

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

*THE MEANING OF "HATRED" IN THE NEW
TESTAMENT.*

THINK not that I came to send peace on the earth :
 I come not to send peace, but a sword !
 For I came to set a man at variance against his father :
 And the daughter against her mother ;
 And the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law ;
 And a man's foes shall be they of his own household :
 He that loveth father or mother more than me,
 Is not worthy of me :
 And he that loveth son or daughter more than me,
 Is not worthy of me.
 And he that doth not take his cross and follow after me,
 Is not worthy of me.
 He that findeth his life
 Shall lose it.
 And he that loseth his life for my sake
 Shall find it.

St. Matt. x. 34-39.

Now there went with Him great multitudes, and He turned and said unto them, If any man cometh unto me and hateth not his own father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

St. Luke xiv. 25, 26.

As a rule the synoptic parallelisms containing our Lord's own words are much closer than the narrative portions common to two or to three Evangelists. In some cases these parallelisms are identical or nearly identical ; see, for example, Mark i. 23-28 and Luke iv. 25-37 ; Matt. ix. 14-17, Mark ii. 18-22, Luke v. 33-39 ; Matt. xii. 46-50, Mark iii. 31-35, Luke viii. 19-21 ; Matt. xvi. 17-28, Mark viii. 30-ix. 1, Luke ix. 21-27.

This fact throws into prominence any discrepancies which may occur in such parallelisms. In this respect a comparison between our Lord's words as reported in Matthew x. 37, 38 and in Luke xiv. 26, 27 have a special interest. The passages are parallel, and yet out of fifty-two (Greek) words

in St. Luke's report seven only are found in St. Matthew's version.

Apart from the verbal discrepancies the Evangelists differ in two important particulars. St. Matthew incorporates in our Lord's words a citation from the LXX. version of Micah x. 34-39,¹ and quotes the rest of the saying in a poetical form of great beauty in accordance with the movement of the prophetic passage.

The first of these differences is typical of St. Matthew's plan of presenting the gospel to his Jewish readers, who would understand and appreciate the allusion to one of their old prophets.

The rhythmical form of Hebrew parallelism into which our Lord's words are thrown, raises a question of great importance and interest in regard to St. Matthew's reports of the sayings of Christ. There are very few chapters indeed of this Gospel which do not present some instance of this poetical element.² The Sermon on the Mount is full of such instances, chaps. v.-vii. The question therefore arises whether the poetical form is a transcript of the *ipsissima verba* of our Lord, or whether it was used as a means to facilitate oral tradition. The parallels from St. Matthew and St. Luke with which this paper is concerned seem to show that neither alternative admits of decisive proof. Cases exist where a two-fold and diverse tradition has come down of the words of Jesus, where one only can be literally exact.

As to the verbal discrepancies in the contrasted passages, the difference which has presented the greatest difficulty is that between ὁ φιλῶν πατέρα ἢ μητέρα ὑπὲρ ἐμέ (he that loveth father or mother above me) of St. Matthew, and εἶ τις . . . οὐ μισεῖ τὸν πατέρα ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τὴν μητέρα κ.τ.λ.

¹ Cited by S. Luke on a different occasion, xii. 51-53.

See the Index of Texts in Bishop Jebbs' *Sacred Literature*.

(if any man hateth not his own father and mother, etc.) of St. Luke.

The latter phrase, as given in St. Luke, has been regarded as a "hard saying," and has not seldom been explained away. It is therefore worth while to investigate somewhat fully the precise meaning of the expression and to consider how far at this point the two reports are in agreement.

The general meaning of each passage is seen from its context.

In St. Matthew the words form part of our Lord's charge to the twelve Apostles on sending them forth to preach and to heal the sick (chap. x. 6 foll.). On the one hand, towards the close, He assures them of the Father's providential care; on the other He inspires them with courage, and places before them the reward of loyalty to the Master, and the condemnation of those who deny Him. He prepares them in fact for persecution; He foretells the divisions which His teaching will bring to pass and the issues of discipleship. A man must make his choice: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me."

