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Pablo de Burgos' Commentary on *Maranatha*: Text and Discussion

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Pablo de Burgos (14th-15th C.) introduced a novel interpretation of the expression *maranatha* (1 Corinthians 16:22) that broke with centuries of tradition and whose mark can be felt even today. Nevertheless, his commentary on *maranatha* is almost completely unknown and has never been translated. This work presents a translation of Pablo de Burgos' commentary on *maranatha* and is followed by a discussion of his commentary and its influence on subsequent scholarship.

KEYWORDS: Pablo de Burgos; *Maranatha*; Curse formula.

LOS COMENTARIOS DE PABLO DE BURGOS SOBRE *MARANATHA*: TEXTO Y EVALUACIÓN.— Pablo de Burgos (ss. XIV-XV) introdujo una interpretación original de la expresión *maranatha* (1 Corintios 16:22) que rompió con siglos de tradición y cuya huella se puede notar hasta hoy. Sin embargo, sus comentarios sobre *maranatha* son prácticamente desconocidos y nunca se han traducido. Este trabajo ofrece una traducción de los comentarios de Pablo de Burgos sobre *maranatha*, seguida por una evaluación de dichos comentarios y su influencia en eruditos posteriores.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Pablo de Burgos; *maranatha*; fórmula de maldición.

1. INTRODUCTION

Until the 15th century, there were only three viable options for translating the expression *maranatha* present in 1 Corinthians 16:22. The two dominant theories were “our/the Lord has come” (*dominus [noster] venit*; ὁ κύριος [ἡμῶν] ἤλθε) and “until the Lord comes/at the coming of the Lord” (*donec dominus redeat/in adventum domini*), and the minor-

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ity theory was “I have seen the Lord” (εἶδον τὸν Κύριον).¹ In the 16th century, however, it was not uncommon for interpreters to understand the expression as having some relationship to the Hebrew word חרם (curse), thereby implying a translation that had some connection with the word “curse.” This theory proved convincing to influential 16th-century Reformers such as Martin Luther, Henry Bullinger, and John Calvin, and thus its influence has reached even into modern times.²

The person responsible for this shift in interpretation is Pablo de Burgos (or, Pablo de Santa María, or Salomon Halevi, c. 1351-1435), a Spanish *converso* who is perhaps best known for his *Additiones* to Nicolaus de Lyra’s (c. 1270-1349) *Postillae*. Nevertheless, his comments on *maranatha* are virtually unknown to modern scholarship.³ The purpose of

¹ The translation “our/the Lord has come” was argued for by influential authors such as Ambrosiaster (*PL* 17: 276), Jerome (*PL* 22: 430-431), John Chrysostom (*PG* 61: 377), and Theodoret of Cyrus (*PG* 82: 373) and was followed by authors such as Oecumenius (*PG* 118: 904-905), John of Damascus (*PG* 95: 705), and Theophylact of Ohrid (*PG* 124: 793). The translation “until the Lord comes/at the coming of the Lord” was introduced by pseudo-Augustine (*PL* 33: 1161) and was followed by many influential authors such as Isidore of Seville (*PL* 82: 745), Haymo of Halberstadt (*PL* 117: 606), Rabanus Maurus (*PL* 112: 160), Florus of Lyon (*PL* 119: 352), Atto of Vercelli (*PL* 134: 412), Lanfranc (*PL* 150: 216), Bruno of Cologne (*PL* 153: 218), Hervey le Breton (*PL* 181: 1001-1002), Peter Lombard (*PL* 191: 1696). The translation “I have seen the Lord” was introduced by pseudo-Chrysostom (*Ep. ad abbatem*) and was followed by a few Greek lexicographers such as Hesychius and the *Suda*. A fourth translation was introduced by Thomas Aquinas who translated *maranatha* as “may the Lord come/the Lord will come” (*dominus veniet*; for Latin text and English translation, cf. John MORTENSEN and Enrique ALARCÓN [eds.], *St. Thomas Aquinas: Commentary on the Letters of Saint Paul to the Corinthians* [Lander, WY: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012] p. 396). This translation, however, was not followed by subsequent authors.

