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THE USE OF ἐπιτιμᾶν IN MARK 8 30 AND 3 12

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IN St. Mark's account of the disclosure by Jesus to his disciples at Cesarea Philippi of his Messiahship we find in ch. 8 30 a puzzling use of ἐπιτιμᾶν. In response to Jesus' question: "But whom say ye that I am?" Peter had answered: "Thou art the Messiah". Then it is said of Jesus: καὶ ἐπετίμησεν αὐτοῖς, ἵνα μηδενὶ λέγωσι περὶ αὐτοῦ, which some scholars take to be equivalent to a denial of all Messianic claim, and would apparently render: "He rebuked them that they should say that about him to nobody". If this is the correct understanding of the verb here, it is a matter of considerable consequence. It would mean that, according to the earliest tradition, Jesus had made no Messianic claim, and had rebuked his disciples for suggesting such a thing. This is important, if true. The word, therefore, merits our careful study. As Jesus' Messianic claim is attested by many other passages in the Gospels, one doubts the correctness of this interpretation.

As is well known ἐπιτιμᾶν meant originally "to show honor to", "to honor"—a meaning found, for example, in Herodotus, 6, 39. Then it was employed in the sense of "set a value or a price upon" something, as, for example, food. From this usage it came to be employed in the sense of "adjudging or awarding a penalty". Finally the meaning last mentioned was extended so that ἐπιτιμᾶν meant "chide", "find fault with", "rebuke", "reprove", "censure severely", "blame", etc. Outside a few passages in the Gospels this is apparently as far as its development went. In the LXX it occurs eight times (Gen. 37 10; Ruth 2 16; Ps. 9 5;

68 31; 105 9; 118 21; Sirach 11 7; Zech. 3 2). With one exception ἐπιτιμᾶν in these passages is a translation of the Hebrew רָפָה "rebuke". In Sirach it translates רָפָה, a word which has an even stronger meaning.

In the Greek Papyri from Egypt, so far as I have been able to discover, the verb ἐπιτιμᾶν occurs but once. This is in a letter published in Grenfell and Hunt's *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, vol. X, p. 249. It is a letter from a woman, Taosis, to a man named Dionysius. The latter was, apparently some sort of a custodian of the former's son. She says, "See, I have not imitated you by taking away my son, but if you intend οὕτως αὐτῷ ἐπιτιμᾶν, I shall send Ptolemaeus and take him away. When his father died, I paid on his behalf 1300 drachmae, and expended on clothes for him 60 drachmae. I therefore beg that you will not persuade him to desert me, or I shall take him away and put him in pledge at Alexandria". Here the meaning of ἐπιτιμᾶν is not very clear. Grenfell and Hunt translate it "blame him". It might also be rendered "rebuke" or even "punish". Either meaning would suit the context. Indeed, from the last sentence quoted, it would seem that we might translate it by "prohibit", if we could supply in thought some such words as "from seeing me". Then the sentence would mean, "if you intend to prohibit him from seeing me in this way". That, however, is uncertain. The meaning may be "if you intend to punish him for seeing me". The usage does not afford a clear parallel to the use of ἐπετίμησεν in Mark 8 30.

In favor of the interpretation put upon the word by Schmidt and others is the fact that ἐπιτιμᾶν means "rebuke" in most of the New Testament passages in which it occurs, the majority of which are in the Synoptic Gospels. This is the case in Mc. 1 25; 9 25; 10 48; Lc. 4 35, 39; 8 24; 9 42; Matt. 17 18; 20 31; 2 Tim. 4 2; Jude 9.

