

# PONTIFICIO ISTITUTO BIBLICO

SEMINARIO PER STUDIOSI DI S. SCRITTURA [26-30 GENNAIO 2015]

Sedute seminariali del pomeriggio

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## Struttura e teologia in Matteo 5–7

**Prof. Luis SÁNCHEZ-NAVARRO**

[giovedì 29 gennaio]

### *Prima sessione (15:30-16:30)*

Impianto generale del Discorso della Montagna: situazione nel Vangelo; nome (“Insegnamento”); struttura concentrica. Significato teologico della situazione, del nome e della struttura.

### *Seconda sessione (17:00-18:00)*

Presenza della Scrittura in Matteo 5, con speciale attenzione alle Beatitudini e alle sei antitesi; ruolo chiave di Mt 5,17-20. Significato teologico del fenomeno.

### *Sussidi bibliografici*

DUMAIS, M., *Il Discorso della Montagna. Storia della ricerca, Interpretazione, Bibliografia* (PTB 9; Elledici, Torino 1999).

MUNARI, M., *Il compimento della Torah. Gesù e la Scrittura in Mt 5,17-48* (SBFA 81; Edizioni Terra Santa, Milano 2013).

NEUDECKER, R., *Moses interpreted by the Pharisees and Jesus. Matthew's Antitheses in the Light of Early Rabbinic Literature* (SubsBib 44; PIB, Roma 2012).

SÁNCHEZ NAVARRO, L., *La Enseñanza de la Montaña. Comentario contextual a Mateo 5-7* (EstB 27; Verbo Divino, Estella 2005).

———, “The Patrocentric Structure of the Teaching on the Mount”, in A. KUCZ – A. MALINA (ed.), *Ethos and Exegesis* (StMat 41; Księgarnia św. Jacka, Katowice 2007) 226-233. **[riportato nelle pagine seguenti]**

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## THE PATROCENTRIC STRUCTURE OF THE "TEACHING ON THE MOUNT"

When we approach the "Teaching on the Mount" (Matt 5-7), we find a well organized literary text<sup>1</sup>. It forms the first great discourse of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel<sup>2</sup>. It is also the longest one, and has a programmatic character: beginning with the Beatitudes (5:3-12) and the declaration in 5:17-20, it contains a program valid not only for the present sermon, but for the whole Gospel. In this paper we want to show the literary structure of this Teaching and its relationship with (or, perhaps better, dependence on) its theological focus.

### 1. INTRODUCTION: THE STRUCTURE OF THE TEACHING ON THE MOUNT

It is a conviction shared by most scholars that the Teaching on the Mount has a carefully planned literary structure. After the narrative introduction (5:1-2) it begins with the Beatitudes, a real overture to this teaching (5:3-12; an author has called it a "preludious synthesis" of the whole sermon<sup>3</sup>), which are followed by the introductory sections on the salt of the earth and the light of the world (5:13-16). Afterwards we find a solemn declaration: "Think not that I have come to abolish the Law and the Prophets; I have come not to abolish, but to fulfill" (5:17). It marks the beginning of the central section of this discourse, which ends in 7:12 (the "Golden Rule"), as the inclusion formed by the repeated expression "the Law and the Prophets" shows. In 7:13-27 we find

a paracletical final section, an exhortation to fulfill the teaching stated before<sup>4</sup>. The sermon ends with a narrative conclusion underlining the effect Jesus' authoritative words have had upon the listeners (7:28-29)<sup>5</sup>.

