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The logia or sayings of Jesus

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1922

THE LOGIA OR SAYINGS OF JESUS.

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T. Ralph Watson.

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The few words known under this caption were found, written in Greek, on a leaf from a papyrus book., The leaf was marked "11" and was evidently the eleventh page of the codex from which it became detached., It is about, $3 \frac{3}{4}$ inches broad and $5 \frac{3}{4}$ inches in length., The edge is torn so that the original length of the leaf may have been much greater., The sentence too, at the bottom of the page is incomplete., The leaf was picked up in a heap of rubbish at the Egyptian village behnesa, where formerly stood the ancient, flourishing city of Oxyynchus., This village is situated on the right bank of the Nile some 120 miles south of Cairo., This city was of much importance in early Christian times., Strabo says that it was named from the worship of a Nile fish of the sturgeon class, with pointed head (' $\sigma\epsilon\delta\upsilon\pi\upsilon\chi\omicron\varsigma$). It appears that the city was noted for the great number of monks and virgins, -10,000 of the former and 20,000 of the latter., Prof. Swete quotes Rufinus as saying, "No one can worthily depict the religious life of the place; it is so manifold and so delightful., The town is packed with monks, the neighborhood teems with them., Such public buildings as they have, and the old pagan temples, are now in the hands of the monks, and in every part of the town the monastic cells far outnumber the private houses., The city being a large and populous one, has twelve churches; but the monks with their ceaseless hymns and lauds, which rise night and day to heaven, make it, in fact, all one church of God. There is not a pagan or a heretic to be found there., All the citizens are Christians and Catholics., The date of Christianity in this place is quite early., A bishop of Oxyrhynchus signed the Seleucian Creed of 359, and other bishops had preceded him in that see. Those who have the honor of making this important discovery, and who have edited the Sayings, are Messrs Grenfell and Hunt. They were searching under the auspices of the Egyptian Exploration Fund.

The exact date of the Logia cannot be given., The type of the handwriting, and the absence of all stops, breathings, and accents in the text, indicate a date not later than 200 A.D.; while the presence of word contractions, the interpolation of special characters, and a

slight tendency towards a separation of the words make improbable an earlier date than 200 A.D. The fact, that, it, is a part, of a codex and not, of a roll prevents assuming an earlier date than 200 A.D. The original from which the Sayings were taken were doubtless much older.

The title by which this fragment, is designated is open to criticism, as expressing the character of the sayings. "It is difficult," say the editors, "to imagine a title better suited to a series of sayings, each introduced by the phrase λέγει ἰησοῦς, than "Logia". The objection to the title Λόγια ἰησοῦς, is that, from the time of Herodotus Λόγια has been interpreted to mean oracles or oracular sayings. It is so rendered in the New Testament, in the four places in which the word occurs, viz. Acts 7:38; Rom. 8:2; Heb. 5:12; I Pet. 4:11. There is in the spirit, of the contents of this page grounds for the title 'logia' with this meaning. Again this document, must, not, be confused with the sources of Matthew and of Luke, and of Luke, or with the 'logia' of Papias. Harnack is of the opinion that, our fragment, forms no part, of such 'logia'. This, of course is questionable. On the other hand λέγει, or λέγει ἠγραφή, is a regular formula for scriptural citations. Much of the Sayings is doubtless scriptural, but, a portion is not, so, apparently. Sayings is but, a free translation of the term Λόγια. With this discrimination in mind, we may accept, the title as fairly appropriate to the fragment, not, however pressing it, too far. Already the title has become distinctive, and this unusually interesting document, is known as the 'Logia of Jesus'.

Logion I., and then shalt, thou see clearly to cast, out, the mote that, is in thy brother's eye. This is evidently a fragment, of the saying found in Matt. VII, 3-5, and in Luke VI, 42. Indeed it is identical with the last, clause of Luke VI, 42, according to the R.W., although Westcott, and Hort, change the order of the words somewhat, in their text. This saying is so closely connected with these gospels that, it, adds a flavor of genuineness to the whole of the logia. From the portion, it, is impossible to decide whether it, is taken from the Gospels, or has a simpler form, or points to a common source of tradition or written records.

Logion II. Jesus saith, Except, ye fast, to the world, ye shall in no wise find the kingdom of God; and except, ye keep the sabbath, ye shall

not, see the Father.

This saying has no parallel in the Gospels, and presents some perplexing problems. The first difficulty is met with in the phrase 'ἢ ἄνευ τῶν κόβων;'. Various translations have been suggested, as "unless ye fast, in due order" (Clemen), "With a material fast" (Moffatt), "While the present order lasts", "A world-long fast" (Swete). Did the genitive instead of the accusative occur the translation would be much easier. Many emendations are offered, but it seems best to accept the reading of the editors. This phrase is variously rendered 'to the world', 'from the world', and 'as respects the world'. The latter seems to me the most preferable. Another difficulty in making this phrase harmonize with the remainder of the saying lies in its corresponding phrase σαββατῆς τοῦ σαββάτου. Here we have the usual construction of a cognate accusative. That such a difference exists in the constructions may well cause doubt, as to the correct emendation. It is Hebraistic in style, and doubtless reflects Jewish thought.

