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STUDIES IN THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

I. THE BEATITUDES.

So long as the study of the New Testament continues, it is probable that Mrs. Lewis's discovery of the Sinaitic Palimpsest will rise rather than decline in importance. With her text, with the Curetonian and the Peshitta, we have something like the three terms of a mathematical series, whence the character of the series can be determined, and earlier or later terms inferred. A series 2, 4, is ambiguous, but a series 2, 4, 6, or 2, 4, 8 certain. And for certain purposes we have in the Harklensian and Palestinian Versions two further terms. For the latter Mrs. Lewis has again done admirable service, while the merit of locating it correctly, as in the case of the Peshitta, belongs to Professor Burkitt.

The writer who has hitherto—so far as the undersigned is aware—pursued this line of inquiry with the greatest success, is one whose recent death makes a painful gap in the ranks of European Semitists, Professor Adalbert Merx. Long known by his works on Syriac grammar as a painstaking student, in his work on the Syriac Gospels¹ he displayed a degree of acuteness and power of generalisation which perhaps his earlier writings did not indicate. He speedily convinces his reader that in the case of a text so important as that of the Gospels various readings and renderings, however minute, are fraught with tremendous significance; an alteration for “and” to “or” may embody the result of a long train of thought and controversy. In the history of the Gospel text the Higher and the Lower Criticism meet, and it is hard to say where one ends and the other begins.

Bulky as is the commentary of Merx, it does not exhaust

¹ *Die vier kanonischen Evangelien nach ihrem ältesten bekannten Texte*, Berlin, 1897-1905.

its subject, and there seems to be some opportunity left for building on the foundation which he has laid. And this is the intention of the present studies. The first subject will be the Beatitudes.

Of these there are two records, that of Luke, who records *four*, and that of Matthew, who offers *nine*. The respective records are as follows.¹

Luke vi. 20-23.

- a. Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.
- b. Blessed are ye that hunger now, for ye shall be filled.
- c. Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh.
- d. Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company and reproach you, and cast out your name as evil for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy ; for, behold, your reward is great in heaven ; for in the same manner did their fathers unto the Prophets.

Matthew v. 3-11.

- a. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- c. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.
- e. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
- b. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.
- f. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.
- g. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
- h. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God.
- i. Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- d. Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad ; for great is your reward in heaven ; for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.

What is the relation of these two texts to each other ?

In the first place it is clear that the Lucan beatitudes are, with the exception of *d*, epigrammatic and unqualified. if "you" means "all mankind," they constitute a eulogy on present misery, on the ground that there is to be a com-

¹ The translation follows the R.V.

plete reversal of conditions. Just as in the Parable of Dives and Lazarus nothing is said of the moral qualities of the two, but only of their respective condition in this world and the next is an account given, so here (if "you" have that sense) present misery is said to be the prelude to happiness.

In the Matthaean versions of *a, b*, this is altered. Qualifications are introduced, such as seriously alter the sense. It is no longer poverty, but poverty in spirit, which earns the kingdom of heaven; not real hunger and thirst, but hunger and thirst [after] righteousness, which are to be satisfied. In *c* mourning is not to turn into laughter, but to be solaced. And the additional beatitudes *e, f, g, h, i*, are all eulogistic of moral qualities, not of physical conditions.

In *a* the Syriac versions exhibit one difference of rendering, apparently slight in character; LS [Lewis Syriac] and CS [Curetonian Syriac] render *poor in their spirit* for *poor in spirit*, introduced by PŠ [Peshitta Syriac] after the Greek, and retained in JS [Palestinian Syriac]. And (like some of the other authorities) they vary in the location in Matthew of the beatitude *e*; CS places it after *a*, whereas the others place it after *c*.

The beatitude *e* excites suspicion, because it is a *Rabbinic* aphorism, based on Psalm xxxvii. 11, "The meek shall inherit the earth." This is rendered in the Peshitta of the Old Testament, "The *poor* shall inherit the earth," in accordance with a very common confusion between the Hebrew words for *poor* and *meek*, which originally appear not to have been distinct.¹ The addition of the words *in spirit* gives us the transition between "poverty" and "meekness"; the one is humble in means, and the other humble in spirit.