² See, respectively, Joachim Karl Friedrich KNAAKE (ed.), *D. Martin Luthers Werke: kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar: Hof-Buchdruckerei und Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1883-1929) vol. 2, p. 573, and vol. 7, p. 137; Heinrich BULLINGER, *In priorem D. Pauli ad Corinthios epistolam* (Tiguri [Zurich]: Christophorus Froschouerus, 1534) p. 224; and Eduard REUSS, Alfred ERICHSON and Ludovicus HORST (eds.), *Ioannis Calvini Opera Exegetica et Homiletica* (Brunsvigae: C. A. Schwetschke et Filium, 1892) vol. 27, pp. 572-573. To the extent that moderns continue to read these well-known 16th-century authors, their influence remains.

³ The only reference I know is from the 19th century (Nathaniel SCHMIDT, “Μαραναθα, 1 Cor. xvi.22,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 13 (1894) pp. 50-60: 51 and 53). The reader should note that Schmidt’s comments regarding Pablo de Burgos’ thoughts are a bit misleading.

this work is to present an English translation of his *additio* on *maranatha*, followed by a discussion of his influence on subsequent scholarship regarding the interpretation of *maranatha*. The translation will also include Nicolaus de Lyra's *postilla* together with Matthias Döring's (or Toringus; c. 1390-1469) *replica*, since they are important for understanding Pablo's comments and subsequent reception, as well as the fact that their comments also remain unknown to modern scholarship.

2. PABLO DE BURGOS' *ADDITIO*, WITH NICOLAUS DE LYRA'S *POSTILLA* AND MATTHIAS DÖRING'S *REPLICA*

The following Latin text comes from the 1492 Strassburg edition, in which all three authors' texts (i.e., *postilla*, *additio*, and *replica*) are found.⁴ The following English text is an original translation.⁵

Nicolaus de Lyra's <i>Postilla</i>	Translation
<p>Maranatha. Sic enim debet scribi sunt enim duae dictiones. Et prima valet in latino dominus noster. Secunda idem est quod venit. Sed propter ignorantiam idiomatis et longitudinem temporis duae dictiones coniunctae sunt simul et ultima litera dictionis est submota. Est igitur sensus: Si quis non amat dominum Iesum Christum, negando eum esse verum Deum caeli et terrae, sit anathema, et subditur causa, maranatha, quia dominus noster venit, scilicet, Iesus Christus venit in mundum, qui est verus Deus et dominus omnium. Et videtur Apostolus hoc specialiter dicere contra Iudaeos obstinatos, qui asserunt verum Christum adhuc non venisse.</p>	<p>Maranatha. So it ought to be written, for there are two words. And the first means in Latin, "our Lord." The second word means, "has come." But due to the ignorance of the language and the distance in time, the two words have been joined together and the last syllable has been removed. Thus, this is its meaning: "if anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ," by denying that he is the true God of heaven and earth, "let him be accursed" (1 Cor 16:22). And the reason is provided, "Maranatha," because our Lord has come, namely, Jesus Christ has come into the world, who is the true God and Lord of all. And the Apostle seems to say this especially against the obstinate Jews, who assert that the true Christ still has not come.</p>

⁴ Nicolaus DE LYRA, *Postilla super totam bibliam*, facsimile reprint of 1492 Strasbourg edition, 4 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Minerva, 1971) glossing 1 Cor 16:22.

⁵ I would like to thank Dr. Mark Paridaens for his assistance in translating this text.

