

NOTE BY PROFESSOR ROBINSON.

DR. HARNACK has asked me to add a note to his dissertation on the newly found Sayings of Jesus, in order to give the reasons which had pointed me quite independently to the Gospel according to the Egyptians as a possible source of some at least of these Sayings.¹ The passages to which I shall refer have for the most part been noticed by others as isolated parallels. It is the context in which they are found that seems to me to lend them a special interest.

In the Third Book of the *Stromateis* Clement of Alexandria is defending Holy Matrimony against impugners of two kinds: the abusers of the doctrine of Christian *κοινωνία*, who extended it to include community of wives; and the extreme ascetics, who forbade marriage as unworthy of a true Christian. He argues against each of these errors in turn, as he deals with various Scriptures, canonical and uncanonical, which were employed in their defence. It is with the error on the side of asceticism that we shall be here concerned, and we must pick out the main passages which deal with it.

§ 1. The followers of Basilides use Matthew xix. 10-12 ("eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake"). In refuting their view Clement says (§ 4): *ἡμεῖς εὐνουχίαν μὲν καὶ οἷς τοῦτο δεδώρηται ὑπὸ θεοῦ μακαρίζομεν, μονογαμίαν δὲ καὶ τὴν περὶ τὸν ἕνα γάμον σεμνότητα θαυμάζομεν, κ.τ.λ.* The word *μακαρίζομεν* in this connexion is to be noted.

§ 45. The extreme ascetics cite a conversation of our Lord with Salome: the answer to the question, "How long shall death prevail?" is this: "As long as ye women

¹ Dr. Harnack, whom I had the pleasure of seeing quite recently for the first time in Berlin, begged me also to add on his own behalf a remark which he had intended to have made in his tract. He desires to call attention to the *parallelism between the clauses* in almost all of these Sayings, a parallelism which recalls the method of the Hebrew poetry and the Hebrew proverbial sayings.

bring forth children." The source of the citation is not here stated. Clement explains the words to mean: As long as the present order lasts, in which as the sequence of nature *γένεσις* is followed by *φθορά*.

In § 50 he further discusses the passage about the eunuchs; and in the following sections defends matrimony by the example of Apostles.

In §§ 63-67 he returns to the passage about Salome, and says: *φέρεται δὲ, οἶμαι, ἐν τῷ κατ' Αἰγυπτίους εὐαγγελίῳ*. He finds in the further answer of the Lord, "Eat every herb, but that which hath bitterness eat not," the confutation of the argument which the heretics had put upon the earlier words.

Then in § 68 he suddenly asks: "But who are the two and three gathered in the name of Christ, among whom the Lord is in the midst?"¹ He suggests various answers. In the first place he says: "Is it not husband and wife and child that He means by the three? for 'to husband wife is joined by God' (Prov. xix. 14, LXX.)." A similar interpretation of the preceding verse (Matt. xviii. 19, "If two of you shall agree," etc.) is mentioned by Origen as propounded by one of his predecessors (*Comm. in Matth.*, t. 14, c. 2; *Ru.* iii. 617). The heretics with whom Clement is dealing interpret the meaning of Christ to be that "with the many is the demiurge, the god of *genesis*, but with the one, the elect, is the Saviour, who is Son of another God, to wit, the good God" (*Βούλεσθαι γὰρ λέγειν τὸν κύριον ἐξηγοῦνται μετὰ μὲν τῶν πλειόνων τὸν δημιουργὸν εἶναι τὸν γενεσιουργὸν θεόν, μετὰ δὲ τοῦ ἐνὸς τοῦ ἐκλέκτου τὸν σωτήρα, ἄλλου δηλονότι θεοῦ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ υἱὸν πεφυκότα*). Clement declares, on the contrary, that the same God is with those who

¹ *τίνες δὲ οἱ δύο καὶ τρεῖς ὑπάρχουσιν ἐν ὀνόματι χριστοῦ συναγόμενοι, παρ' οἷς μέσος ἐστὶν ὁ κύριος*. It is just worth while to point to the coincidence in respect of *παρ' οἷς* with the notable reading of Matt. xviii. 20 in Codex Bezae: *οὐκ εἰσὶν γὰρ δύο ἢ τρεῖς συνηγμένοι εἰς τὸ ἔμὸν ὄνομα, παρ' οἷς οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν*.

marry in sobriety and beget children, and with him who exercises continence according to reason. He then suggests alternative interpretations of "the three," such as *θυμός*, *ἐπιθυμία*, and *λογισμός*; or, again, *σάρξ*, *ψυχή*, and *πνεῦμα*. Stress appears to be laid on the "gathering together," the union of the *τριας*, as he calls it, whatever its component parts may be interpreted to be.

He is still struggling with the interpretation in § 70, where he suggests a new possibility: "Or perhaps *with the one*, the Jew, the Lord was in giving the law; but in prophesying and sending Jeremiah to Babylon, and yet further in calling those of the Gentiles through prophecy, he was *gathering* peoples (who were) *the two*; and a *third* was being created out of the two unto a new man, in whom indeed He walks and dwells, to wit, in the Church.

