

The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.

JOHN xiv. 15-17.

'If ye love Me, ye will keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may be with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth: whom the world cannot receive; for it beholdeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: ye know Him; for He abideth with you, and shall be in you' (R.V.).

EXPOSITION.

'If ye love Me, ye will keep My commandments.'—The Greek may be translated imperatively, as in the Authorized Version. But it is a consequence, clearly.

'And I will pray the Father, and He shall give.'—As the Father gave Me, so will He give the other Comforter. I can of Mine own self do nothing. The Father does all things. But the time is coming when I will not need to pray the Father for you. And even now it is not the prayer of a suppliant; it is the request of one whom the Father receives.

'Another Comforter'—*Paraclete*. It has the two meanings of Comforter and Advocate. We need both words to cover it. So one is used in St. John's Gospel (14¹⁶⁻²⁶, 15²⁶, 16⁷) and one is used in St. John's Epistle (2¹). He battles with and He battles for the believer. As for the English word *Comforter*, it has lost half its meaning now. It is not sorrow only, it is weakness of every kind that needs a Comforter. *Another* Comforter, for Jesus is one; and this Comforter is to take His place on earth.

'That He may be with you for ever.'—This was the disciples' sorrow, that the first Comforter, Jesus, was about to go away. The other will never leave them.

'The Spirit of truth.'—In whom is truth, who gives the truth, who is the truth; to have whom is to have the truth, and to have the strength to speak and witness for it. This was the work the disciples had to do—to be witnesses for the truth.

'Whom the world cannot receive.'—The world being all except the followers of Jesus Christ. They alone love Him, and so for them alone He prays the Father to send the Comforter. They alone are ready to believe the truth, and so to them alone the Spirit of truth can come.

'He abideth with you, and shall be in you.'—Jesus cannot abide. And even when He is here He cannot always be beside. The Spirit abides, is always near, is always in the heart of those who receive Him.

The Other Comforter.

1. Christ has told the disciples that He must go away, and He has told them why. But they are not satisfied. He has promised that He will

remember them. He has said that they will have work to do, and He will so remember them as to give them power to do it. The work will occupy them. It will be grand work. They will have great joy it. And whatever they need to the full accomplishment of it, if they ask it, He will give it. Yet they are not satisfied. They need Himself. If only He would not go away. As long as He is with them He is a present help in every time of need. Whatever He can send them after He is gone, it will not be Himself.

2. He recognizes the hunger of their hearts. He does not promise not to go away. He cannot promise that. It is expedient for them that He should go away; otherwise there is no place for them. But He will send them another Comforter; He will send them One who will take His place with them and fill it, as nearly as it can be filled. He is to promise them more than that in a moment—He promises them that first. This One whom He is to send will comfort them as He comforts them, be to them what He is to them, just supply that which they fear will be lacking when He is gone. And He will be with them for ever. That will be an advantage; they will never need to sorrow over His departure.

3. Who is this other Comforter? He is a Spirit. That is necessary. For He is to be with them for ever, which no man can be. He must be with them all for ever, wherever they are in all the generations. So He must be a Spirit. He is more than a Spirit, however, He is the Spirit of God,—for that is the meaning of the Spirit of truth. God is truth, Christ is truth, the Spirit is truth. And He is called specially the Spirit of truth, because it is for this work He is to be sent. He is to fit them for their work and confirm them in it. And since their work is to witness to the truth, He is the Spirit of truth. So He will guide them into the truth, give them power to utter the truth, the heart to live the truth.

4. As the Spirit of truth He comes to those who are of the truth. He does not come to the world. Jesus came to the world; the world could see Him, could spit upon Him. The Spirit of truth comes unseen by the world, unknown, un-

received. He comes to those who are of the truth.

5. And He comes very close to them. He is beside them; He is in them. Jesus was often away from them. There they are in the open boat on the angry sea, and Jesus is away on the mountain-top. The Spirit will be beside them always. And more, He will be in them. Even when Jesus was beside the boat, and Peter could say, 'Lord, bid me that I come to Thee on the water,' his courage failed, for Jesus was not in him. The Spirit will be in them now, and his courage will be theirs, till Peter can brave the rulers and say, 'Whether we ought to serve you or God, we leave ourselves to settle.'

6. Lord, when will the Spirit of truth be sent? He answers, 'When I pray.' And He will pray the Father to send the Spirit when they love Him and keep His commandments. This is the evidence that the Spirit of truth will come to *them*. This is the condition, indeed, upon which He is sent. 'To them that love Him, surely near is His salvation.' It is the New Covenant. 'If ye keep My commandments, I will send the Spirit.' It is the covenant of love. 'If ye love Me, ye *will* keep My commandments.'

ILLUSTRATIONS.

OUR Saviour puts this 'if' in such a way as to teach us that love must be prior to obedience. Obedience must have love for its mother, nurse, and food. The essence of obedience lies in the hearty love which prompts the deed, rather than in the deed itself. A heart at enmity with God cannot be made acceptable by mere acts of piety. It is not what your hands are doing, nor even what your lips are saying; the main thing is what your heart is meaning and intending. The great fly-wheel which moves the whole machinery of life is fixed in the heart; hence this is the most important of all suggestions—'If ye love Me.' When the heathen killed their sacrifices, in order to prophesy future events from the entrails, the worst augury they ever got was when the priest could not find a heart; or, if that heart was small and shrivelled. It is so in very deed with religion, and with each religious person. He that searches us searches principally our hearts.—C. H. SPURGEON.