Pablo de Burgos' <i>Additio</i>	Translation
<p>Maranatha non recte exponitur in glossis nostris dicendo quod sunt duae dictiones in syro significantes idem quod dominus noster venit, prout in postilla. Vel donec veniat dominus, prout in glossis Tum quia nihil istorum proprie significatur per ista verba. Tum quia non apparet aliqua ratio quare Apostolus, qui semper hoc nomen Iesus et hoc nomen Christus ponit sub propria forma latina quibuscumque locis, ubi de eo tractat, in hoc loco mutaret stilum suum nomina Christi ponendo in syro. Tum quia non bene concordat ratio huius propositionis causalis cum dicit, Si quis non amat Christum sit anathema, quia dominus noster iam venit. Non enim tantummodo ex hoc quod Christus iam venit sumus obligati ad dilectionem suam, quia etiam ante adventum suum homines obligabantur ad dilectionem Dei, ut in lege testamento. Unde ad veram expositionem harum dictionum sciendum est, quod Iudei tribus modis exercebant censuram seu sententiam iudicalem contra rebelles seu inobedientes fidei vel legi divinae.</p> <p>Primo modo per separationem a fidelibus, sicut inter nos per sententiam excommunicationis, et hoc est quod dicitur, Qui non amat Christum sit anathema, est, separatus a fidelibus prout in postilla.</p> <p>Secundo modo per destructionem, seu perdicionem omnium suorum, et hoc vocatur apud eos herem, de quo</p>	<p>Maranatha is not correctly explained in our glosses, saying that there are two words in Aramaic meaning, "our Lord has come," as in the <i>Postilla</i>, or, "until the Lord comes," as in the glosses. First, because neither of them give the correct meaning of these words. Second, because there is no reason why the Apostle, who always puts this name "Jesus" and this name "Christ" in their proper Latin form wherever he treats them, would have changed his style in this place by setting the names of Christ in Aramaic. Third, because the causal statement does not make much sense when he says, "If anyone does not love Christ let him be accursed" (1 Cor 16:22), because our Lord has come already. For it is not only because Christ already has come that we are obligated to love him, because even before his coming men were obligated to love God, as in the Old Testament. Thus for a true explanation of these terms, one must know that the Jews were practicing three modes of judgment or judicial sentence against persons who rebelled against or disobeyed the faith or divine law.</p> <p>The first mode is by separation from the faithful, as is practiced among us by sentence of excommunication, and this is the meaning, "whosoever does not love Christ, let him be accursed," which is "separated from the faithful," as in the <i>Postilla</i>.</p> <p>The second mode is by destruction or total loss of all his possessions, and this is called by them "herem,"</p>

habetur Leviticus ultima in litera et postilla et ille qui isto secundo modo incurrebat praedictam censuram seu sententiam vocabatur macharam, quod est nomen derivatum ab ipso herem praedicto.

Tercio modo per maledictionem solennem, in qua ille qui hoc incurrebat maledicebatur solenniter tubis canentibus, sicut inter nos solenniter maledicitur excommunicatus, qui in ultima contumacia persistit, extinctis candelis et pulsatis campanis, et haec vocatur inter eos samatha, quod significat mortificationem, qui quidem tres modi maledicendi, seu separandi hominem sunt noti inter eos sub praedictis vocabulis.

Apostolus ergo illos tres modos praedictos innuit. Primo modo per separationem, et de hoc dicit, Sit anathema. Secundo modo per destructionem suorum, et de hoc dicit, Maranatha, id est, macharam. Fuit enim hic, h, quae est litera inspirationis amota, eo quod in lingua nostra rarissime intervenit et ultima litera, m, mutatur in, n, per hoc quod scriptores nostri ignorant idioma dicta. Tertia imprecatur illis ultimam mortificationem quae dicitur samatha, quae est ultima mortificatio, ut dictum est, et fuit amota prima syllaba, per imperitiam linguae, ut dictum est.

which is found at the end of the book Leviticus (27:28-29) and the *Postilla*. And he who incurs this second mode of censure or sentencing is called "macharam," which is the noun derived from the same word "herem" previously mentioned.

The third mode is by a solemn curse, whereby the one who incurs it is solemnly cursed while the trumpets are being blown, as among us the person who is excommunicated is solemnly cursed who persists obstinately to the end, after the candles have been extinguished and the bells have been rung. And this is called among them "samatha," which means "mortification." These are the three modes of cursing or separating a person that are known among them under the terms previously mentioned.

