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THE "SINGLE" EYE.

THE saying of Jesus, "If thine eye be single (ἁπλοῦς) thy whole body shall be full of light," has excellent documentary support. It is independently attested by our first and third evangelists—we will use the current designations "Matthew" and "Luke"—forming part of that older material which they use in common, but do not obtain from Mark. In critical parlance, the saying belongs to Q, and Q has been decreed off-hand a source (Quelle) and identified with the *Logia*, the compilation of the precepts of Jesus reported by Papias, on unknown authority, if any, to have been made by the Apostle Matthew "in the Hebrew tongue." The only three characteristics specified for this reported work exactly reverse those of the material designated Q. This material was (1) not in "Hebrew." (2) It was not confined to precepts, but largely concerned with the mighty works of Jesus in their bearing on the problem of His person;—it even dealt with the person and work of His forerunner. (3) It was not compiled by an Apostle nor by any first-hand reporter. These three points can all be proved from the Q material itself. But the temptation to "identify" besets the critic as well as the excavator. By the time the sixteen different reconstructors of Q have settled their differences and found a discernible unity somewhere in the pile of fragments, some reconciliation may be found with Papias. Meantime, however, it will be safer to use the letter Q purely as an algebraic symbol. Let it designate simply *material* of the type described (i.e. coincident matter of Matthew and Luke after subtraction of Mark), without prejudging the question of its derivation, whether apostolic or secondary, oral or written. We have not even determined as yet whether the Q material comes all

from a single source, or from several sources of different kinds.

But is it proper to speak of a Q saying as "independently" attested by Matthew and Luke? Why may not one have taken it from the other?

Wernle's demonstration of the mutual independence of Matthew and Luke in his admirable *Synoptische Frage* is too long for transcription. We must content ourselves with a reference to this work and a challenge to critics who maintain that the differences in treatment of the sayings are due solely to the individual fancy of the particular evangelist, to produce a parallel instance from the treatment either accords to Mark. In the particular case of the saying, "Let thine eye be single," both sense and historical occasion are made utterly different in the Matthaean and Lukan versions respectively, though the saying itself is reported in almost identical terms. In the absence of disproof this must be taken to show that Matthew and Luke are following diverse tradition. Where either so treats material taken from Mark it is for the sake of adjusting it to another form of the tradition. But the assumed variant form is here just the point in question. If Matthew in borrowing from Luke (or Luke in borrowing from Matthew) has not arbitrarily altered occasion and sense—an unlikely supposition—he must have had some *independent* report unknown to us; for Mark has no reference to this saying whatever.

Unfortunately the very differences which verify the authenticity of the saying increase the difficulties of its interpretation; and it is with its interpretation that we are now concerned. A recent discussion by one of the keenest and ablest of New Testament critics denies indeed the authenticity.[1]

[1] W. Brandt in *Z. ntl. W.* xiv. 2 (May, 1913), under the title, "Der Spruch vom Lumen Internum," p. 107. The article is to be continued as we write, but the critical discussion of meaning and authenticity shows the author's

But this is chiefly on the ground of an interpretation which we take to be erroneous, and is no less opposed to the Lukan than the Matthaean context. An interpretation consonant with at least one of these, and in agreement with the general style, bearing and animus of the precepts of Jesus as otherwise known should remove all reasonable objection. It may not establish the authenticity, but will at least put the burden of proof on him who disputes it. We shall have attained the strongest attainable documentary attestation for a saying of Jesus; and that must have no small historical weight in the case of a Teacher whose sayings were treated as having more than human authority within a few months at the outside from the date of their utterance.

So far as Matthew is concerned we agree with Brandt that neither sense nor reported historical occasion of the saying, "Let thine eye be single," can be correct. It forms part of an agglutination in vi. 19–34, the material of which is all found in fuller and more appropriate contexts in Luke, not connected with the Sermon on the Mount, but each factor having its own historical occasion. Together with the adjoining material the saying on the "single eye" has thus been employed by Matthew to fill out the first of the five great discourses of Jesus wherein this evangelist includes most of his material not borrowed from Mark. These agglutinated "discourses" give, in fact, to the Matthaean Gospel its distinctive character.[1] The first occupies Matthew v. 1–vii. 27. We designate it The Sermon on the Mount, recognising as its basis the briefer discourse on Thank-

view. The saying, says Brandt, is "an attempt to set forth the value of self-consciousness, and to urge the exercise of it. . . . We may be fairly sure it does not come from Jesus."

