

# The Wisdom of Jesus the Messiah.

BY PROFESSOR C. A. BRIGGS, D.D., NEW YORK.

## SECOND ARTICLE.

IN my first article<sup>1</sup> I presented specimens of the Wisdom of Jesus in the forms of the couplet and triplet. In this article I shall give specimens in which He uses pieces of four and five lines.

### 3. TETRASTICH.

The tetrastich is quite frequent in Proverbs. The little supplementary collection of the Words of the Wise (xxii. 17; xxiv.) has no fewer than fourteen of them (xxii. 22-23, 24-25, 26-27; xxiii. 10-11, 13-14, 15-16, 17-18; xxiv. 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 15-16, 17-18, 19-20, 21-22). The second great collection of the Proverbs of Solomon (xxv.-xxix.) has four examples (xxv. 4-5, 9-10, 21-22; xxvi. 4-5), the Words of Agur one (xxx. 5-6), and the collection of Aluka one (xxx. 17). These may suffice as specimens—

'The eye that mocketh at his father,  
And despiseth to obey his mother,  
The ravens of the valley shall pick it out,  
And the young eagles shall eat it.'—Prov. xxx. 17.

The second couplet gives the punishment for the sin of violation of the parental law, which violation is stated in the first couplet.

The following tetrameter is a fine specimen of two couplets in which the first gives the comparison, the second the explanation:—

'Take away the dross from the silver,  
And there cometh forth a vessel for the finer.  
Take away the wicked from before the king,  
And his throne shall be established in righteousness.'  
Prov. xxv. 4, 5.

A third specimen is also of two couplets—

'If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat;  
And if he be thirsty, give him water to drink:  
For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head,  
And the Lord shall reward thee.'  
Prov. xxv. 21, 22.

The second couplet gives the reasons for the conduct recommended in the first.

<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew Lexicon, edited by Brown, Driver, and Briggs, and published simultaneously by the Clarendon Press and Messrs. Houghton, was quoted in the first article by the editor under the title, *Oxf. Heb. Lex.* Professor Briggs wishes it said that he prefers *New Heb. Lex. B.D.B.*

Jesus gives many sentences of this type—

'No household servant<sup>2</sup> can serve two masters:  
For either he will hate the one and love the other;  
Or else he will hold to the one and despise the other.  
Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.'  
Matt. vi. 24; Luke xvi. 13.

This is a fine specimen of what Bishop Jebb calls introverted parallelism, where the first and last lines are synonymous and the second and third are antithetical.<sup>3</sup> Bishop Jebb gives as his specimen—

'My son, if thine heart be wise;  
When thy lips speak right things,  
My heart also will rejoice,  
Yea, my reins will rejoice.'  
Prov. xxiii. 15, 16.

Certainly the specimen from Jesus is much superior to the one from Proverbs. The following are tetrastichs with two progressive couplets:—

'Every idle word that men speak,  
They shall give account thereof in<sup>4</sup> the judgment;  
For by thy words thou shalt be justified,  
And by thy words thou shalt be condemned.'  
Matt. xii. 36.

'Give not that which is holy unto the dogs,  
Neither cast your pearls before the swine,  
Lest haply they trample them under their feet,  
And turn and rend you.'—Matt. vii. 6.

An interesting specimen of the tetrastich is given in Matt. vi. 14, 15—

<sup>2</sup> Matthew omits *οικετης* of Luke, probably in order to generalise, as usual in his collection of the Wisdom of Jesus (Matt. v.-vii.).

<sup>3</sup> See *Biblical Study*, p. 261.

<sup>4</sup> It is common in Matthew to insert *day* before *judgment* in order to make the reference more distinct to the ultimate Day of Doom. See *Messiah of the Gospels*, p. 240.

'If<sup>1</sup> ye forgive men their trespasses,  
Your Father<sup>2</sup> will also forgive you your trespasses;<sup>3</sup>  
But if ye forgive not men their trespasses,  
Neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.'