In the central section of the sermon (5:17-7:12) we can recognize three parts that explain in detail the "higher righteousness" (5:20) required by Jesus from his disciples: 5:21-48, 6:1-18 and 6:19-7:11<sup>6</sup>. All three develop different dimensions of that "righteousness" to which Jesus calls. There are some areas of disagreement on this, such as the meaning and coherence of Matt 6:19-7:11<sup>7</sup>. We can speak of it as a section centered on the relationship the disciple must have with created things<sup>8</sup>, whose synthesis we find in its midpoint: "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you as well" (6:33); it would be then a kind of development of the stanza about fasting (6:16-18)<sup>9</sup>. Notwithstanding, however this question is answered, the strong coherence of the two preceding sections (5:21-48 and 6,1-18) and the limit marked by 7:12 clearly manifest an artistic, concentric structure which can be expressed as follows:

<sup>4</sup>H.D. Betz speaks here of two different sections: 7:13-23 (eschatological warnings) and 7:24-27 (peroration): H.D. Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Minneapolis, MN 1995) 65-66.

<sup>5</sup>Among the scholars there is a broad consensus about some key points: the narrative frame (5:1-2 and 7: 28-8,1), the main body defined by the inclusion between 5:17 and 7:12, the exordium (5:3-16) and the final exhortation (7:13-27): M. Dumais, *Il Discorso della Montagna. Storia della ricerca, Interpretazione, Bibliografia* (PTB 9; Torino 1999) 102.

<sup>6</sup>"There are three major topics — the Torah (5:17-48), the Christian cult (6:1-18), and social issues (6:19-7:12)": D.C. Allison, "The Structure of the Sermon on the Mount", *JBL* 106 (1987) 423-445, p. 438. Allison holds a strong literary parallelism between 6:19-34 and 7:1-11: both parts would consist of an instruction (exhortation → parable about the eye → second parable) and an encouragement (the heavenly Father's care); they would appear then as structural twins (435). It has been noted that 5:21-48 and 6:19-7:11 have the same length (48 verses the former, 47 the latter): "Matthew has evidently intended it and has seen in it [6:19-7:11] a complete whole" (U. Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus I* [EKKNT I/1; Zürich · Neukirchen 1985] 354). Both sections are rather longer than the central unit (18 verses).

<sup>7</sup>"Unconcern and commitment" (J. Lambrecht, *The Sermon on the Mount: Proclamation and Exhortation* [GNSt 14; Wilmington, DL 1985] 28); "affairs of daily life" (Betz, *Sermon*, 62); "social issues" (Allison, "Structure", 438). See Dumais, *Discorso*, 103.

<sup>8</sup>So K. Stock, *Discorso della Montagna (Mt. 5-7) – Le Beatitudini* (Roma 1988) 7.

<sup>9</sup>M. Dumais proposes a division of this section into two parts: "the righteousness searched for in an exclusive manner, without anxiety" (6:19-34) and "gathered sentences" (7:1-11): Dumais, *Discorso*, 105. My opinion is: there is an evidently deep unity between 7:7-11 and 6:19-34; the problematic section would be 7:1-6. But these verses, following an exhortation referred to the "theological" relationship with created things, can be understood as a warning about judging one's brother. The disciple who tries to live according to the teaching in 6:25-34 runs the basic risk of judging severely his neighbor's behavior as regards wealth. So the disciple has to avoid judging mercilessly (7:1-5); but this does not imply being unable to discern (7:6).

<sup>1</sup>This name, "Teaching on the Mount", expresses the purpose of the sermon: cf. διδάσκω "to teach" in Matt 5:2 and 7:29, and διδάχῃ "teaching" in 7:28. Concerning this see my *La enseñanza de la montaña. Comentario contextual a Mt 5-7* (Estella [Navarra] 2005).

<sup>2</sup>Matthew's Gospel is characterized by Jesus' five great sermons: the TM (5:1-7:29), the missionary sermon (10:1-11:1), the parabolic sermon (13:1-53), the ecclesial sermon (18:3-19:1) and the eschatological sermon (24:1-26:1).

<sup>3</sup>I. Gomá Civit, *El evangelio según San Mateo I* (Madrid 1966) 241.

Narrative introduction (5:1-2)
Exordium (5:3-16)
Programmatic declaration (5:17-20)
"Higher righteousness" and neighbor (5:21-48)
"Higher righteousness" and the Father (6:1-18)
"Higher righteousness" and creatures (6:19-7:11)
The synthesis of "higher righteousness" (7:12)
Final exhortation (7:13-27)
Narrative conclusion (7:28-29)

At first glance we realize this concentric structure has its center in the section in which the heavenly Father is the main character. Now we will explore this fact further.