Therefore the Apostle indicates those three previously mentioned modes. The first mode is by separation, and about this he says, "let him be accursed." The second mode is by destruction of their possessions, and about this he says "maranatha," that is, "macharam." For it was this "h" (that is an aspirated letter) which has been removed, for it rarely occurs in our language, and the last letter, "m," was changed into "n" because our scribes are not familiar with the spoken language. In the third mode he curses them with the ultimate mortification, which is called "samatha," which is the ultimate mortification, as has been stated. And the first syllable was removed, by inexperience with the language, as has been stated above.

<p>Sic ergo Apostolus interpretatur tres sententias condemnativas, his qui Christum non amant, sit anathema quae est separatio a fidelium caetu, et herem, quod est destructio bonorum suorum, et samatha quod est quaedam ultima et solennis mortificatio in sua civilitate seu politia.</p>	<p>Thus the Apostle gives expression to three sentences of condemnation on those who do not love Christ: “let him be accursed,” which is separation from the company of the faithful; and “herem,” which is destruction of their possessions; and “samatha,” which is the ultimate and solemn mortification in their city or polity.</p>
<p>Matthias Döring’s Replica</p> <hr/> <p>In ultimo capitulo Maledictionem eorum qui Christum non amant ponit Apostolus in lingua extranea. Circa quam Burgense se opponit, et literae et omnibus doctoribus, quasi nullus intellexit vere terminum ibi positum vel terminos. Respondeat ibi pro doctore, qui voluerit, idioma est mihi ignotum.</p>	<p>Translation</p> <hr/> <p>In the last chapter the Apostle places a curse in a foreign language on those who do not love Christ. In this regard, Pablo de Burgos finds fault both with the diction and with all scholars, as if no one really had understood the term or terms put there. Whoever so desires, let him respond there as a scholar. I do not know the idiom.</p>

3. BRIEF DISCUSSION OF PABLO DE BURGOS’ COMMENTS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON SUBSEQUENT SCHOLARSHIP

Before turning to Pablo de Burgos’s text, Nicolaus de Lyra should be acknowledged in his own right as somewhat of a trailblazer. Although the translation “dominus noster venit” was a common translation amongst Patristic scholars, the majority translation throughout the Middle Ages and in Nicolaus’ time was “donec dominus redeat/in adventum domini.” His language demonstrates only minimal dependence on Ambrosiaster and Jerome,⁶ and thus he appears to be demonstrating a certain level of independent thinking and fresh exegesis of the text.

Coming now to Pablo’s text, he is essentially arguing for textual emendation with regard to *maranatha*’s original form.⁷ Subsequent

⁶ Ambrosiaster: *PL* 17: 276; Jerome: *PL* 22: 430-431.

⁷ It should be noted that Pablo was the first to argue for textual emendation in reconstructing *maranatha* in its original form. Few have appealed to this strategy since his time, but it was a truly novel (if not daring) idea in the 15th century. For examples

scribes, he claims, were ignorant of the Aramaic language and thus did not know how to preserve it accurately. His proposed reconstruction is based on both linguistic and cultural-religious arguments. He argues that taking into account a justifiably reasonable amount of textual emendation, one can reconstruct the three Jewish curse formulas. The first, he says, corresponds to the word “anathema.” He does not provide the underlying Aramaic word as he does with the other two curses, but based sources from the following century (see below) it appears that this curse was referred to as *niduri* (Hb. נדורי). The second and third curses are *herem* (Hb. חרם) or *macharam* (Hb. מחרם), and *samatha* (Hb. שמתא), respectively.

In his bilingual Hebrew-Latin dictionary, Elia Levita (or Elias the Tishbite, c. 1469-1549) writes in his entry שמתא / *Schamatha*:

Tres sunt speties Anathematum, sive excommunicationum. Niduri, Cherem, & Schamata (There are three types of Anathema or excommunication: Niduri, Cherem, and Schamata).⁸

According to Elia, the curse שמתא was believed to be an abbreviated form of the phrase שם מיתה, meaning “ibi mors est” (there is death), but later interpreters understood the expression to be an abbreviated form of the phrase שמ אתא, which literally means “the Name comes” but which was used as a euphemism for “the LORD comes (i.e., in judgment).”