[1] The five discourses each conclude with a distinctive formula borrowed from Q (Luke vii. 1) and nowhere else employed. It marks the transition to new material in Matthew vii. 28; xi. 1; xiii. 53; xix. 1 and xxvi. 1.

worthy Goodness, reported (with omissions) in Luke vi. 20–49. The two Q discourses principally utilised by Matthew as a quarry to fill out his sermon are that in Luke xi. 1–13 on Prayer, and that in Luke xii. 13–34 on Treasure in Heaven. The additions in Matthew vi. 9–13 and Matthew vii. 7–11 are taken from the discourse on Prayer, while the greater part of the context in which our own saying lies embedded in Matthew vi. 19–34 is taken from the discourse on Treasure in Heaven.

The motive for the attachment is transparent. From the Beatitudes in v. 1–12 to the description of Thankworthy Worship in vi. 1–18 the thought of the entire "Sermon" in its Matthaean form is dominated by the thought of heavenly "reward" (μισθός). The Beatitudes introduce it (v. 3, 12), the Antitheses contrasting the "righteousness of God" with that "of the scribes and Pharisees" repeat it (v. 46), the section on Works of Devotion is full of it. Worship "to be seen of men" exhausts its "reward." True worship must be in secret, "else ye have no reward with your Father" (vi. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 16, 18). At this point begins Matthew's great addition from the discourse on Treasure in Heaven, given according to Luke on occasion of Jesus' being called upon in a synagogue to settle a dispute over inheritances. It appears in the form of an adjuration to *seek this heavenly reward,* and into the midst of it are inserted the sayings, "Let thine eye be single" (vi. 22–23), and "No man can serve two masters" (vi. 24), both given by Luke in other connexion. It is impossible in this Matthaean context to mistake the sense. *Thus framed* the saying reflects the exhortations of St. Paul: "Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth." "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (Col.

iii. 2, 2 Cor. iv. 18). To Matthew accordingly a "single" eye means an unwavering, consistent aim. He is desirous of fortifying the effort of the disciple to attain the "treasure laid up in heaven." The same motive leads him to introduce the final division of the "Sermon" in chapter vii. with the warning against censorious judgment (vii. 1–5) and carelessness of things holy (vii. 6).

Matthew, then, has taken the word ἁπλοῦς—the *Greek* word—in its primary and literal sense. He understands Jesus to be inculcating "singleness" of aim. Is this the real meaning?—We regard it as impossible (1) because in *both* forms of the saying the contrasted adjective is not anything signifying "wavering" or "inconstant," but πονηρός, i.e. "evil," "malignant"; (2) because the Lukan narrative context is wrongly disregarded by Matthew. It is consonant with another sense of ἁπλοῦς, the exact antithesis of πονηρός. Moreover, Luke's account of the occasion of the saying is not without support in Mark and John.

(1) In the Greek language, but in no other, so far as known to the present writer, the adjective meaning "single" (ἁπλοῦς) is applied to the act of *giving*, in the sense "liberal," "generous." The adverb (ἁπλῶς) has the corresponding meaning. Thus in Romans xii. 8 he that "giveth" is urged to do it ἁπλῶς, which the King James version wrongly renders "with simplicity." The Revisers properly correct this to "with liberality," putting in the margin "Gr. *singleness*." A still more undeniable instance appears in James i. 5, where he who lacks wisdom is bidden to ask of God, because He "giveth to all liberally (ἁπλῶς), and does not even upbraid." The reason for this remarkable linguistic usage is perhaps to be found in the customs of primitive races in respect to giving.

To this day the traveller in oriental countries will find himself beset by a host of "givers" whose offerings are far from disinterested. From the instant tents are pitched the

natives swarm about offering all kinds of trifles ostensibly as "gifts." The more they are refused the more is acceptance insisted on. Etiquette requires that the fiction of "giving" shall be maintained, even when, as in the biblical case of the cave of Machpelah (Gen. xxiii. 8–16), the equivalent to be paid is hinted in no dubious terms.