It seems hard to think that the passage in S. Matthew's Gospel is the sole basis of this discussion. It seems as though the heretics in question had got hold of some passage which distinctly said that the Lord was "*with the one*." That there was such a Saying current, we know from Ephraem's Commentary on the *Diatessaron* ("where there is one, there am I"): and we have a new parallel now in the recently discovered Sayings. The point to be noted is this: the heretics, who apparently used the Saying in some shape or other, also used the Gospel according to the Egyptians. After refuting their argument based on the words spoken to Salome, Clement passes at once to refute their argument based, as it would seem, on a Saying of Christ which promised His presence to "the one" as contrasted with "the two" or "the three."

Clement has not told us thus far the names of the heretics who thus misused the Sayings of the Lord; he has only described them in general terms as *οἱ ἀπὸ τοῦ Βασιλείδου* (§ 1). But in § 91 he refers in particular to Julius Cassianus and his book *Περὶ ἐκρατείας ἢ περὶ*

εὐνουχίας. Clement quotes from this book certain sentences in which Cassianus resists the conclusion that the physical differences between man and woman point to their union as permitted by God. "If such a disposition were from the true God, He would not have pronounced the eunuchs blessed (*οὐκ ἂν ἐμακάρισεν τοὺς εὐνούχους*), nor would the prophet have said that they were 'not a fruitless tree' (Isa. lvi. 2, 3)." In the next section he mentions Cassianus again as having made use of further words spoken by the Lord to Salome. In answering this new argument in § 93 Clement says: "In the first place we do not find the passage in the four Gospels which have been handed down to us, but in that according to the Egyptians." But none the less he goes on to show that it is capable of a perfectly satisfactory explanation. Cassianus, then, discussed the question of the true eunuchs, and quoted the Gospel according to the Egyptians. This makes it probable that it is to his work that Clement has been referring in the earlier sections.

In § 98 Clement quotes the passage of Isaiah to which reference has already been made: *Μὴ λεγέτω ὁ εὐνούχος ὅτι ξύλον εἶμι ξηρόν· τάδε λέγει ὁ κύριος τοῖς εὐνούχοις. Ἐὰν φυλάξητε τὰ σάββατά μου καὶ ποιήσητε πάντα ὅσα ἐντέλλομαι, δώσω ὑμῖν τόπον κρείττονα υἰῶν καὶ θυγατέρων*: and he adds, *οὐ γὰρ μόνον ἡ εὐνουχία δικαιοῖ, οὐδὲ μὴν τὸ τοῦ εὐνούχου σάββατον, ἐὰν μὴ ποιήση τὰς ἐντολάς*. In the preceding verse in Isaiah we read: *μακάριος ἀνὴρ ὁ ποιῶν ταῦτα, καὶ ἄνθρωπος ὁ ἀντεχόμενος αὐτῶν καὶ φυλάσσων τὰ σάββατα μὴ βεβηλοῦν*. It is probable that "the eunuch's Sabbath" was interpreted of the restfulness of the unmarried state, as opposed to the distractions of married life (1 Cor. vii. 33). We are thus reminded of another of the new Sayings, to which we shall find a striking parallel in the next section of Clement.

Clement sums up the controversy by giving a wholly

allegorical interpretation to the eunuch of Isaiah lvi. He is the man who has no offspring of truth (ὁ ἄγονος τῆς ἀληθείας). He was formerly a "dry tree," but if he obeys the Word and "keeps the Sabbaths" in refraining from sins, and does the commandments, he shall have a special honour. "For this cause," he says in conclusion, "'a eunuch shall not enter into the congregation of God (Deut. xxiii. 1),' to wit, he that is barren and fruitless in life and word: but 'they that have made themselves eunuchs' from all sin 'for the kingdom of heaven's sake,' these are blessed—even they *who fast from the world* (οἱ τοῦ κόσμου νηστεύοντες)."

An explanation of Clement's line of thought in this section (§ 93) is given at once, if we may suppose that Casianus had been led by the reference to the keeping of the Sabbath by the eunuch to cite the saying which we have now recovered: Ἐὰν μὴ νηστεύσητε τὸν κόσμον (? τοῦ κόσμου), οὐ μὴ εὕρητε τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ· καὶ ἐὰν μὴ σαββατίσητε τὸ σάββατον, οὐκ ὄψεσθε τὸν πατέρα. And from what we have seen above he might well have cited it if it stood in the Gospel according to the Egyptians.

I am not at present prepared to say with Dr. Harnack that the newly discovered Sayings are excerpts from the Gospel according to the Egyptians. I must content myself with the statement that such a view is not improbable. But I am glad to have had an opportunity of calling attention to the above-mentioned coincidences. They are remarkable in themselves, and still more remarkable in their context. And they deserve the more attention from the fact that they find no place among the reasons which originally led the editors of the Sayings to suggest the Gospel according to the Egyptians as a possible source, nor among the reasons by which Dr. Harnack maintains the correctness of that suggestion.

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