## 2. THE FATHER IN MATT 6:1-18

The Father of Jesus, named 17 times in the Teaching on the Mount (111 verses), appears ten times in this central section (18 verses)<sup>10</sup>; this relative frequency is striking. From 6:1 we know the subject of this section: it focuses on how to go about being righteous so that we will be rewarded by the Father. It deals with three Jewish traditional acts of mercy: almsgiving (6:1-4), prayer (6:5-15) and fasting (6:16-18). All three are considered under a given point of view: their "theological" dimension. This is obvious for the second activity (prayer), directly addressed to God, but not for the other two. The most important thing according to Jesus is not, for instance, the amount given to the poor, or the degree of austerity in our fasting. Rather, the point is that the Father, and not men, see these actions in order to reward them. Otherwise, they are worthless.

Christian life is presented here as something which occurs in the Father's sight; it is secondary what other people think about it. It looks as if we should even positively avoid being seen by other men<sup>11</sup>. Is it possible to give alms without being seen by the person who receives it? Perhaps; but it is difficult. What seems absolutely impossible is letting the left hand not know what the right hand does. We understand, of course, that it is a hyperbole; but its meaning is clear: the only significant thing is *what the Father thinks* about our actions. The point of this allegoric teaching is: you must not pursue that goal. Your only purpose, the only spectator you must pay attention to, is the heavenly Father. Righteousness cannot be practiced with another intention in mind as this would impede filial communion

<sup>10</sup> Matt 6:1, 4, 6 (twice), 8, 9, 14, 15, 18 (twice). Moreover: 5:16, 45, 48; 6:26, 32; 7:11, 21.

<sup>11</sup> "But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing" (6:3); "But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door" (6:6); "But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face" (6:17).

with God ("the payment")<sup>12</sup>. Because the Father "sees in secret", that is, he sees the secret of our hearts, he perceives our intention.

This is the reason why Jesus insists on this matter. He will say below: "lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (6:20-21). Jesus is deeply concerned with his disciples' heart. At the very beginning of the Teaching on the Mount he has said: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (5:8). The heart is the "place" where the disciple enters into relationship with his Father (where "he sees God"), whether he gives alms, fasts, or prays. The disciple's righteousness depends on the intention that moves him (6:1); the Father, who "sees" that intention, is then the only competent judge on the true ethical value of our acts. Morals and divine filiation are inseparable.

Let us note that this teaching complements 5:16 ("Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and give glory to your Father, who is in heaven"): there Jesus exhorts us to make our own light (i.e., good works) shine before men so that they give glory to the Father. In 6:1 Jesus warns of the risk that could be run by misunderstanding 5:16. In his acts before men the disciple must seek to be seen, not by them, but by the Father. Were he to seek his own glory and not that of the Father, he would invalidate his relationship with him. His acts would become sterile and therefore cease to be light for men.

## 3. IN THE MIDDLE: THE "OUR FATHER" (6:9-13)

A careful reading of Matt 6:1-18 shows we have two different kinds of material: the three short paragraphs about the acts of mercy (vv. 1-4; 5-6; 16-18) and the expansion containing the "Our Father" (vv. 7-15). Regardless of what explanation we give to this fact<sup>13</sup>, the result is: we have 11 verses on prayer, against 4 on almsgiving and 3 on fasting. This statistic shows the different levels of importance the evangelist ascribes to these acts: the most important one is prayer, whose direct object is God. The importance of this custom requires that Jesus insist, not only on the *way* to pray, but on the *content* of this prayer. The teaching on the contents of prayer is developed in three phases: the first one is negative and, following on the previous verses, indicates how it should not be (6:7-8). The second is a positive one which is the center of this literary unit (the 'Our Father': 6:9-13). The conclusive phase insists on the fundamental requisite (forgiveness) for this prayer to be effective (6:14-15).