St. Luke cites this saying of our Lord in a different connexion. Nor is there indeed any reason to suppose that it was uttered once only. According to St. Luke the words were spoken in the course of the last journey to Jerusalem to the 'great multitudes' who were following Jesus—to those men who seemed to regard discipleship as an easy thing, who were going with Jesus to Jerusalem misled by some false Messianic hope, He sets forth the truth first by the strongly decisive form of the saying: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea and his own life also, cannot be my disciple." He then adds two parables, in the same sense, of the rash builder and the rash king, each of whom failed to calculate the cost and difficulty of his under-

taking. In each case the context illustrates the phrase. In St. Matthew, however, it is intended to nerve and strengthen the resolute disciple; in St. Luke it is intended to make the rash and unreflecting count the cost before he arrays himself on the side of Christ.

The expression in St. Matthew, 'loving father or mother more than me' has never presented any difficulty, and yet the exact meaning has sometimes been missed. For the question is not so much of personal attachment to parents, as of adherence to principles which they hold. Personal attachment is not inconsistent with wide disagreement in politics or religion, though, of course, more often than not, such disagreement is followed by estrangement and failure of love.

It is here that we find the true key to the meaning of *μισεῖν* (to hate). 'To hate father and mother' is not to hate them personally, but to oppose the principles which they represent in opposition to Christ—to be 'on the other side' in the great controversy between Christianity and paganism. If this explanation be borne in mind, it will not be necessary to interpret *μισεῖν* as signifying "to act as if one hated," or even "to hate parents so far as they are opposed to Christ." It is needless to say that the highest sanction of natural affection was given by our Lord both by precept (Matt. v. 22, 24, xv. 5; comp. 1 John iii. 18), and by example (John xix. 25-27); and that therefore no thought of bitterness, or rancour, or vengeance, or injury—the usual accompaniments of hate—can enter into the word in this connexion. The inclusion of a man's own life or soul among things to be 'hated' for the sake of Christ illustrates the meaning of the expression, which implies dispassionate, often sorrowful, but not wrathful or vindictive opposition. This point is well expressed by Bengel, (*Gnomon Novi Testamenti, ad loc.*): "Hoc odium non solum comparate et conditionate debet accipi; sed etiam absolute.

Nam quisquis maturam cognitionem, gustum, appetitum Dei et bonorum cœlestium a Christo duxit; is habet generosum idemque tamen ab omni acerbitate remotum sui et omnis creaturæ vanitati subjectæ fastidium atque odium."

It remains to be seen how far *μισεῖν* (to hate), as used by the classical writers and in the LXX., admits of this modified and gentler meaning. In its ethical aspect, as a classical word, *μισεῖν* has a certain range of meaning. Up to a point it was *καλόν* (noble and good) to hate. In the Ajax of Sophocles, Odysseus says: "I was hating when it was right to hate" (*ἐμίσουν ἡνίκ' ἦν μισεῖν καλόν*), 1367, but he urges Agamemnon not to press hatred beyond the point of justice—*τοσόνδε μισεῖν ὥστε μὴ δίκην πατεῖν*, 1335. In Aristotle (*Eth. Nic.* iv. 8. 7), *μισητόν* is contrasted with *ἡδύ* merely as things pleasing or unpleasing to good taste. Whence we get a meaning for *μισεῖν* to hate or dislike on principle, the personal element being entirely excluded, or, if it comes in, the person being regarded simply as representative of a principle.

In the LXX. *μισεῖν* generally represents the Hebrew *אָשַׁף*, and is as frequently used of things as of persons; e.g., of hating "unjust gain," Exodus xviii. 21. "Every abomination to the Lord," Deuteronomy xii. 31. "Robbery for burnt offering," Isaiah lxi. 8. It is also frequently used to express vindictive personal hate as of the brethren of Joseph, Genesis xxxvii. 4, 5, and generally of enemies, Lev. xxvi. 17, and elsewhere.

The Greek word, however, as well as its Hebrew equivalent admits of a much gentler interpretation, signifying, in relation to things, moral disapprobation; in relation to persons, rejection in favour of another. Instances of the first are: "They hated (*ἐμίσησαν*) knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord," Proverbs i. 29. "Hate the evil and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate," Amos. v. 15. In regard to persons, two instances

may be quoted which bear closely on the New Testament use of the word: "He loved Rachel more than Leah. . . . And the Lord saw that Leah was hated," Genesis xxix. 30, 31. "If a man have two wives, the one beloved (*ἡγαπημένη*), and the other hated (*μισουμένη*)," Deuteronomy xxi. 15. In both of these cases the contrast between 'love' and 'hate' is little more than the contrast produced by preference.

