduction is in order, and there are some others who even accept that this is the case. Thus A. B. Bruce,<sup>4</sup> who has treated our pericope with great attention to many details, considers both possibilities seriously, and A. Plummer<sup>5</sup> even tries to expound the idea that ‘this generation’ in fact corresponds to those children who complain of their comrades: ‘These are the children sitting in the market-place and finding fault. The Baptist comes in his sternness, and they want him to play at festivals. Jesus comes, taking part in social joy, and they want Him to play at funerals. Nothing that varies from their own narrow rules meets with their approbation.’ The common view, however, is that ‘this generation’ is compared not with those children who propose the games but with those who refuse to play – in spite of the only possible understanding of the introduction.

Now the introduction is not the only obstacle for the common interpretation. In the rhyme the proposal of a wedding comes first, the proposal to play at funerals second. But Jesus who, according to the common interpretation, invited to a wedding came after the austere John, who invited to a funeral. And in the application also, according to both Matthew and Luke, John comes first.<sup>6</sup> Many scholars have observed this discrepancy and some have discussed it more or less seriously. But the end is, as a rule, that this objection also is disregarded. The chief counter-argument is that Jesus here

<sup>1</sup> J. M. Creed, *The Gospel according to St. Luke* (1953), p. 108.

<sup>2</sup> A. H. McNeile, *The Gospel according to St. Matthew* (1957), p. 157. Cf. also e.g. A. R. C. Leaney, *A Commentary on the Gospel according to Luke* (1958), p. 145: ‘The men of this generation. This passage becomes clear if we suppose that the men included both John and Jesus on one hand and their contemporaries on the other; it is Jesus who has piped and failed to make his contemporaries dance and John who has mourned and failed to make them weep.’

<sup>3</sup> E. Klostermann, *Das Matthäusevangelium* (1927), p. 99: Only reasonable ‘wenn der Text v. 16 einst gelaute hätte: “Kindern gleicht es (dies Geschlecht), die auf dem Markt sitzen und denen die Gespielen zurufen”.’

<sup>4</sup> A. B. Bruce, *The Parabolic Teaching of Christ* (London, 1882), pp. 413–26.

<sup>5</sup> A. Plummer, *An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Matthew* (1910), p. 163. This attempt merely to put the common interpretation upside-down has not been very successful.

<sup>6</sup> Clement of Alexandria (*Paid.* I ch. v, § 13, 3) has a quite different introduction, an assimilation to a most common pattern: αὐθις τε παιδίοις ὅμοιοι τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν ἐν ἀγοραῖς καθήμενοις καὶ λέγουσιν· ἡλιθίσταται κτλ., and adduces other biblical texts in order to establish the equation παῖδες, τέκνα = disciples.

quotes a well-known rhyme, in which the order was given and consequently could not be altered. This argument is plausible and it can also be supported by the fact that a hysteron-proteron is quite common in the New Testament. In this way this objection also has been effectively reduced. Together with the first obstacle, however, this one also carries some weight.

But there is a third obstacle which is even more decisive than any of those hitherto presented, the fact namely that there is a correspondence between what the children say and what people say of John and Jesus. This becomes very apparent if the reconstruction of the original texts in Matt. xi. 16–17 and Luke vii. 32 is valid. For in that case the end of the introduction to the rhyme, καὶ λέγουσιν, corresponds exactly to the words in which the rumours about John and Jesus are introduced in Matthew, καὶ λέγουσιν. This may confirm that the analysis given above is correct and also implies that we have to accept this Matthaean variant as against the Lukan: λέγετε. But also in case we prefer the acknowledged texts, it is obvious that the application as well as the parable reaches its climax in the utterances quoted. The correspondence, moreover, is not restricted to this formal aspect. There is also a real correspondence, because both utterances are in fact complaints, complaints about the other children in the parable and complaints about John and Jesus in the application.