The beatitude *e*, then, of which the place is uncertain, appears to be an insertion of the same type as that of the

¹ עניים and ענוים. Arab. سجين = "captive."

word "in spirit" in beatitude *a*; perhaps it does not absolutely imply that its author had the beatitudes before him in Hebrew, but it implies that its author was acquainted with the ambiguity of the Hebrew word for "meek," and felt safe in adding a beatitude which simply embodied a text of the Psalms, and which is practically found in the Oral Tradition.¹ What is uncertain is whether *e* was meant to displace *a*, or to be an addition to the list. Since the "poor in spirit" and "the meek" are identical, probably the former was the case.

The same hand is easily traceable in beatitude *b*, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God." The argument lying at the basis of this text is from Judges vi. 24, where an altar is called *Jehovah Shalom* [Jehovah Peace]; whence the Rabbis infer that Peace is a name of God. "Great is Peace," we read in the Oral Tradition, "because the name of God is Peace," and that verse is quoted. Hence the "Sons of Peace" = the Sons of God. There was a rule that the salutation "Peace be upon you" might not be said in an unclean place, because of Peace being a divine name.²

The same hand is probably traceable in beatitude *g*, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." This would seem to be evolved from Isaiah vi., where the Prophet says that he, being a man of unclean lips, is ruined because he has *seen God*. "Uncleanness of lips" is afterwards identified with iniquity; whence the Targum has some justification for its rendering of the phrase "worthy to be reprov'd" or "tainted with iniquity." And indeed for the identification of the lips with the heart evidence could be found in the Gospel itself: "Out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh." And the argument from Isaiah might seem as sound as the others.

¹ B. *Succah*, 29b.

² B. *Sabbath*, 10b.

The objection to this teaching is not that it is unsound, but rather that it is like (and not *unlike*) the teaching of the Scribes. That teaching consisted in the evolution of precepts from the text of the Old Testament by methods which at times were reasonable, at others (to our minds) the reverse ; but they lacked personal authority—the “ *I say unto you* ”—which the Speaker of the Lucan beatitudes possessed. Hence these precepts give the commentator little trouble ; the genuine sayings, with their uncompromising authoritativeness, seem at times to require the analogue of smoked glass to prevent their proving too dazzling for the common eye.

Beatitude *c* in Matthew exhibits the “ smoked glass ” as compared with its Lucan form. The change from mourning to laughter is something positive ; the transition to “ being comforted ” is neutral. However for the assertion that the mourners would be comforted the writer could cite authority. The comforting of mourners, according to Jewish authorities, took priority over visiting the sick. Even the bereaved Gentile was to be “ comforted,” i.e. visited and sat with. A verse of Job was used to prove that the *mourner*, like the bridegroom, should sit at the head of the table.¹ In Ecclesiasticus the practice of “ comforting ” is recommended, and the mourner told to accept the comfort. Hence “ because they shall be comforted,” i.e. “ because comforters will come to visit them,” is from the Rabbinic standpoint quite defensible.

Beatitude *f*, “ Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy,” is also part of the Rabbinic stock. It is a comment upon Deuteronomy xiii. 18 : “ And He may give thee mercy and have mercy upon thee.” The comment in the Oral Tradition runs thus :² “ Whoso is merciful unto mankind

¹ Authorities in פסח יצחק, s.v. מְבַלֵּים, etc.

² B. *Sabbath*, 151b.

receives mercy from heaven ; and whoever has no mercy on mankind receives no mercy from heaven." " Shall give thee mercy " was then interpreted as " make thee merciful " ; and the occurrence of " and have mercy upon thee " immediately after lends this gloss some colour. The old authorities appear all to take this view. The Peshitta of the Old Testament offers an alternate rendering, " shall love thee," for " shall have mercy upon thee," in which case the phrase " shall give thee mercy " might be rendered " shall show thee mercy " ; the Vulgate omits one of the phrases.

Beatitude *b* in Matthew reveals the fact that it has been altered, by the difficulty of its Greek. In that language these verbs rarely take the accusative ; ¹ the addition is not quite so strange in the Syriac versions. The nature of the comment is similar to that of the Targum on Isaiah lv.1. : " Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters " ; in the Targum, " Ho every one that wishes to learn, let him come and learn."