HERE is a unique fact in the history of the world, that not only did He make this astounding claim, but that it has been responded to, and that to-day there are millions of men who love Jesus Christ with a love warm, personal, deep, powerful—the spring of all their goodness, and the Lord of their lives. Why do they? For one reason only. Because they believe that He died for them, and that He lives an ascended, yet ever-present Helper and Lover of their souls.—A. MACLAREN.

WE remember the anecdote of a Roman commander who forbade an engagement with the enemy, and the first transgressor against his prohibition was his own son. He accepted the challenge of the leader of the other host, met, slew, spoiled him, and then, in triumphant feeling, carried the spoils to his father's tent. But the Roman father refused to recognize the instinct which prompted this as deserving the name of love. Disobedience contradicted it, and deserved death.—F. W. ROBERTSON.

WHAT does the word 'paraclete' mean? Nearly all the ancient interpreters render it comforter or consoler. This accords with one use of it and its related words in both the Old Testament and the New. It does not cover the whole ground, since the Holy Ghost not only comforts, but does a great deal more than that. In some cases the word is equivalent to master, teacher, interpreter. In other cases it means a pleader or advocate—one engaged to take up a cause and carry it through. Hence the word comes to mean—one by whose grace and love the entire case and cause of men are undertaken; who will soothe, comfort, advocate, plead, teach, interpret—yea, who will stand by us, and render any needed aid whatever! For this reason the word 'advocate' is, like the word 'comforter,' too restricted. We want a word of wider significance than either. The word 'helper' is the best that we can find.—C. CLEMANCE.

CHRIST said 'another Comforter.' Who is it? The Father? Yes; for He is the 'God of all comfort.' The Son? Yes; 'I will not leave you comfortless.' Then, a Trinity of Comforters. Is that the way we travel to 'God is love?' Through a Comforter I ask a Comforter to send a Comforter. Or, more truly, two Comforters of themselves send a Comforter. You are a deep mourner. But see how you are encircled. And can sorrow outreach that comforting?—J. VAUGHAN.

WHEN a telescope is directed to some distant landscape, it enables us to see what we could not otherwise have seen; but it does not enable us to see anything which has not a real existence in the prospect before us. The natural eye saw nothing but blue land stretching along the distant horizon. By the aid of the glass there bursts upon it a charming variety of fields, and woods, and spires, and villages. And so of the Spirit. He does not add a single truth or character to the Book of Revelation. He enables the spiritual man to see what the natural man cannot see; but the spectacle which He lays open is uniform and immutable.—T. CHALMERS.

Sermons for Reference.

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 Benson (R.), Final Passover, vol. ii. pt. i. 353, 363.
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At the Literary Table.

THE BOOKS OF THE MONTH.

PART II.

Christian Doctrine.

ST. PAUL'S CONCEPTION OF CHRIST. BY DAVID SOMERVILLE, M.A. (*T. & T. Clark.* 8vo, pp. xvi, 330. 9s.)

WE have read Mr. Somerville's Cunningham Lectures with uncommon pleasure. Having heard them highly praised by those who listened to their delivery, we went to the book with misgiving. For how often has the printed page crushed the life out of the spoken word! But the life here is vivid still and intense.

And yet it is not where the author expects that we find his page most interesting. In the Pauline conception of Christ it is the doctrine of the Second Adam that Mr. Somerville holds central. It does not seem to us that he has proved it so central as he holds it is. And certainly it is not in the exposition of the Second Adam that Mr. Somerville rises to the height of himself. It is in the later pages of the lecture on the Immanent Christ. That lecture (it is the fourth) is, for warmth of spiritual feeling, the climax of the book. In spite of Mr. Somerville's intention, the interest rises to that, and never rises beyond it. The book fulfils its intention. It is the most credible account of St. Paul's conception of Christ we have ever read. But the

chapter which describes the Christ that dwells in the believer's heart by faith is an original contribution to Biblical Theology of the highest permanent value.

THE CHRIST OF HISTORY AND OF EXPERIENCE. BY THE REV. DAVID W. FORREST, M.A. (*T. & T. Clark.* 8vo, pp. xx, 479. 10s. 6d.)

This is the third volume of the Kerr lectureship. The previous volumes were Dr. Orr's *Christian View of God and the World*, and Dr. Kidd's *Morality and Religion*. Both took and have maintained a place of nearly unique distinction among lectures. This volume will lift the Kerr lectureship, we do not hesitate to say, to a yet higher place.

The Christ of History and of Experience is the greatest subject of human study. It demanded a strong man's hand, the hand of a man who knew that he was strong. Mr. Forrest is one of the younger men of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland, yet he must have known his strength. We know it also now. Surely it is a marvellous thing that we should be able to call a book worthy of a theme like this? We call this book worthy. We recognize it as a distinct contribution to the interpretation and vindication of that subject which has occupied the greatest minds of all the