

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 Expository Times* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

delivering a startling and almost overwhelming power. Douglas was descanting in his usually impassioned manner upon the wrongs and miseries of the negro race. Warming with his subject, and waxing more and more indignant with their persecutors, he seemed to lose all patience, and at last said that they must henceforth trust in the strength of their own right arm, seeing that it was in vain otherwise to hope for deliverance. At this moment there arose a tall aged negress who, while perfect silence reigned throughout the hall, said in a voice, not loud but deep, which thrilled every heart in that excited assembly, 'Frederick ! is God dead ?'

Lord, many times I am aweary quite
Of mine own self, my sin, my vanity—
Yet be not Thou, or I am lost outright,
Weary of me.

And hate against myself I often bear,
And enter with myself in fierce debate :
Take Thou my part against myself, nor share
In that just hate.

Best friends might loathe us, if what things perverse
We know of our own selves, they also knew :
Lord, Holy One ! if Thou who knowest worse
Shouldst loathe us too.¹

3. *This assurance will teach us to use all means necessary for steadfastness and progress.*—For the assurance is of a kind which by magnifying God's

¹ R. C. Trench.

grace in Christ, obtains a clear view of the difficulties which that grace has to overcome. So we shall wait upon God day by day, realizing the need of prayer, and of keeping in close touch with Jesus Christ, lest some temptation should take us un-awares. But we shall use the means freely not slavishly, as a privilege not as a task, finding in fellowship with God its own blest reward.

LITERATURE.

- Davies (J.), *The Kingdom without Observation*, 69.
Davies (T.), *Homiletic Expositions of Philipians*, 18.
Harper (F.), *A Year with Christ*, 191.
Jordan (W. G.), *The Philipian Gospel*, 42.
Jowett (J. H.), *The High Calling*, 12.
Kuegele (F.), *Country Sermons*, iii. 244.
Martin (S.), *Fifty Sermons*, 72, 76.
Meyer (F. B.), *The Epistle to the Philipians*, 27.
Paxton (W. M.), in *Princeton Sermons*, 75.
Rainy (R.), *Philipians* (Expositor's Bible), 25.
Sauter (B.), *The Sunday Epistles*, 530.
Spurgeon (C. H.), *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, xv. (1869), No. 872.
Stennett (J.), *Discourses on Personal Religion*, 430.
Stevens (H.), *Sermon Outlines*, 300.
Vaughan (J.), *Sermons*, No. 744, 13.
Sermons for the People, vii. 173 (T. B. Buchanan); vii. 150 (E. C. Wickham).

An Important Reading in the Diatessaron.

By J. RENDEL HARRIS, LITT.D., LL.D., WOODBROOKE SETTLEMENT, BIRMINGHAM.

ANY person who expects to solve the problem of the diversity of the New Testament text in the second century, without employing in the solution the Old Syriac and associated versions and the closely connected Diatessaron of Tatian, is, no doubt, the victim of a delusion; and with almost as great a sense of hallucination, we may say that the person who attempts to clear up the New Testament problem with the aid of both Old Syriac and Diatessaron, is mistaken, unless he can include in his preparation for the problem some greater acquaintance than ordinary with the genesis of both of the explanatory factors. This last remark is not meant to be in disparagement of the attempt of Professor von Soden, of whose co-operation we have been recently bereft, to explain striking variants by the influence of the Diatessaron; what we want to say is that, if Professor von Soden

was right, then we ought to know a great deal more about the Diatessaron and the associated Syriac Versions. Nor was the former remark as to the necessity of acquaintance with Syriac texts meant to be offensive to my friend Professor Souter, though I must admit that his book on the *Text and Canon of the New Testament* amazes me, both by the thoroughness of its treatment of the Latin Versions and by the inadequacy of its references to the Oriental texts; Professor Souter must build broader, before he builds higher; already his centre of gravity is in danger of falling outside his base.

What then is necessary by way of guidance, if we are to move towards a sufficiently considered and adequately supported solution? My impression is that we need to spend much more time on the Diatessaron and its comrades. For those who

are not familiar with the investigations that are going on we need some fresh statement of the existing and already registered evidence and some attempt at its re-interpretation. The first thing that the student needs is to re-examine the evidence for the following proposition:

The Peshito version of the Old Testament is, in part at least, anterior to the Diatessaron and to all known Syriac Versions of the New Testament. In connexion with that statement I am going to write a note upon one particular reading of the Diatessaron, which will serve as a commentary on the statement, and will incidentally throw a ray of light upon the relation between the development of the New Testament text and the parallel development of the institutional life of the Church; for I think it can be maintained that there is no peculiar phenomenon in the text which has not a conjugate phenomenon in the history of the Church.

Our knowledge of the Diatessaron is, in the main, our knowledge of the Commentary upon the Diatessaron made by Ephrem the Syrian, in the latter part of the fourth century, and translated, at a very early date, into the Armenian language, in which it is now preserved, with its underlying text. As we say, most of our certain knowledge of the Diatessaron comes from this source. We have the text and commentary of Ephrem translated into Armenian and from thence done into Latin, by Professor Mösinger; from the Latin of Mösinger, the text has been extracted and done into English by Mr. Hamlyn Hill; however convenient this may be, it is quite inadequate for close study, as the text cannot often be understood or even determined apart from the Commentary.