Going further, we realize that not only the instruction about prayer, but the prayer itself, occupies the center of the whole section:

<sup>12</sup> Matt 6:1.2.5.16; cf. 5:12.46.

<sup>13</sup> See Betz, Sermon, 330; Dumais, Discorso, 287.

Almsgiving (6:1-4)

Prayer (6:5-15)

*Our Father* (6:9-13)

Fasting (6:16-18)

We have shown before that 6:1-18 is the center of the Teaching on the Mount; now we see that the *Our Father* stays in the middle of this central section. Its role is reinforced by one fact: it is the only prayer we find in the whole Teaching. If the section whose main character is the heavenly Father occupies the middle of Matt 5-7; if the pericope devoted to prayer is the midpoint of this section; and if the prayer beginning with "Our Father" represents the core of this pericope, then we must assume that this prayer has an importance that is not secondary for the global meaning of the whole literary unit<sup>14</sup>.

The main subject of the Teaching is the "righteousness" (5:6, 10, 20; 6:1, 33) of the disciple, which must exceed that of scribes and Pharisees (5:20); such is its importance that it has been proposed that this sermon be titled "The *righteousness* of the Kingdom of the Father"<sup>15</sup>. But what does this righteousness consist of? It is equivalent to "doing the Father's will." At the end of the Teaching Jesus says: "Not every one who says to me 'Lord, Lord' shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (7:21); if we compare this verse with 5:20 ("For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven"), we understand clearly the real equivalence between both expressions. In 3:15 Jesus remarks that he has to "fulfill all righteousness"; in 26:42 he will say to his Father: "your will be done".

This same words form the core of the *Our Father*: "your will be done" (γενήθῃ τὸ θέλημά σου 6:10b)<sup>16</sup>. In this prayer, then, the disciple asks the Father for the righteousness he is called to incarnate. This relevant fact shows the significance (I would say *the need*) of prayer in order to live according to that "higher righteousness." Structurally, the prayer to the Father represents the core of the Teaching on the Mount. Theologically, the prayer to the Father is the basis of Christian moral life. The righteousness Jesus demands is not the result of the disciple's own effort, but the fruit of the Father's grace—His response to the disciple's humble and confident prayer.

We can confirm this conclusion with a general view over the Teaching on the Mount.

<sup>14</sup>K. Stock has noted that in this prayer we find, not only the relationship with God, but — together with it — the relationship with the neighbor (6:12) and with the created things (6:11): Stock, *Discorso della Montagna*, 7.

<sup>15</sup>Dumais, *Discorso*, 104.

<sup>16</sup>About the relationship between 6:10 and 26:42 see P. Mareček, *La preghiera di Gesù nel Vangelo di Matteo* (TG-ST 67; Roma 2000) 94-95.

#### 4. THE FATHER IN THE TEACHING ON THE MOUNT

In this major literary unit, in which God is seen mainly in his paternal role<sup>17</sup>, the Father appears a few times outside 6:1-18; now we will focus on two of them which hold key places. At the end of the *exordium* Jesus says: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and give glory to your Father, who is in heaven" (5:16). The disciple's works are seen as signs of the Father's work; so that men seeing those works shall glorify, not the disciple, but the Father. When the disciple does what is righteous, he shows himself as son of the heavenly Father (see 5:9: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God"). The Father is, mysteriously, at the source of the disciple's righteous acts.

In the last antithesis we read: "But I say to you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may become sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He makes the sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (5:44-45). The disciple is called to love his enemies on theological grounds: only in this way can the disciple become son the Father, whose loving mercy towards every kind of man is as generous as the sunlight or the rain. The love of enemy is the perfect act of righteousness; doing so the disciple imitates his Father: "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (5:48).

