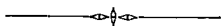


I have endeavoured to show that the structure, the style of thought, the moral and religious teaching, the grounds of appeal, and many details—of which I have noticed four—point to the genuine character and historical reality of Deuteronomy. But I must close; and, in conclusion, I should like to make an appeal to those who are pressing these questions upon us. My appeal is that they should complete their new Eddystone before they take the old one down. I will assume, for the moment, that their analysis is all correct: that "E." and "J." and "J. E." and "P. C." and "D.," etc., are to take the place of Genesis, Exodus, etc. Well, the chemist has great power; he can take a loaf of wholesome bread and put its contents before us in so many phials, starch, and gluten, and water, and what not. But let a man be ever so hungry, he will scarcely eat these elementary substances. Nor would they readily digest if he did. And the chemist who analyzed the loaf cannot re-make it. The elements are there, indeed, a scientific curiosity, but absolutely useless.

ALFRED KENNION.



ART. IV.—NOTES AND COMMENTS ON JOHN XX.

No. VIII.

WE began last month to study the narrative of the doubt and the faith of Thomas, and remarked the strong individuality of the Apostle's character as it is indicated by St. John. It is from St. John only that we get any such information about the man; the other Evangelists and the Acts contain mere mentions of his name. In St. John it occurs seven times, and in three cases it is given with the translation, *Didymus*, *Twin*. Is it possible that the Evangelist sees a moral significance in the name, as if it suggested a certain doubleness in the mind where love and mistrust were both at once so strong? Not that duplicity in any other sense is traceable in Thomas; his was anything but a character of guile.

In two other scenes in this Gospel, as we remember, Thomas appears, so to speak, in character. In xi. 16 he proposes to the others to accompany the Lord into Judea at a dangerous time: "Let us also go, that we may die with Him;" a brief sentence, in which we see combined a resolution almost petulant, an intense devotion to his Lord's person, *and* great mistakes as to His nature and power. In xiv. 5 he seems to interrupt the Master in the midst of His words about the heavenly home and His purpose to "go and prepare" it for

His followers: "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?" Here, again, is the mind which shapes boldly to itself, and almost brusquely expresses, the difficulty or doubt which it feels. One other mention of Thomas in this Gospel must be recalled—xxi. 2. He is there the second name in that blessed company which met the risen Jesus in the early morning by the lake-side. Is not this a beautiful and touching close to the notices of the Apostle? He has ceased to be the self-asserting, self-separating doubter. He is happy now to be just a brother with his brethren; and so he is privileged to enjoy, without delay, without reproof, that heavenly interview.

But we turn now to the narrative before us.

Ver. 24. *But Thomas, one of the Twelve, whose name means Twin, was not with them when Jesus came.*

"One of the *Twelve*": their, so to speak, official title, though, alas! they were now only eleven. This distinctive mention of the Twelve may suggest to us that, when just above and below the Evangelist speaks of "the disciples," he means the little company at large, and not only the Apostles.

I will not repeat what was said in our last number about the probable causes of Thomas' absence, only remarking again that in his mental frame we see, surely, the recent mental frame of all the disciples, but expressed more definitely and resolutely. He did but speak out, or rather act out, what had been deep in the hearts of all—a sense of tremendous disappointment, a deep and gloomy despondency, with the immediate impulse to separate rather than to combine.

Nothing can be more certain than that this impulse to separate would have had its way finally, and very soon, if no magnificent antidote to the despair of Friday had come into the midst of them. The shame as well as pain of having embarked in a great mistake would have made them loth to meet and see each other's faces for long together. And the terrible act of Judas must have given them for a time a sense of mutual suspicion. If Judas had proved untrue, might not another, might not others? Those who had so often misconstrued the Master might easily suspect their fellow-servants.