On p. 137 of Mösinger's edition we have the following sequence:

Qui maledicit patri suo aut matri suae, morte moriatur (Math. 15, 1-12) et qui blasphemat Deum, crucifigatur. Quibus verbis Deus honorem parentum cum suo honore comparavit, quam comparationem et propheta fecit, dicens, etc.

Here the Commentary shows that Mösinger should have spaced the words, 'And he that blasphemes God, let him be crucified,' and not have ended his quotation with the words from Matthew, 'He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.' For the commentator (Ephrem) goes on to explain

that with these words about the crucifying of the blasphemer, God joined the honour due to parents with His own. Mr. Hamlyn Hill saw this, and in his *Ephrem's Gospel Harmony* he printed the whole passage among the Ephrem Fragments.

Now, if we turn back to Mösinger, we find him perplexed, and rightly so, as to the origin of the added clause about the crucifixion of the blasphemer. In a footnote he says:

Forsitan alludit ad Lev. 24, 16, 'Qui blasphemaverit nomen Domini, morte moriatur.'

One's natural comment upon this bit of Latin (which is not exactly Ciceronian) is that *forsitan* is too strong a word to use, in view of the discordance of the quotation and its supposed original. Evidently Mösinger has sinned, in the Greek sense of not hitting the mark.

Suppose, however, we turn to the Peshito version of Dt 21²³, we shall find the very words used by Tatian, and commented upon by Ephrem; for the passage of Deuteronomy, which in our English Bible appears in the form:

'His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accused of God;)'

appears in the Syriac Old Testament, with the parenthesis in the form:

'for he that curses [or insults] God shall be crucified.'

Here then is the passage which Tatian incorporated in his Gospel Harmony; and it follows that the Syriac Old Testament is anterior to Tatian. The peculiar reading was, in fact, known to the observant Syrian commentators: I was pleased to find the confirmation of my identification of the passage, so far as the proof of the coincidence with Deuteronomy goes, in Isho'dad's commentary upon the Epistle to the Galatians; as the following quotation will show:

'It is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree. And it is asked, Where is it written? It is written in Deuteronomy, If a man is guilty of a mortal sin, and is crucified on the tree, and dies, his corpse shall not remain till the morning; but bury him on the same day that he is crucified, because *he who*

blasphemes God shall be crucified, or, it is a disgrace to God, that he should hang, as the Hebrew says.'

The inquirer in the text is clearly a Syrian, he does not know that Paul was quoting the Septuagint; and he is informed that the Syriac reads it this way, and the Hebrew this way; and a reference to the Hebrew shows that the Hebrew really has, 'an insult of God [or, a curse of God] is the crucified [*or* hanged].'

When we have satisfied ourselves that Tatian is quoting the Syriac Old Testament, we are raising other questions. For example, how does it happen, in view of such a quotation, that some persons have assumed that Tatian made his harmony in Greek? and, to change from criticism to dogma, how did a passage, susceptible of such a pro-Jewish application, ever find its way into a Christian Bible, or a Christian Harmony? The answer to this last question seems to be that the Syriac Bible was not made, as is commonly supposed, for Christians by the aid of Edessan Jews,

but that it was actually made by Edessan Jews for their own use, and passed from them to the Christians. Ought we to say, that the translation in question was anti-Christian? It is not easy to decide: certainly Jesus was condemned on a charge of blasphemy, and He is still known among the Jews as Taluy (the Hanged or Crucified), according to the word used in the Hebrew of Deuteronomy. Moreover, the early Christian literature is full of evidence for the existence of violent disputes whether Christ was the Curse or the Cursed, which show that this was one of the questions between Church and Synagogue. What is really difficult is to imagine how a Mesopotamian Christian could have transferred such a text from his Syriac Deuteronomy into his Gospel.

We have said enough to show the importance of the reading to which we have invited attention. If I have ever pointed the verse out before, I hope the repetition will be attributed to a lapse of memory. The passage is sufficiently important to invite further study.

Recent Foreign Theology.

The Russian Sects.

THE investigator of religious pathology will find abundant material in the second half of the second volume of K. K. Grass's *Russische Sekten*, which has just been published (Hinrichs, Leipzig; M. 14.50). This completes the author's study of the Skopzi, who base their sect on a literal interpretation of Mt 19¹². The history of these repulsive fanatics is given with great detail from 1832, and the historical survey is followed by a very complete account of the legends of the sect, their eschatology, way of salvation, ascetic and ecstatic practices, secret discipline, forms of worship, and organization, attention also being given to the sub-sects and the Neo-Skopzi. The key of the whole system is the endeavour to check the sexual impulse by castration, and the underlying principle of the Skopzi is of interest as being an ignorant recrudescence—in extreme form—of ancient heretical asceticisms. The book is of value for the folklorist as well, for the Skopzi

legend of the Czar Peter III., who is more or less confounded with Ivanoff (or Selivanoff), the founder of the sect, is of marked worth as an instance of historically traceable development of a myth. A Napoleon myth likewise plays a part, for he is declared by the Skopzi to be Antichrist and to have been the natural son of the Empress Catharine II., who first educated him in the Russian Academy of Sciences, and later sent him to France. The author's mode of treatment is of the most admirable German type—impartial and exact—and his work, which, it is to be hoped, will deal not merely with the Chlysti and Skopzi, but also with the minor sects, bids fair to supersede all previous discussions of the theme.

LOUIS H. GRAY.

Jesus in Non-Christian Sources.

THIS is one of the latest additions to the publishers' well-known *Kleine Texte*, which have