According to Pablo, the latter two curses, חרם (or מחרם) and שמתא, are what the Apostle Paul had originally written,⁹ but that due to the scribes' ignorance of the language the word מחרם was changed to מרן, and שמתא was changed to תא, resulting in the reading מרתא. Thus it is seen that linguistic and cultural-religious arguments lay behind Pablo's reconstruction and interpretation of *maranatha*.

of others who have appealed to emendation, cf. Carl SIEGFRIED, “Review of E. Kautzsch, *Grammatik des Biblisch-Aramäischen mit einer kritischen Erörterung der aramäischen Wörter im Neuen Testament*,” *Zeitschrift für Wissenschaftliche Theologie* 28 (1885) pp. 126-128: 128; William F. ALBRIGHT and Christopher S. MANN, “Two Texts in 1 Corinthians,” *New Testament Studies* 16 (1969-1970) pp. 271-276.

⁸ Elia LEVITA, *Tishbi* (Isnae: Algauia, 1541) pp. 270-271. It is from this source that the above reconstructions have been taken.

⁹ Pablo is not clear whether the Apostle had originally written these words with Greek or Aramaic characters.

Turning now to Pablo's influence on subsequent scholarship, it is helpful to distinguish between his specific connection between *maranatha* and the Hebrew root מָרָא, and his general connection between *maranatha* and the three Jewish curse formulas, especially the last, שְׁמָתָא. As for the specific connection, it was noted above in passing that 16th-century Reformers were influenced by this theory. Here the testimony of Martin Luther and John Calvin are presented to demonstrate that influence.

In his 1519 commentary on Galatians, Martin Luther cites 1 Corinthians 16:22 and then writes:

quod Burgensis pessimum maledicendi genus apud Hebreos esse dicit, ubi nostri maranata 'dominus venit' intelligunt, non absque errore, ut puto (Burgos says that amongst the Hebrews it is the worst kind of cursing, where they understand maranatha to mean "the Lord has come," not without error, as I think).¹⁰

Later, in his commentary on 1 Corinthians he writes of *maranatha*:

Bann auff deutsch, Anathema, Griechisch, Maharam, auff Ebreisch ist ein ding. Moth aber heisset tod. Wil nu S. Paulus sagen, Wer Christum nicht liebet, der ist verbannet zum tode. Vide Leui. 6 (Ban in German, Anathema in Greek, and Maharam in Hebrew mean the same thing. But *moth* means death. St. Paul means this: whoever does not love Christ, he is ostracized to death. See Leviticus 6).¹¹

Pablo's influence on Luther is evident.

John Calvin's comments are not as explicitly dependent on Pablo as Luther's, but his (indirect) influence can be seen nonetheless. In his commentary on 1 Corinthians he writes the following of the traditional interpretations of *maranatha*:

Atqui nemo non videt (opinor) quam frigidum sit ac puerile, apostolum apud Graecos syriace loqui, quum dicturus esset, Dominum venisse. Qui transferunt in adventum Domini, tantum divinant: neque etiam multum in sensu illo est coloris (And everyone, I think, must see how silly and childish it is that the Apostle spoke to Greeks in Aramaic, when meaning to say, 'the Lord has come.' Those who translate it 'at the coming of the Lord' are only guessing; and besides, there is not much plausibility in that gloss).

Instead of these theories, he writes:

¹⁰ KNAAKE, *D. Martin*, vol. 2, p. 573.

¹¹ KNAAKE, *D. Martin*, vol. 7, p. 137.

Quanto verisimilius est, formulam hanc fuisse Hebraeis familiarem, quum anathematizare vellent? (Isn't it much more likely that this expression was customary of the Jews when they wanted to excommunicate someone?).