How is it possible that the Father may be at the very origin of the disciple's righteous acts? This is what we learn from 6:9-13. The core of the Teaching on the Mount is, as we have said, the "Our Father", a prayer. The disciple's good acts, according to which he really merits a reward (6:1), are the result of that disciple's filial communion with his Father expressed and achieved by prayer: becoming son of God, he is transformed by Him. The disciple's righteousness, which he must learn in communion with Jesus "meek and humble of heart" (11:29)<sup>18</sup>, is then the fruit of his prayer. The righteous moral life of the disciple consists of his free response to a free gift of God<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>17</sup>"God": 6 times (5:8,9, 34; 6:24, 30, 33); "the Father": 17 times.

<sup>18</sup>L. Sánchez Navarro, "Venid a mí" (Mt 11,28-30). El discipulado, fundamento de la ética en Mateo (SThM 4; Madrid 2004) 79-120.

<sup>19</sup>"The prayer to the Father gives a special splendor to the ethical demands in the Sermon on the Mount. Placed in the center of the sermon, the *Our Father* makes fast the close bond between action and prayer. The determination to live our relationships with others and with God according to the new "righteousness" required by Jesus (5:2-48; 6:1-6), receives its intense energy from our request in prayer (6:7-13) that we be left open to God's plan and work in us, which will enable us to "give fruit" as corresponds to our nature as children (7:15-27). Given this, might we speak of a symbiosis between the deeds of man and divine grace?": Dumais, *Discorso*, 322.

It is not incidental that the Our Father stands at the very middle of the Teaching on the Mount since it shows the key to put it into practice, the indispensable condition to live according to Jesus' Gospel<sup>20</sup>.

### 5. THE HEAVENLY FATHER IN MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

According to this Gospel the Father plays a primary role in the disciple's life. The disciple is defined as he who does the Father's will: "Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother" (12:50). He must not call anyone on earth "father", "since you have only one Father—the one in heaven" (23:9); disciples, then, are characterized by their filial relationship with the heavenly Father. It is the Father who reveals them the mysteries of the Kingdom (11:25), who makes them know who Jesus really is (16:17). The Father is the main subject of Jesus' revelation (11:27); it is the Father, and not the Son, who will decide the earthly destiny of each disciple (20:23). The upright men who "will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (13:43) will hear at the Last Judgment: "Come O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (25:34); the righteous disciple is here presented as the blessed one of Jesus' Father. The final Great Mission will consist of introducing "all nations" into the communion with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (28:19).

The heavenly Father appears then as the vital atmosphere of the disciples' life; accordingly, introducing others into communion with Him through the brotherhood with Jesus is the main aim of their mission<sup>21</sup>. From the Teaching on the Mount we know that the relationship with the Father is at the very heart of their religious and moral life.

### CONCLUSION: A "PATROCENTRIC" STRUCTURE

We have shown the profound motif of the concentric literary structure of Matthew's Teaching on the Mount. The central section, devoted to the way the disciple has to carry out his righteousness (6:1-18), is dominated by the inner relationship with the Father. It means: the disciple's righteousness is essentially related to Him, who "sees in secret". This central section is very carefully composed; at the middle stands the pericope about prayer. But this pericope contains, not only a theoretical instruction, but also a real prayer, the model (I would say *the canon*) of every disciple's prayer: the "Our Father". And what does the disciple ask for in it?

<sup>20</sup> "The «Father» is... the end and the key reality to understanding the Sermon on the Mount in depth": Dumais, *Discorso*, 393.

<sup>21</sup> Sánchez Navarro, "Venid a mí", 277-278.

"Hallowed be thy Name, thy Kingdom come, thy will be done" (6:9-10). That is: he asks for the righteousness Jesus demands from him. This way we understand that the "higher righteousness" is not a mere result of the disciple's own effort, but mainly a God's gift. The disciples can be righteous because in Jesus they are children of the heavenly Father who graciously grants them the means to do so; their divine filiation transforms them.

We see, then, that the concentric literary structure of the Teaching on the Mount exceeds the mere literary fact: it is motivated by a theological (that is, a real) reason. What we can call "patrocentric" literary structure is a means to express something that stands at the very core of the disciple's life: the filial relationship with the heavenly Father as the root of his righteous acts.