This observation will help us to a more adequate interpretation of the rhyme and its function. We are told that some children are sitting in the market-place, one group shouting to the other. The rest we only learn from the rhyme itself, namely that the children speaking (*we* have piped, etc.) have invited the others (*you*) to dance, and then to lament – possibly because the first exhortation was rejected. But the chief point is the rhyme itself, the comment of the children who have exhorted the others, namely their complaint about their comrades. That corresponds to the application. There we are told of the appearance of John and Jesus and of their different behaviour: one neither eats nor drinks, the other eats and drinks. At last follow the rumours: 'He has a demon', 'He is a glutton', etc. That means: the *tertium comparationis* lies in the comments, in what the children *say* about their comrades, and what people *say* about John and Jesus.

The common interpretation implies some presuppositions which I would like to discuss for a moment, particularly three ideas. The first one concerns the relation between John and Jesus. Our text is one of the chief sources of the juxtaposition of the stern John and the 'evangelical' Jesus (with his 'Weltoffenheit', 'taking part in social joy'). This contrast is of course included in the text, but it must not be overestimated so as to make Jesus an opponent of John – such an idea is absolutely alien to the text, which is dominated only by one juxtaposition, that between 'this generation' on one side and John and Jesus on the other. The second proposition, often combined with our pericope, is that the initiative must be attributed to John and



Jesus, the (negative) reaction to 'this generation'.<sup>1</sup> The third idea may be formulated as a question: how can Jesus, the great friend of children, compare this (wicked) generation with children? In other words: how can we blame this generation without blaming the children? To this many scholars have given a most clever answer: this generation is compared with playing children who are childish and unsteady, not knowing what to play: 'The state of mind of "this generation" can no more be taken seriously than the words of children at play.'<sup>2</sup> In this way, however, not only the children but also this generation are excused. The idea of the inconsistency of the children cannot be the *tertium comparationis*. For which children are inconsistent? those who want to play on any account or those who do not want to play at all? The point is a quite different one. The original Greek text, as transmitted both in Matthew and in Luke, is in fact – like most modern translations – only a halfway translation. A thorough rendering of the original Aramaic must run as follows: 'when we piped you did not dance, when we mourned you did not lament'. The complaint is that 'the others' spoil the game by refusing to play their part, so that instead of being good comrades they behave as outsiders. On this point children and grown-ups are often alike: they cannot stand people differing from themselves. Jesus may use the children as examples because their games are a mirror of 'the real life' of the grown-ups. Because weddings and funerals are outstanding events in real life, the children play at weddings and funerals. And as it is expected of the guests at a wedding or a funeral not only that they are present, but also that they take part in the joy and in the lament, so do the children expect their comrades to join in the game. For children do not take their games less seriously than grown-ups their real life. The unwilling children behave as persons who at a wedding will not enjoy themselves, or at a funeral do not take part in the lament. But did Jesus not think that children differed from grown-ups? Did he not embrace them with a special love? Could he have given such a realistic view of the children's game as the one here proposed? Why not? He is here not speaking of babes and why should his or anybody's love of children depend on unrealistic presuppositions?

## IV

We may thus conclude not only that the common rejection of the introduction to the rhyme is out of place, but also that a most common interpretation of the rhyme itself must be rejected. The question is now whether we can go further and also give a plausible interpretation of the application. If not,

<sup>1</sup> A. B. Bruce, *op. cit.* p. 417: 'It is in favour of this view that it assigns to Jesus and John the initiative.' On this point see below, p. 176.

<sup>2</sup> McNeile, *op. cit.* p. 158. Cf. innumerable commentaries, e.g. C. F. Keil, *Commentar über das Evangelium des Matthäus* (Leipzig, 1877), p. 276. He characterizes Matt. xi. 16–19 as 'Rüge des leichtsinnigen und lauenhaften Characters der Zeitgenossen'.

much of what has been said so far becomes more or less questionable again.

