

word "clever" to be naturally associated with their name. But to particular individuals extraordinary powers were granted, which they could neither communicate nor hand down, and the very form of which they could not lucidly explain. Hence what they produced differed from the productions of other races more in kind than in quality, and its efficiency for the purpose of evolution has been proportionately great. The descent from the Old Testament to the Mishnah is, in consequence, steeper than that from the greatest of the Greek poets to the feeblest, or from the most brilliant of the productions of India to the least tolerable. And the underlying fact is that the value of the former is due to the presence in it of a factor which the intellectual capital of the race did not provide. The literature produced by the race unaided wanted that anti-septic, and also showed but a small measure of the gifts whence mankind has derived its stores of philosophy and science.

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### SINGLENES OF VISION.

(MATT. VI. 22, 23; LUKE XI. 33-36.)

THE difficulty which the passage in Matthew's Gospel has long presented to most readers and students of the New Testament arises from the fact that hitherto it has been the custom to regard it as a somewhat obscure simile. It is maintained that the terms of the analogy are very incompletely expressed,—that given the statement that the eye is the lamp of the body and the source of its light, it is left to the ingenuity and to the common and religious sense of the reader to discover the other member of the simile from the slight indications given in the passage itself. We can easily understand how such liberty of interpretation results in many strange and diverse discoveries among exegetes, and

how those who are lacking in the power of imagination and who have no expository gifts class this as a dark saying of even the clearest of teachers. We think that there has been too much of the figurative discovered in these words of Jesus. In our opinion there is no simile here but only a metaphor, which is expressed in the opening sentence: *ὁ λύχνος τοῦ σώματος ἐστὶν ὁ ὀφθαλμὸς*. That metaphor is continued right through the passage. The functions of a lamp in a house are ascribed to the eye of the body, and hence is derived a lesson with reference to the moral and religious significance of ordinary vision. The whole may be termed Christ's saying concerning singleness of vision. When we consider the passage from this standpoint, we find that many of its hard sayings become plain, and some of its difficulties are at once removed.

We naturally commence with a consideration of the word *ἀπλοῦς*. An expositor's arrangement of the passage depends upon the way in which he interprets this word. It is the central difficulty about which all explanations work and around which they form themselves. It is a word denoting moral attributes, and its application in all Greek literature is confined almost exclusively to the sphere of ethical qualities, except when it is used to denote purely numerical singularity. Yet here in the second sentence *ἀπλοῦς* is applied to the physical organ of sight, *ἐὰν οὖν ᾗ ὁ ὀφθαλμὸς σου ἀπλοῦς*. Confronted with this difficulty expositors have apparently followed one of two courses. On the one hand they have strained the meaning of *ἀπλοῦς* so as to make it signify "good," "fulfilling its office," "sound." Thus one side of the simile becomes fully stated: the body's lamp is the eye; if the eye is healthy, the body is full of light; if the eye is diseased, the body is full of darkness. But the other member of the simile is entirely wanting. Any one reading this passage thus would understand it clearly enough, but would naturally ask, "What is it meant

to teach?" It is with a strange suddenness that the concluding remark is launched upon him, *εἰ οὖν τὸ φῶς τὸ ἐν σοὶ σκότος ἐστί, τὸ σκότος πόσον*; there is a great blank of meaning between the sentence we have just paraphrased, and this final one. The latter evidently deals with a moral truth, the former with a physical fact, and there is nothing to connect the two. We may well maintain that this interpretation of *ἀπλοῦς* brings us to a far from satisfactory issue. On the other hand, some have adhered to the strictly moral meaning of *ἀπλοῦς*, "simple" and so "sincere." They have thus been obliged to maintain that in the second sentence the two members of the simile have become confusedly entangled. There we find *ὁ ὀφθαλμός* and *τὸ σῶμα* belonging to one member of the simile, while *ἀπλοῦς* belongs to the other. Thus is presented the very difficult task of discovering the subject of *ἀπλοῦς*, in which task the only help given in the passage itself is to be found in the fact that the application of the word *ἀπλοῦς* is limited. It is because *ἀπλοῦς* is so often used to qualify a man's purpose and aim that some have completed the simile with one of these as the eye of the soul. But it is evident how by this method a dozen different subjects might easily be found, and the passage made to teach a dozen different lessons. To build up thus a mass of interpretation on a single word is hardly legitimate exposition. We consider that the difficulty is self-illuminative. It is by a frank recognition of it, not by trying to smooth it away, that we reach the solution. Expositors have strained the meaning either of *ἀπλοῦς*, the term denoting moral attributes, or of *ὀφθαλμός*, the physical organ of sense, in order to remove the incongruity of the application of the one to the other. But is it quite impossible for us to accept the difficulty as it stands? Is the application of moral good and evil to the eyesight of man an altogether impossible conception? Does not sin actually affect a man's vision?

