THE TRADITIONSGESCHICHTE OF MATT. 11:12-13, PAR. LUKE 16:16

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Introduction

The interpretation of Matt. 11:12 is problematic. Bultmann\(^1\) observes that it is 'no longer patent of confident interpretation'. Käsemann\(^2\) states: 'The history of the saying shows that we are dealing with very primitive tradition, already unintelligible by the time of the Evangelists.' For a history of the discussion of this problematic verse see P.S. Cameron, *Violence and the Kingdom: The Interpretation of Matthew 11:12* (Frankfurt 1988).

The interpretation of Luke 16:16 would be easier if it were not for its difficult parallel in Matthew. Even so, in a recent study Cortés and Gatti\(^3\) describe Luke 16:16 as one of the *cruces interpretum* of the New Testament. They identify three principal points of controversy over the verse:

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\begin{align*}
\text{βιάζεται} & \quad : \text{Is the verb's sense positive or negative?}^4 \text{ Is its voice middle or passive?}
\end{align*}
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\(^4\) G. Schrenk, βιάζομαι, *TWNT I* (Stuttgart 1933), pp. 608-13 (= *TDNT* I [Grand Rapids 1964], pp. 609-14), presents the arguments for interpreting
μέχρι, ἀπὸ τοῦτο: Is John included in or excluded from the period of the Kingdom?

πάς: Does Luke really intend to say that all enter the Kingdom?

The interpretational difficulties of Luke 16:16 have not prevented it from playing an important role in attempts to understand Luke's theological stance. One has only to think of Conzelmann's redactional study to appreciate the significance of the verse for the study of Lukan theology. The purpose of this paper, however, is not so much to look at the redactional or interpretational activities of the evangelist as to enquire after the saying's tradition-history and to

Matt. 11:12 with a negative sense and Luke 16:16 with a positive sense. W.G. Kümmel, "Das Gesetz und die Propheten gehen bis Johannes"—Lukas 16,16 im Zusammenhang der heilsgeschichtlichen Theologie der Lukasschriften', Das Lukas-Evangelium, ed. G. Braumann (Darmstadt 1974), pp. 398-415 (= Verborum Veritas, edd. O. Böcher and K. Haacker [Wuppertal 1970], pp. 89-102), also discusses the question of the verb's sense. Kümmel (p. 410) sides with Schrenk and understands Luke's usage to be positive (in bonam partem). F.W. Danker, 'Luke 16:16—an opposition logion', JBL 77 (1958), pp. 231-43, by making the words the response of Jesus' critics to his antinomian universalism presents an argument for understanding the Lukan logion in a negative sense. O. Betz, 'The Eschatological Interpretation of the Sinai-Tradition in Qumran and in the New Testament', RQ 6 (1967), p. 104, also suggests that Luke's sense is negative. More generally, it may be observed that the use of metaphor in the verse makes the interpretation of its sense more difficult, for even if at the literal level the logion had a negative sense, at the metaphorical level it might have been positive. Cf. a similar situation in some parables, e.g. the parable of the dishonest steward—Luke 16:1-13.

5 H. Conzelmann, Die Mitte der Zeit. Studien zur Theologie des Lukas (1st ed. 1953), consigned the Baptist to the earlier epoch of Israel but his arguments have been variously criticised. W.G. Kümmel, 'Das Gesetz ...', pp. 405-6, holds that there are no linguistic grounds on which to base the exclusion of the Baptist. On the contrary, he (pp. 410-5) argues from other evidence in the Lukan corpus that the Baptist was included in the period of the Kingdom. Kümmel bases five of his seven arguments on evidence adduced by W. Wink, John the Baptist in the Gospel Tradition (Cambridge 1968), pp. 51-55. The latter argues that John was included in the new era and suggests that a separate preparatory period be added to the schema of the time of fulfilment (pp. 55-6). D. Daube, 'Violence to the Kingdom', The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism (New York 1973), p. 285, also questions those arguments which interpret ἀπὸ in both gospels as exclusive. He points to the fact that in the Hebrew or Aramaic form of the saying the preposition (π) may have been inclusive. For a summary of the arguments see D. Kosch, Die Gottesherrschaft im Zeichen des Widerspruchs: traditions- und redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung von Lk 16,16 // Mt 11,12f bei Jesus, Q und Lukas (Bern 1985), pp. 36-8. Apart from these linguistic and contextual arguments Conzelmann is also criticised for his disregard of the tradition-history of the logion—D. Kosch, p. 11. The criticism is not unimportant, for if Luke had received the saying in a block of Q-material which he then faithfully reproduced (Luke 16:16-18), it may be asked whether the verse's perspective can properly be characterised as Lukan.