In his commentary on Matt. xi. 16 McNeile says: 'The προσφωνοῦντα can hardly be the Pharisees, demanding this and that manner of life from the Baptist and Jesus: they made no such demand.' I must acknowledge that this sentence brought me on the right track – because it is obviously false. We shall only have to consider a presupposition which McNeile evidently had in mind when he wrote these words, namely that the Pharisees demanded something outstanding from the Baptist and Jesus. They did not demand anything extraordinary, only that John and Jesus should behave according to normal Jewish practice. And that meant that they should take part in feasts when the people had their festivals and fast when all decent people fasted. It was certainly allowed to celebrate private feasts and to observe extra fasting, but it was not allowed to join a party on a fasting day or to fast when the people 'rejoiced in the Lord'. How a decent Jewish man or woman who 'served God with fastings and prayers night and day' (Luke ii. 37) was to behave, can be learnt from Jud. viii. 6: 'And she fasted all the days of her widowhood, save the eves of the sabbaths, and the sabbaths, and the eves of the new moons, and the new moons, and the feasts and joyful days of the house of Israel.' A principle like that is much more relevant here than the idea that people should have kept to a modest life and therefore criticized John because he was too ascetic and Jesus because he was too devoted to food and drink. It was allowed or even demanded both to fast and to rejoice, but there is 'a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance' (Eccl. iii. 4). When you are at a wedding, you must enjoy it, and when you are at a funeral, you must mourn. And when all people 'rejoice in the Lord' you will have to take part in the rejoicing, and when all people fast, you will have to mourn and fast like the others.

But did John and Jesus – or their disciples – offend these holy customs? The question is not quite easy to answer, for undoubtedly there were, among the Jews, circles which were more fervent in keeping religious customs than others or who even aspired to distinguish themselves as extraordinarily pious. The Gospel tradition is furthermore not unanimous as to Jesus' observance of Jewish customs. But there is a pericope which even presupposes that Jesus – or his disciples – did not fast as John and the Pharisees and their disciples did (Mark ii. 18–22; Matt. ix. 14–17; Luke v. 33–9). Also in this text there are two features that are of interest in our connection: the idea that fasting is foreign to a wedding and the idea that there are times which are and times which are not appropriate for fasting. Further, in Mark ii. 16; Matt. ix. 11 (cf. Luke v. 30), we hear it said of Jesus: 'He eats with tax-gatherers and sinners.' We learn here that the two accusations, 'he is a glutton' and 'he is a friend of tax-gatherers and sinners' belong together. Certainly it must be admitted that we never hear that Jesus 'ate and drank'

on the great common fasting days, only that he ate and drank on days when some pious people fasted. But he joined bad company and ate and drank with them. He did not behave as a Jew should do. And that was a bad thing. We must remember that fasting, eating and drinking were of religious importance. You could not do as you liked without serious implications.

But what about the Baptist? As to him we have no clear evidence. We do not hear that he – like Judith – broke off his fasting on the joyful days of the people. But we have remarks in the Gospels about his extraordinary food, and anyhow we get the impression that his way of life did not allow of any exceptions. Further we know that both greater and lesser religious feasts implied that you should eat meat and bread and drink wine. How did the Baptist behave? Did he only keep to himself in the wilderness, thus evading any conflict? We do not know. But if he did, his behaviour anyhow implied an offence against ordinary Jewish religious manners and he thereby exposed himself to blame: surely he was no prophet, not even a pious man. On the contrary his behaviour disclosed that he ‘has a demon’. This rumour was possibly only a common one – in John x. 20; Mark iii. 30 the same accusation was directed against Jesus. Or is there a connection between his ascetic life and the accusation? A current idea was that only spiritual beings like angels and demons could exist without food and drink, and so it was suggested that John was assisted by a demon. This may be a somewhat hazardous explanation – and it has no necessary relation to the main thesis of this paper.