The image on the retina is, of course, the same in the case of every man. But that does not mean that every man sees the same objects. As Carlyle says in another connection, "To Newton and to Newton's dog Diamond, what a different pair of universes; while the painting on the optical retina of both was, most likely, the same." If sin does not cloud the image on the retina of the eye, does it not most certainly cloud the image on the retina of the mind? A saintly man, who has enjoyed the blessing of communion with God for many years, will see things in the world that a debauchee will never see. The same picture is on the retina of the eyes of both men, but the mind will record it in the one and not in the other. So we can understand how, among an unscientific people, totally incapable of making a distinction between the physical and the psychical, the Master might very well speak of a man's eye being good or evil in a moral sense, thereby drawing attention to the way in which sin can contaminate even the faculty of seeing. In fact, the difficulty we have been discussing is but the shadow on the page of words of the great mystery that ever confronts us when we enter the borderland between the physical and the psychical. When we recognise the topic with which the Master was dealing and the character of the people to whom He was speaking, we are not surprised when we find in the choice and setting of His words something strange to our ideas and difficult for us to understand. Jesus talking in popular fashion to an audience totally uneducated as far as all natural science went, applied the term *ἀπλοῦς* to the organ of sight. We should apply it to the faculty of vision, and technically should be more correct in so doing. But the Master's meaning was evident to those to whom He actually spoke, and is evident to us to-day. Just as a man's tongue may become evil, so that it is an easy thing for him to talk hypocritically, to pray on the Sunday and to lie in the

week-time, or so that he becomes "double-tongued"; so also a man's eye may become evil and lose that singleness that is proper to it, so that he will take one view of the world and of his fellow-men amid the religious influences of the Sabbath, and quite another and a different one in the warehouse and in the office. Is not this the defect that accounts for that terrible want of consistency that is so often deplored in connection with the Christian Church? Singleness of vision is as important as singleness of speech, singleness of eye as important as singleness of tongue.

Another difficulty confronts us in the meaning of the word *σῶμα*. Either we must take *σῶμα* in *vv.* 22*b* and 23 in a purely symbolical sense as representing the soul or the heart of man, or else we must recognise that the term denoting "body" suggested much more to Christ's hearers than it does to us. The former course is beset about with difficulties. We may give to the first sentence its most natural meaning, *ὁ λύχνος τοῦ σώματος ἐστὶν ὁ ὀφθαλμὸς*, *i.e.* the lamp that belongs to the body, sheds light as it were outwards, is the eye, and we may interpret *σῶμα* in the passage in which Christ speaks of the body being filled with light as representing the soul. But in that case where does the analogy come in? The whole saying would be thus developed: "The lamp of the body is the eye; if, therefore, thine eye is healthy, such and such a result will ensue. The lamp of the soul is its life aim; if, therefore, thine aim is single, thy whole soul shall be full of light." But what is the result that ensues when the eye of the body is healthy? Till that question is answered the simile remains incomplete. And to us the answer seems difficult indeed to find. But we have the other alternative on which to fall back. Is it necessary for us to believe that *σῶμα* would bear exactly the same significance for Christ's hearers as it does for us? Again we would remind ourselves that Christ was talking to the uneducated

people of an unscientific age. When the Master uttered the saying, "The lamp of the body is the eye," what would be the idea conveyed to the mind of the "man in the street," if we may use such an expression in this connection? Surely it would remind him of a very ordinary experience. Let him close his eyes and there is darkness, not darkness in the world, for he has only to open them again to find the world full of light, but darkness in *his* world, in himself, in his body, for so in his unspiritual, material fashion would he think. In fact, we are driven to the conclusion, and a very reasonable conclusion it seems to be when all the circumstances of the occasion are taken into account, that by *σῶμα* Christ did not simply mean the physical body of flesh and bone, but also the subjective phenomena of the mind, which latter the unreasoning, unscientific popular thought of the day would not have separated from the former. This wider significance of *σῶμα* may be adhered to all through the passage, and there is then no need to interpret it in any but a literal sense. Singleness of vision is considered in its relation to a man's individual world, a man's *σῶμα*.