This is composed of two antithetical couplets. It is inserted by Matthew immediately after the Lord's Prayer. But it is not given by Luke in that context. The Lord's Prayer and this tetrastich were inserted by Matthew between the second and third strophes of Jesus' teaching with

reference to doing righteousness, as we shall see later on.

I shall now give a specimen of three tetrastichs introduced by a couplet. There are two versions, in Matt. vi. 25-34; Luke xii. 28-32. The original form is ascertained by applying the principles of textual criticism to the two versions of a common original. The measure is pentameter, in which the second half of the line is complementary to the first half.

This choice piece of the Wisdom of Jesus has an introductory couplet as follows:—

'Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat,<sup>4</sup> or for your body, what ye shall put on.  
Is not the life more than the food, and the body than the raiment?'

This is followed by a tetrastich which takes up the provision of food mentioned in the first half of the first line of this couplet—

'Consider the ravens,<sup>5</sup> they do not sow, or reap, or gather;<sup>6</sup>  
And God<sup>7</sup> feedeth them. Are ye not of much more value than birds?  
And which of you, by being anxious, can add a cubit to his lifetime?  
If ye are not able to do even that which is least, why are ye anxious concerning the rest?''<sup>8</sup>

The next tetrastich takes up the provision of raiment—

'Consider the scarlet flowers,<sup>9</sup> how they grow; they do not toil or spin:  
Yet even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.  
If God clothe the grass, which to-morrow goes into the oven,  
How much more will he clothe you,<sup>10</sup> O ye of little faith.'

These are now followed by a concluding tetrastich, which comprehends both the provisions of food and clothing—

'Seek ye not what ye shall eat, and wherewithal ye shall be clothed:<sup>11</sup>  
For all these things do the nations of the world<sup>12</sup> seek after.

<sup>1</sup> The connective γὰρ has been inserted in order to attach the Logion to its context in the Gospel.

<sup>2</sup> The Evangelist inserts 'heavenly' before Father in the first couplet, but not in the second. This is in accord with the peculiar usage of our Matthew. See *Messiah of the Gospels*, p. 79.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew omits 'trespasses' in the second line, but the measure requires it, as well as the antithetical statement in the fourth line.

<sup>4</sup> In some late MSS. of Matthew the clause is added, 'or what ye shall drink.'

<sup>5</sup> Matthew generalises into 'birds of heaven.'

<sup>6</sup> Luke expands this verb into οἷς οὐκ ἔστιν ταμεῖον οὐδὲ ἀποθήκη.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew substitutes 'your Heavenly Father,' as elsewhere.

<sup>8</sup> Matthew shortens by omitting the first half of the line. Luke's specific 'raiment' is tempting, even against the more general 'the rest' of Matthew. But it seems to be premature. Raiment is characteristic of the next strophe, and the thought of clothing appears nowhere else in this. It seems to have come into Luke in view of the following context.

<sup>9</sup> These flowers are not lilies, but the wild field-flowers of

Palestine, brilliant scarlet in colour, and so appropriate in the comparison with royal robes.

<sup>10</sup> These lines have been greatly changed in both versions. The original can be determined here only by conjecture. I venture to suggest that it was something like the following—

אִם־הֵאֱלֵהִים סִלְבִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־לִתְּחַן הַתְּנַיִן  
כִּמְהָ יִלְבִישׁ אֲתֶכֶם קַטְנֵי הָאֲמוֹנָה

Luke makes the simile plainer by enlarging the lines into a long and clumsy sentence, and especially by inserting ἐν ἀγροῦ τὸν χόρτον ὄντα σήμερον. He then abridges the second line, and so makes the couplet over into prose. Matthew does the same by a variant rendering, τὸν χόρτον τοῦ ἀγροῦ σήμερον ὄντα.