The Arab proverb "a gift begets a gift" discloses the unvarnished truth. The giving is not "single," but expects an equivalent (more often an increase) in return. Against such disguised barter the Platonic ideal of "goodness" sets the "giving" of God, who seeks nothing in return for His abundant generosity, who can be neither enriched by men's offerings nor injured by their wicked acts. In Wisdom of Solomon xii. 19–22 the principle is applied to the problem of the unequal distribution of suffering. It is *παιδεία*, "discipline." Omnipotence cannot be vindictive, hence the calamities God sends are to be received as the chastening of sons. The Q discourse on Thankworthy Goodness applies it to good. God's giving and serving, unlike man's, is "single," without thought of return. "He is kind even to the unthankful and the evil." Therefore "thankworthy goodness," "the righteousness of God," consists in liberality and service pure of all thought of "recompense." Hospitality should be shown to the poor, the lame, the halt and the blind, not to kinsfolk and rich neighbours, "lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee" (Luke xiv. 12–14). Kindness should be shown to "enemies." Lending and giving should not be "to receive as much again," but as "children of the Highest." This "royal law" of "goodness" pervades the teaching of Jesus, appearing with special distinctness in the Q elements of the Gospel of Luke and in the Epistle of James. But as we have seen in an earlier article, its basis is a conception of the transcendent nature of God. And this larger thought

of God found expression much earlier in Platonic and Stoic religious writers. It would seem to have permeated the later Jewish thought through the medium of the Wisdom literature. The adjective ἁπλοῦς, with its corresponding adverb, is almost a technical term for this distinction between the "royal goodness" of God, and the interested serving and giving of men, with their petty calculation of benefits, their ulterior motives, their tacit hopes of being "recompensed again." God gives "singly." He has no *arrière pensée*. His bounties are not a bait, but "good" and "perfect" gifts (i.e. gifts both kind and complete), coming down from a Father of all lights with whom is no variableness neither shadow cast by turning. If ever modern entered into the full spirit of this noble Platonic thought of the "single" goodness of God it was Lowell in the familiar lines from "The Vision of Sir Launfall"—

> In the Devil's booth are all things sold,
> Each ounce of dross costs its ounce of gold,
> For a cap and bells our lives we pay,
> Bubbles we buy with a whole soul's tasking;
> 'Tis only heaven that is given away,
> 'Tis only God may be had for the asking.
>
> What is so rare as a day in June?
> Then, if ever, come perfect days,
> When heaven over earth her warm ear lays,
> And tries its chords if they be in tune.

On the point of this twofold sense of the word "single" (ἁπλοῦς), vital as it would appear for any thorough discussion of the meaning of the saying, Let thine eye be "single," Brandt defers discussion.[1] He merely "remarks by way

[1] His second article, published since the above was in type in *Z. nlt. W.* xiv. 3, has on pp. 189–201 a very full and scholarly discussion of "the meaning of the words ἁπλους and πονηρός," where it is shown on the basis of Edwin Hatch's study in *Essays in Biblical Greek* (1889), that the use of πονηρός and ἀγαθός (or ἁπλους) with ὀφθαλμός is a Hebrew and Septuagint idiom to express a generous or malignant and envious disposition. Cf. Matt. xx. 15.

of anticipation that πονηρός as applied to the human eye means "ungracious," and for ἁπλοῦς the meaning "liberal" or "generous" seems to be demonstrable. At a pinch the meaning "righteous" might serve; that is, if we assume the author's meaning to be that the Creator imposed upon the eye the duty of giving light: the righteousness of the eye will then consist in giving light. On the same assumption πονηρός is of course to be understood in "the opposite sense." Brandt's interpretation sets out from the idea that the main object of the saying is to answer the question: Whence has the body its light? Its conclusion is that the "generous" or "liberal" eye is that which is generous to the body which it illuminates. The "evil" or "ungenerous" eye is that which like an untrimmed lamp sheds a feeble and insufficient light in the inner chambers of consciousness. This interpretation Brandt supports by citing Proverbs xx. 27, "The spirit of man is a lamp of the Lord, searching all the chambers that are within," and the reference of St. Paul to the human self-consciousness in 1 Corinthians ii. 11. He holds therefore that "the original sense of the saying" is "an attempt to set forth the value of self-consciousness, and to urge its exercise."

If this be the real sense of the saying we must agree with Brandt that it cannot be authentic. We may grant the possibility of some early psychologist having used imagery of this kind to encourage the habit of introspection; but the probability that Jesus ever wasted His breath on such sayings, or that His disciples cared to record them, may safely be dismissed from consideration.