If we turn to the New Testament, we find the same gradation in the meaning of *μισεῖν*. It ranges from the hatred, of which persecution is the fruit and almost the necessary result (see Matt. v. 43, 44, and Mark x. 22, 23) to the choice which rejects one person and prefers another: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other: or else he will hold to one and despise the other" (Matt. iv. 24), and "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hate" (Rom. ix. 13), where the annotation of the word in its original setting (Malachi i. 2) is sterner than in the citation. When St. Paul, in the same Epistle (Rom. vii. 15), speaks of "doing that which he hates," he throws light on the meaning of a disciple of Christ hating his own soul—equally a requirement of Christian discipline with hating father and mother for the sake of Christ. To hate one's own soul is to oppose the baser impulses of mind, will and desire; and to do that which one hates is to yield to the temptation which the higher instinct condemns. Still nearer to the meaning of hate in the passage we are considering is its meaning in the frequent Johannine phrase of the world's hatred of Christ and Christians. In its incipient stage the world's hatred is indifference or calm dislike. Human society hates the disciples and discipline of Christ, but does not actively persecute unless thwarted or reproved. It was trade jealousy, and not doctrine, which stirred the hostility of the Ephesian silversmiths against St. Paul's teaching, and it was the falling revenues of the Bithynian

farmers, who supplied the markets¹ with food for the temple victims, that impelled the imperial legate to persecute.

The inference from this review of the places in which *μισεῖν* occurs, is, that the parallel passages which stand at the head of this paper are much more nearly identical than would appear to the English reader. The fact is that the Greek word and its Hebrew equivalent pass through a variety of meanings not included, at least by literary usage, in the English word 'to hate.' The English dictionaries admit for hate such synonyms only as abhor, detest, abominate, loathe; and consequently in a passage of this kind 'hate' conveys a different notion to the English mind from that which *μισεῖν* conveyed to the mind of a Greek. And although hatred of home for Christ's sake seems too strong a word, it would be misleading in another direction to substitute any weaker phrase as a translation for this, which, itself or its Aramaic equivalent, we must believe to have been Christ's own word. St. Matthew's report referred by the Evangelist to a different occasion may thus have been an equally exact record of our Lord's words; or it may be a softened form intended to convey the Evangelist's impression of the Master's meaning.

Christian history gave the same twofold interpretation to the word. The sword of division began its work in the earliest days. And though instances must have often occurred in family life where the reciprocal 'hatred' of each other's religion would be quite overmastered by the reciprocal love for each other of parent and child, and of husband and wife, still all the elements of tragedy were contained in the possible conflict of principles and feelings involved in obedience to the rule of Christ. And though many would be found in the course of history ready, like

¹ Pliny's letters to Trajan, xcvi. (xcvii.).

Antigone, "to join in love but not in hate," the tendency was for reasoned opposition on the Christian side to arouse vindictive hatred and persecution on the other side.

And unhappily Christian history also shows that 'hating' father and mother for the sake of Christ came to mean division within the Church itself for the sake of a party leader or a doctrinal controversy.¹ And sometimes the most fierce contentions and the most irreparable divisions have existed, where the lines of difference are most slender and all but undefinable. It is the glory of English politics that private friendships should be compatible with political rivalry and "hatred" of opposing principles. And it is the blot and shame of historic Christianity that it should often have been found an impossible condition to contend for a principle without passion, and to 'hate' in the gospel sense without compromising love.

¹ See *Didache*, xvi. 3. ἡ ἀγάπη στραφήσεται εἰς μῖσος ἀξαναούσης γὰρ τῆς ἀνομίας μισήσουσιν ἀλλήλους καὶ διώξουσιν καὶ παραδώσουσιν. And on this passage see Dr. Bigg in *Journal of Theological Studies*, April, 1905, p. 411.

ARTHUR CARR.