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also, as I think, by the consideration that as by the flaming fire the lightnings are meant, the subject itself is conceived of as plural. But further, there is an instance of an exactly parallel construction in Proverbs xvi. 14—"The wrath of the king is messengers of death"—though this is obscured in the English Version by the introduction of the particle of comparison, "The wrath of the king is *as* messengers of death."

2. But the other, and much more serious difficulty, is the inversion of order of the object and predicate after the verb in both members of the verse. This appeared so serious a difficulty to so profound and critical a scholar as the late Bishop Thirlwall that, whilst he felt that the context seemed to require the sense which such an inversion implied, he yet thought it "incredible that the language should have been left in such a state as to make it immaterial as to the sense whether you wrote, 'Who maketh the clouds his chariot,' or, 'Who maketh the chariot his clouds;,' and that the reader should have to infer the author's meaning, not from the order of his words, but from extrinsic considerations. I cannot help thinking," he adds, "that more attention should have been paid to this question, and that it should have taken the precedence of every other." This question had, it is true, engaged the attention of Delitzsch, but the passages which he quoted in proof of the possibility of such an inversion of order were not to the point. I am, however, now able to establish by indisputable parallels that the rules of Hebrew syntax were in this respect not the same as those of most other languages. I can adduce two passages from the Prophet Isaiah (and a more careful and extended search would doubtless increase the number) as evidence that

what seemed "incredible" to Bishop Thirlwall, was, nevertheless, admissible, and that it was really indifferent to a Hebrew writer which order he employed. Thus, in Isaiah xxxvii. 26—"That thou shouldest be to lay waste defenced cities (into) ruinous heaps"—in the Hebrew order the predicate, "ruinous heaps," comes first after the verb, and the object, "defenced cities," last. Again, in Isaiah lx. 18—"Thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise"—the Hebrew order is, "Thou shalt call Salvation thy walls, and thy gates Praise," it being evident that it was a matter of perfect indifference to the writer whether he placed the object or the predicate first. In the former of these examples it might of course be said that the verb "to lay waste" attracted into closer proximity to itself the predicate "ruinous heaps." But the latter is quite conclusive as to the condition of Hebrew syntax, and is strictly parallel to the construction in Psalm civ. There can no longer, therefore, be any doubt that the rendering which is most in accordance with the context is also perfectly justifiable on grammatical grounds, and we ought to render :

Who maketh the winds his messengers,  
The flaming fire his ministers.

J. J. STEWART PEROWNE.

### THE PHARISAIC MODE OF WASHING BEFORE MEAT.

#### A BIBLICAL NOTE.

ST. MARK VII. 3.—"The Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands *oft*, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders." The word here translated *oft* (πυγμαῖ) is one of the crosses of the critics, and has

occasioned a very extraordinary amount of research and discussion. The ancients themselves, who lived comparatively near to the Evangelist's time, and were familiar with Greek as a spoken language, regarded the word as peculiar and debatable. Hence, in the old Latin versions—the "Italic"—which preceded Jerome's Vulgate, it receives quite a variety of translations (*pugillo, prius crebro, primo, momento, subinde*). The word literally means, *with closed hand*, or *with the fist* (compare  $\pi\acute{\upsilon}\xi$ ). But what the Evangelist could mean when he says, *except they wash the hands "with closed hand,"* looks perplexing enough. Had it been the case that there was satisfactory evidence, derivable from the Rabbinical writers, that the Jews were accustomed to close the operating hand when washing the other, so that the hand operated on was rubbed, not with the palm, but with the knuckled part of its fellow—that part which washerwomen use when washing clothes—then there would never have been any dispute concerning the Evangelist's meaning. But there is no such evidence, although the whole extent of Rabbinical literature has been carefully ransacked. Some eminent critics, nevertheless, such as Beza, Fritzsche, Meyer, Grimm, adhere to the idea that Mark must have meant that the washing was performed *with the fist*. The same opinion seems to have been entertained by Michaelis, who, in his translation, inserts a long paraphrase of the words (*wobey aber das Waschen für genug gehalten wird, wenn auch die Faust geballet ist*). Grotius had somewhat of the same notion, only he supposed that the meaning is—that the fist was washed by the other hand (*manum in pugnum compositam manu altera lavabant*). This seems almost to reverse the picture of the process that is naturally suggested

by the Evangelist's expression. Yet Calov approves of it.

Lightfoot took an entirely different view of the phrase. He thought that the debatable word meant *to the wrist*. Hammond, Whitby, Wells, Bengel, took the same view. But (1) the word in itself does not mean *the wrist*; and (2) even though it did, the form in which it is employed could not mean *as far as the wrist*, or *up to the wrist*. Le Clerc saw this, and hence, in his Latin translation of Hammond, as well as in his French translation of the Gospel, he interpreted the word as meaning *by putting the fist into water* (*en mettant le poing dans l'eau*)—an interpretation, however, that involves almost as large an amount of arbitrariness as is characteristic of the explication which he rejects. Theophylact exaggerates Lightfoot's notion, and interprets the word as meaning *up to the elbow* (*ἀχρι τοῦ ἄγκωνος*), because, says he, the term does mean *the length from the elbow to the tips of the fingers*. Certainly the term is a measure of length *from the elbow to the fingers* (strictly, it would appear, *to the closed fingers*: see *Stephen's Thesaur. sub voce*); but it is difficult to see how it could ever be the case that the Evangelist's expression could mean *up to the elbow*.