The most common objection to this thesis is that John and Jesus must correspond to the *active* children, ‘this generation’ to the *passive* and unwilling children. This idea seemed so self-evident that most scholars felt themselves obliged to dismiss the introduction as a bad or even misleading arrangement. For surely John and Jesus were those who brought new tidings, the Jews and their leaders were on the contrary unwilling to accept either John or Jesus.

There seems thus to be no way out. But there is. We need only make a distinction between what is prior in general and what is prior in detail. When we think of the main content of the Gospel tradition it is evident that John and Jesus and not ‘this generation’ had the initiative. But that does not mean that the initiative in every situation, in every pericope is reserved for Jesus. Certainly a story or a saying often starts with a healing made by Jesus or a word uttered by him. But very often a particular Gospel story starts with a question or an attack from Pharisees, lawyers, Sadducees, disciples and others.

Thus it is by no means necessary to deny that the principal initiative comes from John and Jesus, that they brought a message which challenged the listeners to acceptance or dismissal. In this point there is no divergence between me and those who think it necessary even in the parable of the

playing children to ascribe the initiative to John and Jesus. The main bulk of the Gospel tradition surely has as its ultimate presupposition that the initiative did not come from man but from Heaven. The same background dominates the present pericope. For John 'came' and Jesus 'came' and thereby started the Gospel story. But their appearance, their deeds and their words provoked counter-attacks.

John 'came' and preached *metanoia* – and that implied fasting. And the Son of Man 'came' and he rejected fasting as unfit for a wedding-feast – so we can outline the main story. Both were rejected by 'this generation', *inter alia* because it had its own traditional ideas of fasting and feasts. Therefore 'this generation' goes to a counter-attack. They pretend to know better than John and Jesus when to fast and when to 'rejoice in the Lord'. That does not imply any special demands. It is only a reaction against John and Jesus. Instead of first following John and repenting and fasting, and then following Jesus with his uncontrolled 'Gospel', the adversaries, 'this generation', not only reject them but also insist upon it that they shall observe traditional religious customs, fast 'in its time' and 'rejoice in the Lord' in its time. That does not, however, mean that they invite John to dance and Jesus to mourn, for that would be a contamination of picture and adaptation. But it means that they asked both John and Jesus to observe traditional customs. When they did not, their verdict was given. So they go from stating to interpretation. They not only state that John 'neither ate nor drank' and that Jesus 'ate and drank'. They also know why: John 'has a demon' and Jesus is 'a glutton, a friend of sinners and tax-gatherers'. And the scorn is extra sharp on account of the juxtaposition. John will neither 'eat nor drink', Jesus both. The presupposition is that John and Jesus belong together. For only thereby does the juxtaposition become scornful. Certainly the adversaries of John and Jesus presuppose that there is no answer to the question why John fasted and Jesus did not. It is only a *curiosum* to laugh at.

That is the verdict of 'this generation'. But its sentence is not the definitive one. There follows a radically different sentence, expressed in the last words, the comment of Jesus himself: 'And Wisdom is justified of her children'. I have repeated above reasons why we here have to keep to the Lukan version, and this in its shorter form, without 'all'. The structure of the pericope might imply that there must be a relation between 'this generation' and 'the children of Wisdom'. But what sort of relation? The traditional interpretation is that 'the children of Wisdom' are John and Jesus and the Christians, who take the place of those rejected, 'this generation', the Jews and their leaders. There is, however, another interpretation, not quite unknown formerly but especially promoted by Wellhausen<sup>1</sup> with new arguments. According to him ἀπό should be a translation of Aramaic *min q'dām*, and the sense of the clause

<sup>1</sup> J. Wellhausen, *Das Evangelium Matthaei* (1904), p. 55.

be 'And Wisdom is justified from/in front of/against/her children'. In this case 'the children of Wisdom' is a term for the chosen people, like 'the Sons of the Kingdom' in Matt. viii. 12 (cf. NEB: 'those who were born to the Kingdom'), who will 'be cast out in the darkness'. I find this interpretation very plausible, and it would give the pericope an apt and dramatic climax in which beginning and end correspond closely.