The true starting point of the interpreter should be from the phrase (identical in Matthew and Luke) which admits no dispute, "If thine eye be evil" (πονηρός). Notoriously an "evil" or "malignant" eye (ὀφθαλμὸς πονηρός) is that which is directed in "envy, malice, and all uncharitable-

ness" on those around. The eye is not only (in the ancient mode of thought) a "lamp of the body," furnishing light to its occupant, the soul. It is also the organ of observation and of judgment. It may be kindly, charitable, "generous" (ἁπλοῦς); or it may be envious and malignant (πονηρός), darting venomous glances from the quiver of poisoned shafts within. The single treatise on 'Simplicity' in *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (Issachar) will show that Brandt is unquestionably right in rendering ἁπλοῦς "generous" or "liberal," and πονηρός "ungenerous," in the saying under consideration. So long as the latter adjective remains the known quantity in the problem Matthew's understanding is completely excluded. The opposite of an "evil" eye is not an eye unswervingly fixed on the highest gain. But neither is it the psychologist's eye. We can see nothing to connect this saying with the references to self-consciousness in Proverbs or St. Paul. On the other hand it is very closely akin to the passage in *Test. of Issachar*, § 3, "I never spoke against anyone, but walked in 'simplicity' of eyes" (*οὐ κατελάλησά τινος . . . πορευόμενος ἐν ἁπλότητι ὀφθαλμῶν*). Harsh judgment is the sin rebuked. It is the object of the saying to point out, that the eye looks inward as well as outward. The eye is the organ of observation and judgment, and as such is commonly characterised as "benevolent" or "malignant," "single" (i.e., generous) or "evil." But the eye is also the source of the soul's own light. It is the "lamp," or (as moderns would be more apt to say) the window of the body. The occupant of the body (the soul or self) cannot with impunity close its window to the light that brightens all the outward prospect. He cannot take a jaundiced view of the world outside, making censorious judgments, putting evil constructions on the dealings of God and man, without by the same act darkening the inward world, the abode of his own

soul. This is a lesson in morals and religion, not in psychology; and it is thoroughly characteristic of Jesus. It is the inculcation of that supreme charism of the Spirit of Christ, which, as St. Paul describes it, "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things," and "never faileth." The saying, "Let thine eye be *single*," must be (if we judge by the warning against its opposite and the penalty threatened): Be generous in judgment. Put the kindliest construction on what you see and experience.

(2) If with this meaning of the saying in mind we turn to its historical occasion as related by Luke we shall find abundant ground for the belief that, here as in the adjoining excerpts, Matthew has disregarded a genuine historical context which Luke has preserved. It is indeed the fashion among critics who have precipitately identified Q with the *Logia* of Papias to disparage the narrative introductions of Luke as mere editorial fictions drawn from the material itself. Convinced as they are that the precanonical source was a mere "collection of Sayings of Jesus" they are reluctant to grant any basis in older tradition for the Lukan narrative, especially when it fails, as in the present case, to appear in Matthew. And it must be admitted that the Lukan narrative framework often is demonstrably mere editorial fiction. Such cases we do not here consider. In other cases, such as the introduction to the discourse on Prayer (Luke xi. 1) and that to the discourse on True Wealth (Luke xii. 13 f.) Luke's historical occasions imply a knowledge of Jewish environment quite beyond the reach of most Gentiles, and give every indication of authenticity. Such is the case with his account of the warning of Jesus against the "evil eye." In Luke xi. 34 f. it forms the climax of a denunciation against "some" who had declared that His exorcisms were wrought by collusion with Beelzebub. "Others" had demanded a "sign from heaven." Both are grouped together in the

paragraph beginning: "This is an evil generation" (xi. 29–32). The evil generation has shown wilful blindness in its judgment of Him, and therefore "in the judgment" will be condemned by the Ninevites, who repented without a sign at the preaching of Jonah, and by the queen of the south, who for a lesser wisdom came from the ends of the earth. It is true that the *framework* of the warning against an "evil eye" (verses 33 and 36) is inappropriate. It is an exceedingly clumsy attachment of the saying about setting the "lamp" upon the lampstand which we have in Mark iv. 21 and which Luke had already transferred to his pages in Luke viii. 16 along with its companion verse Mark iv. 22. Now we have it a second time and the companion a little later (Luke xii. 2). This is coutrary to the demonstrable effort of Luke elsewhere to avoid duplication. This and the extreme awkwardness of the joiner-work suggest that the combination antedates the work of "Luke," a skilful stylist. Whether "Luke" or Q be responsible for the combination historical context and meaning alike demand a separation of the saying "Let thine eye be single" from the framework. Freed from this it appears in the Lukan narrative as the climax of Jesus' denunciation of "some" who "said He casteth out devils through Beelzebub" and others who "tempting Him sought of Him a sign from heaven." They are types of an "evil generation" which had disregarded tokens more cogent than such as availed with the Ninevites and the Queen of the South. The "darkness" of those who were in this case was due only to their own "evil eye." It was a wilful blindness on the part of men who professed to see. We have reason to think that the original application was more specific than that which Luke reports.