<sup>11</sup> Luke is nearer to the original in the verb ζητεῖτε, which is sustained by its use in lines 2 and 3. Matthew's μεριμνήσητε has originated from ver. 25, the initial couplet of the piece. Λέγοντες is then required in his prosaic rendering. τί πηγήτε of Luke and τί πλωμεν of Matthew are enlargements of the original. Luke generalises in the last clause by substituting for the original specific reference to clothing, which thus sums up the ideas of the two previous strophes, the more general 'neither be ye of doubtful mind.'

<sup>12</sup> Matthew omits 'world,' but the measure requires it.

Your Father knows that ye have need of all these things :  
Therefore seek His kingdom,<sup>1</sup> and all these things shall be added to you.<sup>2</sup>

It is safe to say that this splendid specimen of the tetrastich cannot be equalled either for form or content from the entire extent of the literature of Wisdom.

Matthew (vi. 34) appends to this piece of wisdom a triplet, which was originally independent, but is kindred in theme—

‘Be not (therefore) anxious for the morrow,  
For the morrow will be anxious for itself.  
Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.’

It is, indeed, a trimeter of different measure from the piece to which it is joined.

The same is true of the couplet given here by Luke xii. 32. It is one of the most precious of the sayings of Jesus. But it has no original connexion with the context—

‘Fear not, little flock ;  
For it is your Father’s good pleasure  
To give you the kingdom.’

These cognate Logia are important for a more complete presentation of the teaching of Jesus on this theme, but they impair the literary beauty of the larger Logion unless they are kept distinct.

#### 4. THE PENTASTICH.

The Pentastich, a piece of five lines, is rare in the Book of Proverbs. I have noted but four specimens (xxiii. 4, 5, xxiv. 13, 14, xxiv. 23, 25, xxv. 6, 7). I shall give the last, partly because it is a good one, and partly because it illustrates one of the sayings of Jesus—

‘Put not thyself forward in the presence of the king,  
And stand not in the place of great men ;  
For better is it that it be said unto thee, Come up hither ;  
Than that thou shouldst be put lower in the presence of the prince  
Whom thine eyes have seen.’

Here the triplet gives the reason for the recommendation in the couplet, which begins the quintette.

There are several specimens in the Sayings of the Jewish Fathers. We shall give two—

‘Be not as slaves that minister unto the Lord,  
With a view to receive recompense ;  
But be as slaves that minister to the Lord  
Without a view to receive recompense ;  
And let the fear of heaven be upon you.’—i. 3.

This tetrameter is a finer specimen than we have found in Proverbs. It is composed of two antithetical couplets and a concluding line of exhortation synthetic to both.

Here is a still finer specimen of the tetrametre tetrastich—an antithetical pair—

1. ‘More flesh, more worms ;  
More treasures, more care ;  
More maid-servants, more lewdness ;  
More men-servants, more thefts ;  
More women, more witchcrafts.
2. More law, more life ;  
More wisdom, more scholars ;  
More righteousness, more peace ;

<sup>1</sup> Matthew adds ‘His righteousness.’ This is in accordance with the stress on righteousness characteristic of this Gospel, especially in the collection called the Sermon on the Mount. See *Messiah of the Gospels*, p. 171.

He who has gotten a name, hath gotten a good thing for himself ;

He who has gotten words of law, hath gotten for himself the life of the world to come.’<sup>3</sup>—ii. 8.

We are now prepared to consider three specimens from the teaching of Jesus—

‘Strive to enter in through the narrow gate ;  
For<sup>4</sup> broad is the way that leadeth unto Apoleia ;<sup>5</sup>  
And many be they who enter in thereby ;  
For straightened is the way that leadeth unto Life ;  
And few be they that find it.’—Matt. vii. 13, 14,

A single line of this piece is found in Luke xiii. 24. It is there made the introduction to a

<sup>2</sup> Mark iv. 24c. has *προσθεθήσεται ὑμῖν*, but entirely apart from its original context.

<sup>3</sup> This line has been enlarged from a shorter original, which omitted, probably, ‘of the world to come.’

