WHERE DID ANOTHER RICH MAN COME FROM?
(ORIGEN, COMM. IN MATTH. 15.14)

BY

PETRI LUOMANEN

1. Introduction


It is written in a certain gospel which is called according to the Hebrews (if, however, it pleases somebody to accept it, not as authority but in order to bring to light the question that has been put): Another rich man,² it says, said to him: “Master what good must I do in order to live?” He said to him: “Man, do⁴ the Law and the Prophets.” He answered him: “I have done.” He said to him: “Go, sell all that you possess and divide it among the poor and


² Klijn and Reinink (Patristic Evidence, 128-129) translate “Another of the rich men,” and the English edition of Vielhauer and Strecker (“Jewish-Christian Gospels,” 161) “The other of the two rich men.” Both translations are possible on the basis of the Latin original (alter divitium) but because it is not clear from the context how many men there were, the simple translation “another rich man” is preferred in this article.

³ The English edition of Vielhauer and Strecker (“Jewish-Christian Gospels,” 161) reads: “fulfil the law and the prophets.” “Fulfil” would be a strict translation for Latin impleo or Greek πληρώω. Since different versions of this story do not use the same verbs, a literal translation is preferred here: “do” for Latin facio. Synoptic stories about the Rich Man have φυλάσσω (observe, obey). There may also be a difference in meaning between “doing the Law” (refers more to individual commandments; cf. ποιέω in LXX Deut 27:26; Gal 3:10,12; 5:3) and “fulfilling the Law” (following the central principles; cf. πληρώω in Matt 5:20; Rom 13:8; Gal 5:14).
come, follow me.” But the rich man began to scratch his head and it did not please him. The Lord said to him: “How can you say: I have done the Law and the Prophets?” For it is written in the Law: love your neighbor as yourself. See, many of your brothers, sons of Abraham, are covered with dung, dying from hunger and your house is full of many good things, and nothing at all comes out of it for them.” He turned and said to Simon, his disciple that was sitting by him: “Simon, Son of Jonah, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Scholars generally agree that the passage was not a part of the original commentary but was added by the Latin translator. The translator and the exact time of the translation are unknown. We only have a very general dating between the fifth and ninth centuries.

According to the quotation, the text is from the “Gospel according to the Hebrews.” However, the passage is usually regarded either as a part of the “Gospel of the Nazoreans” or the “Gospel of the Hebrews,” depending on how the number and content of the ancient Jewish-Christian gospels are reconstructed.


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4 Due to a printing error, the first part of the question is missing from Klijn and Reimink’s reprinted translation in A. F. J. Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition* (Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae XVII; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992) 56. The original (*Patristic Evidence*, 129) runs “And the Lord said to him: Why do you say: I did the Law and the Prophets? Is it not written . . .” The Latin text of the later edition should also read in line ten: “Et dixit . . .” (pro “Et dicit . . .”). There is also a very unfortunate error in the last paragraph of p. 59 where the Greek citations from Matthew and Mark/Luke have traded places. Due to this error, the citations appear to support Klijn’s conclusion that the passage in Origen’s commentary cannot depend on Matthew.