Luke and Matthew do not stand altogether alone in reporting the Blasphemy of the Scribes and Jesus' warning against the Evil Eye. Mark has two employments of this

material which in Q we find attached to the incident of the Exorcism of a Dumb Devil. One of these Markan employments seems to be introduced proleptically in Mark iii. 22–30 as a sort of parenthetic off-set to the story of how Jesus' mother and brethren opposed Him, deeming Him "beside himself." Its chronological displacement is apparent from the fact that the "scribes" who make the charge in verse 22 are defined as "those who had come down from Jerusalem"; whereas this same delegation are introduced in Mark vii. 1 as if on their first appearance ("And the Pharisees came unto Him, and *certain* of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem"). Now the coming of this delegation of scribes from Jerusalem so casually mentioned by Mark is anything but an unimportant fact. Such a visit of inspection of Jesus' work from the great Jerusalem authorities is just the event to mark a crisis in Jesus' Galilean ministry. It explains admirably the violence of the collision and Jesus' subsequent retirement. But it is only Mark who mentions it. In Luke there is no characterisation of those who make the blasphemous charge. In Matthew they are simply "the Pharisees." Not even in Mark iii. 22 does it appear who the authors of this evil judgment are, but only in Mark vii. 1. The latter position is easily seen to be the true one, from the fact that the rest of the colloquy proceeds in Mark vii. 1–23 along the same lines as the Q section of Matthew-Luke—inward *versus* ceremonial cleanness. Now it is quite noteworthy that while Mark in this case, as in all others, has but the briefest abstract of the Q discourse, and has indeed, as already observed, no report whatever of the saying, "Let thine eye be single," he *has* toward the close of the paragraph a reference to its counterpart the "evil eye," and (significantly enough) it is mentioned jointly with "blasphemy," the sin committed by the scribes from Jerusalem. The mention occurs in verse 22 as part of the list of inward

defilements. These are "evil thoughts . . . an evil eye, blasphemy, arrogance, madness."

The relation of the Fourth Gospel to Q material has the same free and untrammeled character as Mark's. Instead of the exorcism of a dumb devil as the occasion for Jesus' chief altercation with his self-righteous opponents, the occasion is made the healing of a man born blind by means which recall the Markan healing of the blind man of Bethsaida (Mark viii. 22–26). We also recall the fact that Mark has used two parallel healings, the one of a dumb man (vii. 31–37), the other of this blind man, in the immediate vicinity of his report of the Collision with the Scribes, and that in the Matthaean form of the story the exorcism is of "a demoniac blind *and* dumb," so that "the dumb man spake *and saw*."—But to return. In John ix. the story of the healing also concludes with a denunciation of "the Pharisees" because of their *wilful blindness*. Not only so, but their sin is declared to be *unforgivable*, as in Mark iii. 29=Matthew xii. 31=Luke xii. 10; while the altercation concludes in John x. 20 f. with the words: "And many of them said, He *hath a devil and is mad*; why hear ye him? Others said, These are not the sayings of one *possessed with a devil*. Can a *devil open the eyes* of the blind?"

Remote as are the relations of Mark and John to the Q saying, they are surely enough to justify the historical context reported by Luke as against the artificial collocations of Matthew. In the most authentic tradition the sayings: "If thine eye be 'single' thy body shall be full of light, if it be 'evil' thy whole body shall be full of darkness" was connected with the Blasphemy of the Scribes. It formed a part—perhaps the close—of that awe-inspiring rebuke with which Jesus met the perverse and malignant verdict of the religious leaders upon His work. They had spoken not against Him, but against the Spirit of God. Their blasphemy

could never be forgiven, because it was wilful. Had they been really blind, like the healed sufferer, they "would have had no sin," but professing to see "their sin remained." They had called light darkness and darkness light; they had made the lamp of the soul, their eye, "evil."

These corroborations from Mark and John of the historical occasion of the saying reported by Luke are sufficient to prove it something more than an editorial fiction. Taken together with the facts of common usage regarding the phrase the evil eye they would appear sufficient to establish sense and context alike, at least so far back as Q, the source known (it would seem) to all three Synoptists, if not to all four evangelists. If these conclusions hold, the gain will not be small to criticism. New and important light will be thrown on problems of the history of gospel tradition and interdependence. But that with which we are now chiefly concerned is simply the meaning of Jesus. Of the authenticity of the saying we need no longer doubt. Is it not singularly in harmony with His spirit and life? Was not His own "inward light," the brightness, serenity and faith exhibited in His life of God-like service and love no less clearly than in His "preaching of glad tidings of peace"—was not this light the reflected radiance of an eye "single" with the goodness of the Father in heaven?

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