<sup>4</sup> Some MSS. have *πύλη*, as well as *πλατεῖα*, to correspond with *στενὴ ἢ πύλη* of line 3. But both of these look like enlargements of the original words on the part of the Evangelist, such as we have found elsewhere. They make the lines so much too long in measure.

<sup>5</sup> I retain *Apoleia* = *ἀπώλεια* = *רַבִּי*, in order that the local meaning in antithesis with Life may appear. There can be no doubt that this term applies to the place of the lost in Sheol as Gehenna to the place of the lost after the final judgment. We have had a similar antithesis between Gehenna and Life in the trimeter triplets. (THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, June, p. 397. See also *Messiah of the Gospels*, p. 205.)

judgment-scene (Luke xiii. 25, 30). A parallel to this judgment-scene is found in Matt. vii. 21, 23. It is evident that the kindred Logion—Matt. vii. 15, 20—has been inserted between the two. Luke has changed the original 'gate' into 'door' to suit the phrase of the judgment-scene; but it seems to me that he alone has preserved the original first

word of the line 'strive' which is omitted by Matthew. This pentastich has an introductory line of exhortation, followed by two antithetical couplets contrasting the two ways.

The following is the best specimen of inverted parallelism that can be found in the entire range of the Wisdom literature:—

'All men cannot receive this saying, but they to whom it is given;  
For there are eunuchs which were so born from their mother's womb,  
And there are eunuchs which were made eunuchs by men,  
And there are eunuchs which made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of God:  
He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.'—Matt. xix. 11, 12.

(*The Third Article to follow.*)

## Point and Illustration.

THOUGHTS FROM JEAN PAUL RICHTER.

SELECTED AND TRANSLATED BY CHARLOTTE ADA RAINY, EDINBURGH.

### Music.

THE earthly echo of eternity.

IN its tones the successive waves of the sea of eternity beat on our hearts, we who are standing on its shores, and are yearning to embark. Art thou the evening zephyr of *this* life or the morning breeze from a future one?

### Love.

AS Moses died because God kissed him, so may thy life be a long kiss of the Eternal One.

IF thy friend have a quarrel with thee, furnish him with an opportunity of doing thee a great favour.

THE noblest love can forget no one, for it is built on the *needs* of man, not on his qualities.

HE who has not where to lay his head often suffers less pain than he who has not where to lay his hand.

WHY do we not thank God every time a man finds some one he can love, even although he may not at once be loved again,—or even ever?

MAKE others happy, for with each one you gladden, you bless others also who belong to him. For the same reason forbear to wound.

HOW often have I longed to be present at all the reconciliations of the world,—for no love moves us so deeply as returning love.

THERE are those that are linked together from their very cradles, their first meeting is but a second one, and they bring to each other, as do long-parted ones, not only a future; but also a past.

LOVE but one warmly and purely, and thou lovest all.

LOVE needeth verily no explanation, only Hate needeth such.

### Memory.

THAT Indian summer of human joy.

### True Wisdom.

BE great enough to despise this world, be greater in order to esteem it.

IF self-knowledge be the road to virtue, then is virtue yet more the way to self-knowledge.

### God revealing Himself.

THE Eternal One has shown His name in the heavens in glistening stars, but on the earth in soft flowers.

HOW unbrokenly the rainbow hovers over the stormy waterfall! So standeth God in heaven, and the streams of time are plunging and roaring, yet over all the waves hovers the rainbow of His peace.

EVERY virtuous man, and every wise man is a direct proof that God eternally lives; and every one that suffers without cause.

DO thou rejoice in that which can never depart from Thee, in Him who is at once the greatest and the most beautiful of all objects of joy, who has given thee all, *thyself and Himself*.

EVERY devout soul is a word—a look—from the all-loving One.

### Self-revelation.

A MAN never shows his own character more clearly than when describing another one.

THERE are words which are deeds.

PRAYER is a *keeping silence*, not only with the lips, but with the *thoughts*. But the great Spirit, who knoweth our