In short, they were ready to disperse "every man to his own." They would have diverged, no doubt, in very different moods: some sullen, some tender, some quite silent, others seeking to explain everything. And had they done so, and had some rumours of that obscure event, the crucifixion of a religious leader in Judea, reached our day from that day, those rumours, we may rely upon it, would have been conflicting. Each section of the unhappy dispersion would have had its version of Jesus and of the cross—without a sequel.

But they did not disperse. They reassembled, and in a spirit altogether new. Then after a while they did indeed part, but to preach one message, to confess and glorify one Lord. And the one solution of all this is—the resurrection. Every other explanation is a violent process; it either ignores the despair and separation of the disciples at first, or the completeness and grandeur of their moral *and mental* revolution, so prompt, decisive, and unanimous.

Ver. 25. *So the other disciples began to say to him, We have seen the Lord.*

Surely they went to seek him with the news, perhaps that very night, for probably the presence of the Lord with them that evening was brief, as it seems to have been on other recorded occasions. The one Apostle who did not yet know of the mighty joy must have been an object of strong and loving interest and sympathy to his friends. If they had been tempted before to be impatient when he withdrew, they would be more than patient now; for what can so fully calm the discords of the soul in itself and open it out in unselfish sympathy as the possession of a great spiritual joy? This now, indeed, these men had. They knew Jesus risen; they knew that He had given them His peace; they knew that He had died for them, and was alive for evermore.

“He that believeth shall not make haste.” An eagerness for religious opinions, for religious truths, which is at all harsh or bitter, is not seldom due to uneasiness, not to conviction. It is one thing to be unwavering and entirely in earnest, another thing to be heated. Peter, John, Nathanael, and the rest would not be hard upon Thomas because he had not been with them. Full of their unspeakably glad discovery, rich in the ample possession of such a Saviour, they can only have longed with sympathetic graciousness that their friend should share it to the full.

Meanwhile, the witness would be as positive as it was kind. “*We have seen the Lord*”—an absolute fact. *We*, not others; *have seen*, not guessed or dreamed; *the Lord*, identical and immortal in His love and glory.

So they would bear witness; kindly, positively, and as men who were fresh from the special benediction of the Risen One. And they were persons with whom Thomas had been long familiar, and whose concurrence of witness must to him have been impressive, for they were no mere copies of each other.

Yet all this witnessing wholly, or nearly wholly, failed. It was continued, repeated; ἔλεγον. But Thomas met it with an outspoken scepticism and refusal. Unless his own senses should assure him, *he would not believe, οὐ μὴ πιστεύσω*.

He was wrong, very wrong. The whole narrative, and the

whole Scripture, illustrate this. In Scripture the evidence of the senses is never slighted, never said to be illusory. But it is shown to be not the only evidence. Adequate testimony may fully take its place, even when a soul is in the question.

It was wrong; and yet who, that knows his own human heart, will say that it was unnatural? Who, that knows how violently *self*, in any of its forms, can warp reason or affection, when once self is allowed to have its way, will sit in superior judgment upon Thomas? For surely it was this subtle subjective obstacle that held him. If, as is so likely, grief had developed a certain gloomy pride of isolation, and then upon it had come in this news of the great joy found by those whom he had left in such a spirit, can we wonder if for the time the very thought of their certainty and happiness embittered and hardened his own resolve to doubt and to differ? A subtle sense of mortification may well have tinged the words: *Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and insert my finger into the print of the nails, and insert my hand into His side, I will not believe.*

Many strange but actual workings of human nature, in the absence of the peace and love of God, seem to me to be remarkably illustrated by the acts and words of Thomas in his gloom.

Perhaps we have in him an example of many minds among those which doubt or reject the Gospel. Self (to use the word in the sense not of mere vanity or shallow self-importance, but in that rather of a morbid introspection) often stands more than the doubter suspects between him and conviction. The proof which is really good for another is good for him, in itself. But it is seen distorted, for it is seen askance. We need not live long to find out how, in the practical affairs of common life, personal peculiarities interfere with apparently self-evidently beneficial and just courses of action. Even so, in the microcosm within us, reason and conscience have often to fight a hard, and often a losing, battle with some purely irrational opposition of unregenerate self. How happy, when that self is subdued, as the soul of Thomas was subdued, by the revelation of Jesus Christ as He is, living, loving, slain and risen again, my Lord, and my God!