Scaliger, Drusius, Cameron, and many others, take substantially the view of Theophylact, though under a peculiar phase derived from one of the petty precepts of the Rabbis regarding the ceremonial purification. The Rabbis enjoined that a double washing of the hands should be attended to before eating. In the first of the two *the hands were to be held upward, that the polluted water might run off at the elbow*. In the second, which "purified the water of the first washing," the hands were to be held downward. (See Buxtorf's

*Lexicon Talm.* p. 1,335.) The critics named suppose that the Evangelist has reference to the elevation of the hands. The Evangelist's expression, however, remains as puzzling as ever, both (1) as regards the fact that it is the *fist*, or *closed hand*, that is spoken of, and (2) as regards the form of the phrase, "*with*" *closed hand*.

Wetstein—followed by Wakefield and Principal Campbell—takes an entirely different view. He supposes that the debatable word means *a handful (of water)*. Hence Wakefield translates, *for the Pharisees and all the Jews never eat "without throwing a handful of water over their hands."* Principal Campbell translates correspondingly, *For the Pharisees, and indeed all the Jews, eat not until they have washed their hands, "by pouring a little water upon them."* It is an ingenious cutting of the knot. But it is entirely unwarrantable. The debatable word does not mean *a handful*. The debatable expression—standing absolutely, as it does—cannot mean *a handful of water!*

What, then, are we to make of the phrase? Our Authorized Translators have rendered the disputed word, *oft*. It was Wycliffe's rendering, and Tyndale's, and Coverdale's. It was the rendering of the Anglo-Saxon Version (*gelomlice*) and of the Gothic (*ufta*). It was adopted, too, into the Geneva, and reproduced in the Rheims. It was Erasmus's rendering. More than all, it was the rendering of the Vulgate (*crebro*), the fountain-head of the whole series of repetitions. Erasmus conjectured that the debatable word was a corruption, and that Mark must have used another word which means *frequently* ("πυκνῶς αὐτὸς πυκνὰ αὐτὸς πυκνῆ"). The translation therefore, so far as Erasmus is concerned, is founded on a conjectural reading. And it is not un-

likely that Jerome himself was just as completely puzzled as Erasmus, and hence the Vulgate Version. It is a remarkable fact, however, that one of Erasmus's conjectural readings—the middle one—is actually found in the Sinaitic manuscript (Ⲙ), and thence it has actually been introduced into the Evangelist's text by Tischendorf, in the eighth edition of his New Testament. It is a marvellous deference to pay to the fine Old Manuscript. It is far too much, however. The writer of the Manuscript had manifestly been puzzled by the term which he found in the text from which he copied, and, being unable to understand it, he assumed that it was a mistake, and corrected it accordingly. *If the debatable word was not in the Evangelist's autograph, it is inconceivable that any transcriber would ever have inserted it.* And when we dip into the matter a little farther, we may easily see that the reading of the Sinaitic manuscript, if interpreted according to the rendering of the Vulgate (*oft*, not *much*), could never have been the original reading. There is not an atom of evidence that either the Jews in general, or the Pharisees in particular, or any peoples or persons or person, ever made it a matter of conscience, or a matter of practice, *to wash the hands "frequently" before partaking of food.*

What then? There remains the interpretation of the Syriac-Peshito Version. It renders the debatable word adverbially, by a term which means *carefully* or *diligently*. It is the same term which is employed in its translation of Luke xv. 8. And, assuredly if the debatable word can bear such an interpretation, all the exegetical exigencies of the case would seem to be met to a nicety. One should suppose that a perfunctory washing of the hands would not have satisfied the

Pharisaic sticklers for fulness and thoroughness in all that was merely outward in religion. On the principle which led them "to make broad their phylacteries, and to enlarge the borders of their garments," they would be careful to give, in all ordinary circumstances, an ample lustration to their hands, however neglectful they might be of their hearts. But it is scarcely likely, notwithstanding their devotion to pettinesses, that they would insist on the cleansing being uniformly performed in one invariable way. It is not likely, at all events, that the whole people would be particular in insisting, or admitting, that, from among the many possible modes of cleansing the hands with water, only one single and singular way should be legitimate. And hence the generic idea of *diligently*, or *carefully*, seems to meet all the requirements of the case. It is true that the debatable word does not occur elsewhere with this adverbial acceptance. Hence the difficulty. But it is, nevertheless, when intrinsically considered, quite a natural acceptance, which may readily enough have obtained a local or provincial currency, although it never found its way up into classical usage or polite literary phraseology. Just as some people speak of doing a thing *with tooth and nail*, when they refer to an effort in which the eagerness of a vicious temper plays an important part; so people in other circles might be accustomed to speak of doing a thing *with the fist*, when the thing had to be done *energetically*, *vigorously*, and *effectively*—almost *pugilistically*, as it were: that is Arias Montanus's word (*pugilatim*). The washing was to be done as if hand were to contend with hand which should be cleanest.

DR. JAMES MORISON *in loc.*