There is another difficulty of which our suggested interpretation of the passage offers a solution. The expression "*ὀφθαλμός πονηρός*" is a strange one. It is quite possible to translate it "an unhealthy, diseased eye," but in that case it does not constitute an opposite in any way to "a single eye"; the two expressions belong to different spheres entirely, and cannot be contrasted. The strict opposite to "single" is, of course, "double" or "many," but such a term applied to the organ of sight would not only be awkward, but it would fail to express the Master's meaning as accurately as *πονηρός* does. It is the operation of sin in the matter that Christ wishes to emphasize. The condition of the injured organ might have been described by some other word, but by none that would have so well suggested how

sin can attack and impair even the outmost gates into the soul, the very senses themselves.

The final difficulty is in the concluding sentence of the passage, *εἰ οὖν τὸ φῶς τὸ ἐν σοὶ σκότος ἐστί, τὸ σκότος πόσον*; How is this exclamation to be expounded? We are bewildered by the violent paradox it contains. Many seek to escape from the difficulty by adopting a symbolical interpretation of the expression *τὸ φῶς*. It represents, so they say, the guiding principle of a man's soul, the purpose according to which his whole life is ordered. If this, which ought to be a guiding light, be really darkness, how great will the darkness of the soul be! But we see no need to resort to the symbolical interpretation of this word. Such interpretation seems to rob the Master's words of much of their rich suggestiveness and force. We will take *τὸ φῶς* as literally as possible. We have already referred to the idea aroused in the popular mind by the expression "The lamp of the body is the eye." The light, therefore, of the body's lamp is the faculty that the eye possesses of illuminating the world of our vision, so that everything is placed in its proper perspective and seen in its proper nature. It is by the organ of sight that we obtain that view of the outer world which determines so many of our actions and has so much to do with the ordering of our lives, and it is by the organ of sight that we obtain much of that knowledge which is as a light to guide and direct us even from the days of infancy. Now if a man's eye is evil, if singleness of vision is not his, what is the result? Why, the whole of his experience is contaminated. Though he may travel much and see much, all his seeing will profit him nothing. The very light that does enter the man's eye is really no light at all, it has none of the properties of light, it will not enlighten him. His increased experience, the many things and men he has seen, may make a better business man of him, may make a plea-

sant companion of him, but as far as his soul is concerned it will remain in the densest darkness. Whilst his way of looking at things is evil, stricken by sin, there is nothing else but darkness for him. Whilst the Prince of Darkness stands guard at the gate of the soul no ray of light can enter therein. Let not such a man talk about culture and education and enlightenment. His is doubleness of vision. Then the light that is in him, the light of observation, experience, education, is, as far as the soul is concerned, darkness, it affords no real guidance at all. And till that be corrected and the man learn to view all things in the proper way, that darkness will be at its densest.

In an obscure and difficult passage like this much help may be obtained towards its interpretation by a reference to the context. These words of the Master are reported in two out of four gospels, and some difficulty will be caused at first by the fact that the context in Matthew differs entirely from the context in Luke. Here we may be permitted an expression of opinion with respect to such divergencies in the Gospels. To the historian it is of supreme importance that he should determine which account gives the correct order of events. To the expositor it is not of so much importance. We take this particular passage as an instance. We will suppose that we have come to the conclusion that Luke gives us the actual sequence of events and Matthew does not. Must we therefore regard the context in Matthew as of no importance? By no means. It is nearly, if not quite, of as great importance as Luke's. Its importance consists in this fact, that it gives to us the opinion of the early Christian Church, of the apostles and evangelists, concerning the exact meaning of the passage. No one can conceive for a moment that the sayings of Jesus were thrown together anyhow by the first narrators of the Gospel story. If certain passages were gathered in one group, then there must have been something in their con-



tents to warrant it. Hence their very connection gives to us some idea of the opinion of the original compilers concerning their meaning. Most of us will allow that the contemporaries of Jesus, after receiving the gift of the Spirit of Truth, were much more likely to have a correct understanding of the meaning of the Master's words than we are, and that their opinion of the particular interpretation of any saying of His is well worth obtaining, and is probably a fair representation of the mind of the Master Himself. Thus a fourfold Gospel, in which some of the sayings of Jesus occur in different connections, is a help unto the interpretation of those sayings rather than a hindrance. It gives not only the historical context, but also, indirectly, the interpretation of the early Christian Church, and we have two witnesses from whom to receive evidence concerning the meaning of our Lord's words where otherwise we should have had only one.