I must, however, add two remarks. (a) I wonder whether Greek readers in New Testament days – used as they were to accepting ἄπό with a passive as an equivalent to ὑπό – would understand the text in this way. (b) The difference between the two interpretations is not so great as it might seem. For anyhow 'this generation' is doomed. The only question is whether that is all the text has to say or whether the end points to successors, some real children of Wisdom. Does the text only tell us that 'the kingdom of God will be taken from you' or does it include the continuation 'and given to a nation that yields the proper fruit' (Matt. xxi. 43)?

Anyhow the last words must be spoken out of a new insight. It is evident that 'this generation' has failed to understand what is going on. If the words 'Wisdom is justified of her children' have any connection with the foregoing parable and its application, it is very likely that there is a connection with the opposite behaviour of John and Jesus in regard to fasting. The people did not understand anything about it, and therefore they scorned both John and Jesus. If they had known better, they would not have done so. John came and announced the Kingdom. Therefore he preached *metanoia*, and this includes penitence and fasting. Jesus brings the time of the Kingdom. It is to be noticed that this does not include any criticism of the Baptist. In Mark ii. 18 f.; Matt. ix. 14 f.; Luke v. 33 f. there is no hint that John failed when he fasted. But when the bridegroom is there then fasting is out of place. Such a division of times is also presupposed in the context in which the parable of the playing children appears. As was pointed out in the beginning of this paper, our pericope is the last item in a sequence of pericopes, which already existed in the *Vorlage* used by both Matthew and Luke. In these texts as in Matt. xi. 12 f. and Luke xvi. 16 the Baptist is both the last representative of the epoch of Law and Prophets and the forerunner (*Angelos* Matt. xi. 10; Luke vii. 27; cf. also Mark i. 2) of a new era (Matt. xi. 9–13; Luke vii. 26–8, cf. xvi. 16). John proclaims the Kingdom and therefore he calls to repentance, and that includes fasting. Jesus brings the new era with wondrous works (Matt. xi. 2–4; Luke vii. 22–33) and there is no time for fasting. Also in this connection there is a time for mourning and a time to rejoice. But the timetable is different. This is hidden from 'this generation'. They do not understand 'the signs of the time' but keep to old-established rules and insist that John and Jesus observe them. When John and Jesus do not follow these exhortations they can see no reason for that. But the 'children of Wisdom' know better.

I think therefore that it is possible not only to accept the introduction but also to carry through an interpretation which is in harmony both with the context and with the main ideas of the Gospel story. But I must admit that there are of course different theological aspects in the Gospels. Not only have the different Gospels their special character, we can also observe different strata in the Gospels. Such a stratum is represented by the three pericopes joined already before Matthew and Luke in Matt. xi. 2-19 and Luke xi. 19-35, and it appears also in other texts where there is a close relation between Matthew and Luke.

I might stop here, but I would like to put some questions to colleagues and experts:

(1) A *synoptic* question. Must we not acknowledge that we have to realize that it is reasonable to speak of a nearest common source only when there exists a great conformity as to structure *and* vocabulary, whereas the assumption of a common source in cases of fundamental differences is very disputable?

(2) A *text-critical* question. Should it not be acknowledged that in many places we have to attribute a greater influence to an analysis of the relationship between text-variants? Must it, for example, not be acknowledged that the analysis of the variants in Matt. xi. 16 and Luke vii. 32 is quite convincing? And if so, will it be of any consequence for further text-editions?

(3) A *structural* question. Is it not safer to consider the structure of a text very seriously before we start with the exegesis?

I should be very grateful indeed if I might have some answers, real answers, neither the verdict 'impossible' without any arguments nor the comment 'interesting' without further remarks.