In one other passage in Mark ἐπιτιμᾶν appears to have the meaning "forbid" or "prohibit" as it does in Mark 8 30. This is Mark 3 12, where, after unclean spirits are said to have cried out to Jesus, "Thou art the son of God", we have καὶ πολλὰ ἐπετίμα αὐτοῖς, ἵνα μὴ αὐτὸν φανερὸν ποιήσωσι: "he stringently charged them that they should not do it openly". Matthew, in

employing Mark as a source, retains the ἐπετίμα and the construction (Matt. 12 18); Luke, with his more accurate feeling for Greek usage alters the language as follows (Lc. 4 41): καὶ ἐπιτιμῶν, οὐκ εἶα αὐτὰ λαλεῖν: "and rebuking (them), he did not permit (them) to say the things". Similarly the treatment of Mc. 8 30 by Matthew and Luke is instructive. According to the great majority of MSS Matthew (16 20) in using this passage changed ἐπετίμησεν to διεστειλάτο. Only in B (first hand) and the Western text is ἐπετίμησεν retained. Luke (9 21), as in the other passage, retains the word, but alters the construction by adding another verb, making it read: ὁ δὲ ἐπιτιμήσας αὐτοῖς παρήγγειλε μηδενὶ λέγειν τοῦτο: "but he, rebuking them, commanded them to tell this to no one".

We have, then, these two clear cut cases in Mark, where ἐπιτιμᾶν evidently means "forbid" or "prohibit", and in handling which the two evangelists who were dependent upon Mark, while feeling in greater or less degree the difficulty, have preserved the evidence both of the reading and of its meaning. Is there any explanation for this? It has occurred to me that the explanation is to be sought in the usage of some Aramaic word. Jesus was speaking Aramaic; Mark is written in Greek. Probably his use of ἐπιτιμᾶν here is an attempt to imitate an Aramaic idiom.

One naturally turns to the Jewish Targums to see whether they afford any clue. They uniformly translate ܘܥܝܢܐ, which the LXX interpret by ἐπιτιμᾶν, by the word ܘܥܝܢܐ, the Aramaic form of the late Hebrew word employed by Sirach for "rebuke". This word does not at first sight afford us any help, as no instance has survived, so far as I know, in Jewish literature, where it means "forbid", "prohibit", or "stringently command".

If, however, we turn to the Syriac, we discover the clue we are seeking. Both the Sinai Syr. and the Peshitta (Mark is wanting in the Curetonian) render Mark 8 30: ܘܥܝܢܐ ܘܥܝܢܐ ܘܥܝܢܐ ܘܥܝܢܐ ܘܥܝܢܐ ܘܥܝܢܐ ܘܥܝܢܐ. Similarly in Mark 3 12 the Sinai Syr. reads ܘܥܝܢܐ ܘܥܝܢܐ ܘܥܝܢܐ ܘܥܝܢܐ ܘܥܝܢܐ— a rendering which the Peshitta repeats word for word except that for ܘܥܝܢܐ it substitutes ܘܥܝܢܐ. Now this Syriac verb ܘܥܝܢܐ, which meant originally, "he cried with a loud voice", and which then was

employed in the sense of "rebuke", "chide", "reprove", is also regularly employed, when followed by 𐤒 in the sense of "prohibit", "forbid". Payne Smith, in his *Thesaurus* has noted several instances of the use of the verb in this sense in the works of Ephraem, one in Isaac of Antioch, not to mention other writers cited by him. This gives us the clue we are seeking. Mark, by employing forms of 𐤉𐤎𐤏𐤍𐤏𐤍 followed by 𐤅𐤏 𐤍𐤏 in 8 30 and 3 12 has attempted to imitate a Semitic idiom. He chose 𐤉𐤎𐤏𐤍𐤏𐤍, which ordinarily in the 𐤏𐤏𐤏 means "rebuke", because he had before him in Aramaic a word which ordinarily meant "rebuke". His 𐤅𐤏 𐤍𐤏 is an imitation of 𐤒. It is translation Greek. It may be objected to this that the verb 𐤉𐤎 is Syriac, that it belongs to an East Aramaic dialect, and that we have no evidence that it was employed in Galilean Aramaic of the time of Christ. While that is quite true, it is also true that we have no evidence that it was not so employed.

Even if we suppose, on the basis of the Jewish Targums and Talmud, that the word employed by Jesus was 𐤒 instead of 𐤉𐤎, we should be compelled on the evidence presented, to suppose that in Galilean Aramaic 𐤒, when followed by 𐤒 also had the meaning "forbid", "prohibit", and that this particular use of it has not survived in the Jewish Aramaic documents which have come down to us.