Is the second half to be taken literally or metaphorically? The first part is necessarily metaphorical, so the preponderance of opinion favors the latter interpretation. The meaning then seems to be a spiritual one throughout. To fast, as respects the world is to live above the world upon a spiritual plane; and to keep the Sabbath is to abstain from all sin. It is possible to find in the Gospels passages that may suggest the idea of fasting and of keeping the Sabbath, but it seems most likely that this has a more direct reference to the Old Testament. It would then make salvation depend upon the Jewish fasts and observances of the Sabbath. If this is a real saying of Jesus, it must have been uttered with a view to spiritualizing this Jewish conception. With this explanation it accords with Jesus' teachings.

It is possible that the setting out of which this saying was taken, was such that no ambiguity could attach to the saying. If we do not supply some such condition then we are led to believe that the saying is pseudonymous. The length and style of the saying closely resembles the Lord's sayings in the Sermon on the Mount. I am inclined to regard this logion as a genuine saying of Christ, in which there was expressed a spiritual meaning. It is hardly conceivable that all or even any great number, comparatively, of the sayings of Jesus are embodied in the synoptics. Why should not this saying,

then, be genuine ?

Logion III.—Jesus saith I stood in the midst, of the world, and in the flesh was I seen by them, and I found all men drunken, and none found I athirst, among them, and my soul grieved over the sons of men, because they are blind in their heart.

The meaning of this logion is sufficiently clear, so that, no explanation is necessary. It suggests the closing words of the third chapter of Baruch (III. 37); "Afterwards did she appear upon earth, and was conversant, with men". This logion finds no parallel or hardly a suggestion in the Gospels. It is incomplete but, it is probable that, no new thought, was added. It is to be noted that, the reference in Baruch is thought, to belong to a later addition to the Hebrew Baruch; and this particular verse is regarded by many as a Christian interpolation. Whether it is a genuine saying of Jesus or a product of meditation will probably never be known unless new discoveries are brought, to light.

The time when these words were spoken, (assuming that Christ did utter them) is a matter of some conjecture. The aorist tense is used. It might, have been just, before the crucifixion or after the Resurrection. If before his death, Jesus looks upon his work as practically finished, and with a retrospective glance laments the hardness of men's hearts. The use of the present, tense favors this period, as both the aorist, and present, tenses could then be made to harmonize. The period after the Resurrection seems quite a natural one so far as the past, tense is concerned. Either period should present, no great difficulty.

The phrase "in the flesh", suggests the thought of Christ's spiritual existence as antithetical. This perhaps gives rise to the greatest, difficulty.

The Johanne flavor of this logion has led some critics to place it, among Gnostic writings.

The opinions of critics upon this passage vary greatly. Some hold the saying to be extra-biblical, and ungenue, while others cling to the opposite view. I see nothing to determine conclusively the correct, view.

Logion IV. poverty.

The editors have placed this word in a separate logion. Most critics combine it, with the preceding logion. While this word is

suggestive, its connection is so broken that to discuss it, is mere speculation.

Logion V: Jesus saith, wherever there are two, and there is one, I am with him. Raise the stone and there thou shalt find me, cleave the wood and there am I.

Of the emendations offered for the first part of this saying, Blass gives what seems the most probable. He says, wherever there are two, they are not, without, God's presence, and if anywhere one is alone, I say I am with him. One objection to this is that it makes the numeral two indicated by a letter (β), while in the second clause one is spelled in full (εἷς). Mr Ridpath has pointed out that this is by no means a serious objection, as in Codex B of the LXX there occur frequent uses of numerals side by side with the word in full. This first part is quite similar in thought to passages in both the New

and Old Testament, e. g., Matt. 18: 20, John 14: 22-23, Rev. 17: 20, Exod. 10: 22-23. There is nothing in this part to show that it might not be a genuine saying of Jesus.