Ver. 26. *And after eight days again the disciples were in-doors, and Thomas with them.*

"After eight days," a full week. We are left almost entirely uninformed as to the life of the disciples "between times" during the forty days. We see them, as it were, only under the illumination of their Lord's presence; He goes, and the shadow falls over them for the time. So we do not know how that week was passed, only that it must assuredly have been

a week of great, though private, gladness. "The fear of the Jews" must have been strangely neutralized by the consciousness of the victory and life of the Lord Jesus, while yet the disciples appear to have kept silence about it beyond their own circle—surely in consequence of a command from Him. On the other hand, their enemies seem to have been quite satisfied, so to speak, with the disappearance of the Master, and to have meditated no assault on the disciples. Whatever the mystery of the disappearance of Jesus was to Caiaphas and his fellows, *He had disappeared*; He had become at the most a spectre to them; and so manifest was the inferiority of His followers' power to move and to attract, that the Sanhedrin fairly, it would seem, dismissed the thought of them from their minds.

So the week passed, outwardly undisturbed, as far as we know or can guess. But *within* the little company, great was the stir. This obstinate doubter—this stubborn rejecter of the multifold witness to the great fact of joy—what was to be done in view of him? Again and again they would attack him with a loving siege; but the subtle influence ruled Thomas still. He would not believe.

It was a severe lesson to them all, though a lesson richly blessed, no doubt. For all their after-ministry it must have taught them much; it must have pressed home on them for all time the incapacity of man to 'set free by his own act and word his brother's soul; the weakness of mere evidences, however convincing in the abstract, to sway the heart and will without the eternal grace; the possibilities of doubt in another over what was to themselves so self-evident, and about which they were so greatly happy. Let us learn our lesson from theirs; we shall surely need it, sooner or later, if we at all attempt to bear witness for the Lord.

Meantime their words, though they had not convinced Thomas, had told upon him. Another "first day" at length arrived, bringing back in new realization all the circumstances of the former "first day"; and now Thomas was with them.

That week, we may be sure, had not shaken the faith of "the other disciples." Their witness to the Risen One was not less positive because their brother refused it. And even this must have told upon him. The sight of their certainty would touch, however invisibly, his convictions. The sight of their happiness must have moved his longings, even when he most freely indulged his own self-centred gloom.

They were indoors again. Thomas, in this state betwixt doubt and desire, was with them, ready, humanly speaking, to be swayed either way by what might happen. Can we doubt that, if nothing had happened, or if anything unconvincing had happened, his whole mind would have turned to

a distrust more positive than ever? Could we suppose for a moment so monstrous a thing as that his brethren had devised some illusion to work on his imagination, he was just in the mood to look it through and through, and to be irrevocably confirmed in his denial by the detection of the slightest unreality.

But now what happened?

Ver. 26. *Jesus comes, while the doors were fastened, and took His stand in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.*

Ver. 27. *Then He says to Thomas, Bring your finger hither, and see My hands, and bring your hand, and insert it into My side, and do not become unbelieving, but believing.*

It is vain to try any elaborate "word-painting" here. The wonderful scene of mercy and joy stands out before us. There are the disciples, perhaps, in the act of some fresh effort of reasoning and witness addressed to the stubborn personality of the doubter, each trying his own way; there is Thomas, perhaps more than ever, to all appearance, argumentative, critical, resolved. Then, on a sudden, with the same miracle of silent entrance, the great Reasoner, the faithful Witness, Himself is there once more: JESUS, bringing the brief and mighty logic and demonstration of Himself revealed. We see Him extend His holy and deathless hands, each showing the cleft of the huge nail; we see Him move His robe, and disclose the yet wider and deeper chasm of the spear, that great wound which only St. John records.