We do not therefore propose to determine whether Matthew or Luke gives to us in this particular instance the actual course of events and order of sayings. We will examine the context of each Evangelist, and from such examination try to obtain fresh help for the interpretation of this passage. The context in Matthew's Gospel is very interesting. The words we are considering are preceded by what we may call a sermon to rich men, and are followed by a sermon to poor men. The passage is thus intimately connected with the Master's treatment of our relation to material wealth. And in what more suitable connection could it be found? One of the most difficult lessons that the Church has to learn is this, to take the right view of the riches of the world. Doubleness of vision is more often illustrated in connection with wealth than in connection with anything else. Both rich and poor constantly fail to see wealth as Christ saw it. There are few even of the best men who are not more or less dazzled by it. They

can see the holiness of things divine, the greatness of eternity, the grandeur of the gospel, the solemnity of death, the empty vanity of the world's show, the worth of character, but too often when they come to deal actually with worldly wealth they seem to view it with other eyes entirely. When we consider that these words were addressed in the first instance to Jews, men most notorious for two things—their religious claims and profession and their love of money—how appropriate they are in this context! This doubleness of vision was one of the rich Pharisees' worst hypocrisies.

When we turn to Luke's Gospel, we find that certain remarks concerning the people's desire for a sign precede this passage, and that it is followed by the narrative of Christ breakfasting with a Pharisee. The latter we may consider as having no connection with the words which form the special object of our study. But the relation between signs and seeing is evident to any one. In the 29th and three following verses of the eleventh chapter of St. Luke's Gospel the Master is finding fault with the lack of the right kind of vision that there was among the people of His time. They could see no signs in the apparently commonplace men about them, no signs in the world of the natural and human. They could only see signs in that which was startling and supernatural and wonderfully unique. Their eyesight was double. They viewed religious events and persons in a totally different way from that in which they viewed the ordinary things and men of life. If they had brought their religious eyesight to bear on life's commonplaces, they would have seen what they wanted to see. In all this they were a complete contrast to the men of Nineveh and to the Queen of Sheba. To the one, Jonah, a man like themselves, was a sign; to the other, Solomon, an earthly monarch, was a sign. If the significance of the passage is to be grasped, the name in

the 30th verse, "the Son of man," must be comprehended in the fulness of its meaning. It is the human Jesus, Man among men, who is to be a sign to His generation. Those who can see nothing wonderful in the human will see nothing wonderful in Him. With this interpretation of these verses before us we see how fitting it was that a passage concerning signs should be followed by a passage concerning seeing. To Jesus the two were always indissolubly connected.<sup>1</sup>

To bring a somewhat lengthy discussion to a close. We maintain that three pleas may be urged for the suggested exposition of the passage. Firstly, that it is the least forced of any. It does not arrive at the meaning of Christ's sayings by importing anything into them, but rather by developing them unto their natural and proper issue. Secondly, that it makes the meaning of various sentences in the passage much more clear and free from difficulty. Lastly, that it makes context and text mutually helpful in explaining one another.

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### *HISTORICAL COMMENTARY ON THE EPISTLES TO THE CORINTHIANS.*

THE attempt made by Prof. Findlay, in the EXPOSITOR for June, p. 401 ff., to restore the terms of the letter addressed by the Corinthian Church to St. Paul, has proved exceedingly useful in studying the Apostle's reply. I had often wished that some one would have the courage to

<sup>1</sup> The remark in verse 33, immediately preceding the passage in Luke xi., may be thus briefly interpreted. No man hides a lamp away, but his object in lighting it is to give light and to give light continuously in the house. A lighted lamp not used, but hidden away, is a bit of foolishness. Let a man having once lighted his lamp, having once learned to look on things, events, persons in the right way, in the light of God and of eternity, keep that light burning in a prominent place, not using it only on the Sabbath and hiding it away for the other days of the week.