The latter part of the logion gives no difficulty in the reading; the point of contention here lies in the meaning of the passage. I give some of the opinions that have been set forth. 1. Swete, Lisko and Harnack suggested independently that the clue lay in Ecclesiastes 10: 9. There the writer refers to the vanity and danger of manual work. 'Whoso heweth out stones shall be hurt therewith; and he that cleaveth wood is endangered thereby'. Harnack interprets the saying as the blessing of the Carpenter's Son upon manual work. Do the simplest work, quarry stone, or cut down trees, and you will find my presence with you. Dr Swete allegorizes it, 'The Wisdom of God pledges Himself to be with the Christian builder; and never more so than when he builds alone and with labor and peril.' 2. The view that has been most widely accepted is that which sees in the words an assertion of the presence of Christ in nature. The thought is, 'In all forms of human life I am present, even under inanimate creation', 'Lift yonder stone, cleave yonder piece of wood'. 3. The third view emphasizes the imperatives. The editors are followed by Dr James in this. Earnest effort is implied. 'You must, make an effort, like that, of raising a stone or cleaving a tree if you wish to find Me'. 4. Barnes finds in the stone and wood reference to the stone of the

sepulchre and in the wood of the cross. He refers to the patristic interpretation of Habakkuk 2; 11 in support, of this thought, 5. Ritualistic sacrifice is suggested by some. "Prepare an altar, pile up the stone, cleave the wood for fire, and I shall be there in your worship". R. F. H. Fisher gives a novel meaning. I quote his own words; "The Ophites interpreted the story of the temptation of Eve by the serpent, quite literally, and supposed that this very serpent, reappeared in the form of Christ, or in 'Sophia' thus represented. The most likely place to look for a snake is under a big stone or in the cleft, or hollow of the trunks of trees."

The most natural meaning seems to me to be the universal presence of God, not in a pantheistic sense but, as the creating and conserving power of the universe.

Logion VI. - Jesus saith a prophet is not acceptable in his own country, neither doth a physician work cures upon them that know him.

The first part of this logion is very similiar to the thought, expressed in Matt. 13; 57, Mark 4; 4, Luke 4; 24, and John 4; 41. The use of δεξιόν inclines towards Luke.

The latter part is practically new. There may be some hint, in the expression in Luke "Physician heal thyself". This latter part can be no more than a partial truth.

Logion VII. - Jesus saith, A city built upon the top of a high hill, and established, can neither fall nor be hid.

This logion evidently combines the thought of Matt. 5; 14, with that of 7; 24-25. The literary form and style, however, is not closely dependent. It shows now closer resemblance to Luke 6; 49.

Logion VIII. . . . unto thy face (or presence)

This has been emended so as to read, "Thou hearest with one ear, but the other hast thou closed. The letters thus restored were almost illegible. This is probably a good restoration and the logion gives no difficulty in interpretation.

The most interesting, important, and yet uncertain question in regard to the Logia is that, relating to its origin. The Sayings themselves purport, to be the words of Jesus. If it were granted that Jesus did utter in substance here recorded, it, must be admitted that, they have been recast by the hand of a compiler. There seems to be nothing in the most of the sayings that would disprove the

claims of the fragment, itself, that, these are genuine sayings., There is the Hebrew parallelism that, would indicate that, the compiler of the Sayings is a Christian Jew.,

The relation of this fragment, to the "logia" mentioned by Papias, cannot, be definitely known until more information is brought, to light., Whether the work of Papias was formed on the basis of our Four Gospels, as Lightfoot, and Harnack suppose, or of a collection antecedent to our Gospels cannot, at, present, be known., It, is certain that, while the Sayings are similar to the Gospels in some respects, yet, there is new matter not, contained in the Gospels., Sanday thinks that, the Logia, of which we have only this small fragment, were not, those of St. Matthew, and very probably had no direct, connection with the work of Papias., It seems by no means improbable that, the codex to which our fragment, belonged may have been excerpts from a collection of real sayings of our Lord, and that, in connection with the Synoptics it, may have a common origin., There is an undoubted ring of genuineness in some of the sayings; as much so as those in the Gospels themselves., Of course there is a possibility that, those passages wherein the Logia differ from the Gospels may be interpolations of a later date., At, any rate we need not, doubt, the genuineness of most, of the Logia, although their origin cannot, be definitely known.,

Harnack holds to the view that the Logia are taken from the Gospel of the Egyptians. The location where they were found would favor this view., For my own part, in reading ^{such} and quotations from the Gospel of the Egyptians as I have been able to find, I fail to see any close similarity either in style or content between the Logia and the Gospel to the Egyptians.

If we assume, as the basis of our fragment, genuine sayings of Jesus that, antedate our Gospels then the discovery is of great value. It is significant in pointing towards what, might, be, and suggesting a solution to some synoptic problems., At present no positive assertion can be made: We must, wait, for more light, which we trust may soon dawn. In conclusion I wish to quote the summary of Mr Cross., He makes the following proposition:- 1. That, the contents of the fragment formed part, of a collection of sayings attributed to Jesus.,

2., That, the Sayings are not; all taken from the canonical Gospels, or founded on them., 3., That, some of them are apparently founded on sayings which appear in a simpler form in the Synoptic Gospels., 4., That they appear to belong to a stream of tradition different, from the traditions of the canonical Gospels, different, but, related and secondary., 5., That, there is no evidence to show whether they were culled from a gospel or gospels or from any other written composition., 6., That, they have a common literary character which may have been due to the compiler or editor.

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The following is the list of books and articles referred to in the study of the subject.,

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