He then cites a host of contemporary Hebrew scholars in support of his position:

Admonuit autem Bullingerus ex autoritate Theodori Bibliandri, chaldaica declinatione maharamata idem esse quaedam hebraicum חרם. Et mihi aliquando vir felicis memoriae Wolfgangus Capito idem confirmavit (Now Bullinger has affirmed, on the authority of Theodore Bibliander, that in the Chaldean dialect "maharamata" is the same as the Hebrew term herem. And on another occasion I was assured of the same thing by Wolfgang Capito, a man of blessed memory).¹²

Thus, via other scholars, Pablo's influence can be seen in Calvin's writings.

Despite its reception in the 16th century, the specific connection between *maranatha* and the Hebrew חרם did not last long. The early 17th century critique raised by Cornelius a Lapide voiced the concerns of many. Responding to the variation of this theory that *maranatha* was made up of מחרם and מוּתָה, Cornelius replies:

Sed hoc tortum est, et longe distat macharam morta a maran ata. Nam maran ata hic constanter legunt omnes Latini, Graeci et Syrus (But this is twisted, and "macharam morta" is a long way from "maran ata." For "maran ata" is consistently read in all Latin, Greek and Syrian versions).¹³

This critique was seen as valid for the other variation of the theory, and proponents of the specific connection quickly died out.

However, whereas this specific connection did not last, the general connection between *maranatha* and the three Jewish curse formulas (especially שמתא) did last a bit longer. Apparently what had happened was that the traditional interpretations of "dominus (noster) venit"¹⁴ and "donec dominus redeat/in adventum domini" were seen as able to be harmonized in the Jewish curse שמתא ("the Name/LORD

¹² REUSS, ERICHSON and HORST, *Ioannis Calvini*, vol. 27, pp. 572-573.

¹³ Xysto Riario SFORTIAE, *Commentaria in Sacram Scripturam* (Neapoli: I. Nagar Editorem, 1858) vol. 9, p. 281.

¹⁴ It must be remembered that "venit" could be taken as a preterite or present, yielding the translation either as "has come" or "comes."

comes [i.e., in judgment]”), such that many interpreters understood *maranatha* to be roughly equivalent to שמתא. This was the position taken by various scholars in the 16th-18th centuries such as Theodore Beza, Cornelius a Lapide, Johannis Buxtorf, and Edward Leigh and even made its way into more popular literature in the 19th century via preachers such as Albert Barnes and his commentary on the text.¹⁵

IV. CONCLUSION

As seen, Pablo de Burgos is the person responsible for introducing a new interpretation of *maranatha* which proved convincing to scholars for centuries. His knowledge of the language and customs of the Jews gave him great authority among Christians, although today his thesis has been overturned by better linguistics, better knowledge of the customs of the Jews of the first century, and better historical methodology.¹⁶

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¹⁵ Theodore BEZA, *Novum Jesu Christi Domini nostri Testamentum latine jam olim a veteri interprete, nunc denuo a Theodoro Beza versum* (Basileae: Nicholas Barbier & Thomas Courteau, 1559) pp. 566-567; Cornelius a Lapide, *apud SFORTIAE, Commentaria*, p. 281; Johannes BUXTORF, *Lexicon chaldaicum talmudicum et rabbinicum* (Basileae: Ludovici Regis, 1639) p. 1249; Edward LEIGH, *Critica Sacra: or, Philologicall and Theologicall Observations upon All the Greek Words of the New Testament In order Alphabetically* (2nd ed. London: James Young, 1646) p. 255; Albert BARNES, *Notes, Explanatory and Practical, on the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1859) pp. 355-356.

¹⁶ One notable exception – although completely unaware of Pablo de Burgos and his subsequent reception – is the Aramaic scholar Matthew BLACK, “The Maranatha Invocation and Jude 14, 15 (1 Enoch 1: 9),” in *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament*, eds. Barnabas LINDARS and Stephen SMALLEY (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973) pp. 189-196: 196.