The beatitude *d* shows more signs of alteration than any. The form in Luke is characterised by some remarkable Hebraisms. " Blessed are ye when men hate you, excommunicate you, reproach you, and defame you for the Son of Man's sake." Here the word " defame," in Greek " cast out your name as evil," has been rightly identified with the Hebrew expression of Deuteronomy xxii. 14,² etc. Of this " reproach " might seem to be an alternative rendering, as the Greek is not really intelligible. In Matthew LS alone preserves what is practically the same triad, " when men hate, persecute, and say what is evil about you." Clearly in the two Gospels we have different renderings of the same idiom : that idiom is literally *bring out an evil name*, and while in Luke it is the name that is supposed to be cast out of the

¹ οἱ πεινώντες καὶ διψῶντες τῆν δικαιοσύνην.

² הוציא שם רע.

community, in Matthew the evil name or word is supposed to be *uttered*. The latter appears to be the more scholarly rendering. "Persecute" and "excommunicate" may represent the same word; perhaps "persecute" is a euphemistic mistranslation,¹ such as sometimes occurs. For "hate" the other authorities have "reproach," though the difference in the order of the words shows that there has been tampering with the text. "Reproach" is not identical with "say what is evil about," yet the two are distinguished by a nuance only; and it is not clear why "reproach" should have displaced "hate" rather than the phrase which it so nearly resembles in meaning.²

The translation given above is that of the R.V.; the original is likely to have meant "Blessed shall ye be, when men shall hate, excommunicate and defame you"; it contains a prophecy of future persecution, for which the reason has to be given, and that is represented in Luke by "for the Son of Man's sake," in LS of Matthew "for my name," and in PS, etc., by "on my account." The later tradition of Matthew is not satisfied with this, and adds the word "falsely," which appears before "for my name," etc., in CS and most authorities, and after it in PS. It is already involved in the words rendered "defame," and adds nothing to the sense.

The clause with which beatitude *d* ends in Matthew is, according to LS, "for so did their fathers persecute the Prophets." The Greek has "for so did they persecute the prophets which were before you." CS, according to its custom, gives both: "for so did your fathers persecute the prophets which were before you." Evidently what is literal and right is "for so were the prophets persecuted

¹ מַנְרִין, interpreted מַנְרִין.

² In the next paper we shall find grounds for thinking "hate" and "reproach" various renderings of מַנְרִין.

by them which were before," of which "their fathers" of LS and Luke is a paraphrase.

The beatitude that remains in Matthew (*i*) "Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," appears to add little to *d*. Yet its *tense*, to which PS only of the Syriac authorities attaches much importance, is remarkable. The doctrine which it contains is that of the Book of Wisdom rather than of the Gospel. In the Jewish Oral Tradition it is deduced from Job viii. 7: "Thy beginning shall be from affliction [*sic*; or "afflicted"], and thy latter end very great." R. Eleazar said: "God brings afflictions on the *righteous* in this world, in order that they may inherit the world which is to come."¹ He then quotes the verse of Job as his authority. The relation then of *i* to *d* is similar to that of *e* to *a*.

The form taken by *d* in Matthew furnishes clear evidence of the originality of the Lucan form. For this is addressed to *the disciples*, and contains a warning and an exhortation appropriate to the monly. And in Luke all the beatitudes are so addressed, and the word *now* is inserted with *b* and *c* to distinguish them from *d*, which refers to the future. Merx points out that in the LS form of the Sermon in Matthew it is addressed to the disciples only, whereas the later authorities imply that it is addressed to the crowds. Addressed to the disciples, the words are in the highest degree sublime and inspiring; poor, hungry and thirsty, and distressed, they are assured that what they have got is better than any earthly kingdom; that their apparent sufferings are the prelude to all that the heart can desire; and that their future sufferings for His cause will class them with the Prophets of whom all Israel was proud. That—if the phrase may be used without irreverence,—is the strength of convic-

¹ B. *Kiddushin*, 40b.

tion that moves mountains ; and only reverence prevents the citation of something resembling it in recent history.

But the words *you* and *now* were overlooked by "Matthew," and the precepts were applied to the whole world. Naturally the propositions seemed staggering ; for that hunger, poverty and sorrow were invariably the prelude to their opposite seemed too plainly contradicted by experience. Hence they had in each case to be so interpolated that the *Jewish* reader would perceive that they were in accordance with what the Rabbis taught. And while Rabbinising what the tradition supplied, the editor felt justified in adding some other beatitudes for which chapter and verse could be cited out of Holy Scripture. For *four* seemed an insufficient number. But it seems to the present writer that these Rabbinic beatitudes, depending on the literal interpretation of the text, form a strange prelude to that authoritative discourse in which a new revelation, a new stage of evolution, is substituted for the Law and the Prophets.

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