There they were displayed once more, these marks of the identity of Jesus, as the Lamb that was slain. The Lord displayed them then, that we might believe on Him as such for ever. We may or may not be permitted to see them with our eyes hereafter, but to faith they are indelible; to the love which sees through tears of joy that Saviour so slain, they are in sight for evermore.

For ever here my rest shall be,
Close to Thy bleeding side;
This all my hope and all my plea,
For me the Saviour died.

How blest are they who still abide,
Close shelter'd in Thy bleeding side;
Who life and strength from thence derive,
And by Thee move and in Thee live.

So there, in the lamplight, Thomas had his will. Definitely and unmistakably he there saw the Lord risen, and the marks of His slaughter. And he heard the voice of the Risen One; it addressed him articulately and personally; it recited with strange precision the challenge which he had made so stoutly to his brethren. He was to do the very thing; to come close, to touch, to insert, to feel, and to believe.

Whether Thomas actually "brought thither his finger" we do not know. Probably he did, with tenderest reverence. But it is possible that he did not, so self-evidential was the *sight*. His own eyes, those unready eyes, now saw his own unmistakable Master, and the *contact* may have been almost deprecated. Certainly in the Lord's answer to the disciple's confession, only his *sight* is referred to.

Ver. 28. *Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my God.* Ver. 29. *Jesus says to him, Because you have seen Me, Thomas, you have believed; happy such as saw not and believed.*

The sequel of the interview is not recorded. As in every other Resurrection-appearance, except only the incident at Emmaus, and the Ascension, we do not read any detail of the Lord's *departure*. That night He may have stayed with them, to speak of the things of the kingdom, or He may have left them as silently as they came—left them to their now completed and united joy.

But for us, as we read and think, He "goes out no more." There for ever is He, this same Jesus; and there is the subdued, happy doubter, gazing on Him, confessing Him as his Lord and his God. JESUS and Thomas are immortally present before us in that upper room, "that we, too, may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that we too, believing, may have life in His name."

Thomas is there, in his confession: *My Lord and my God*. Strange sound from those lips! The perplexed and perplexing sceptic has come to utter a confession whose glorious fulness, and also whose personal application ("*my Lord*"), surpass even Peter's at Cæsarea Philippi, when the Father revealed to him the Son. "*My God*"—words impossible to explain away, for they were addressed obviously to Jesus direct, and they meant no less than proper Godhead, for they were uttered by an Israelite.

So Thomas confessed Him, and received Him. Doubt was gone, reserve broken, the soul quite released from the sullen wish to keep its old isolated position in sorrowful pride. He is one with His brethren now, and they shall know it; for he has found in Jesus Risen all his desire, all his joy.

It is no unique case. How often the most positive denials have been exchanged for the very simplest faith! St. Augustine is a memorable example, not to name Saul of Tarsus. And many a later illustration of the same phenomenon may be quoted. Never shall I forget the authentic experience of an aged man, refined and cultured, and a resolute Socinian, who had always maintained that he had never seen Priestley really answered. Late in the long evening of his

life (he died at ninety-two) his doctor one day found him, much to his surprise, dropping tears over his Bible. He had seen a new light. He had met with a Biblical phrase never noticed before, or, however, never thought of before: "*The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.*" He too, like Thomas, after many asseverations of unbelief, reaching over many more days than eight, had seen THE LORD; and bowed before Him, in the light of the profound relation between the virtue of the atoning blood and the eternal nature of the Crucified.

And then, in this immortal chamber-scene, JESUS is there. He meets the confession of His disciple—how quietly, how divinely! There is no word of caution; there is no "See thou do it not; worship God." There is rather a gentle reproof that the faith so expressed had not come sooner: "Not till sight have you believed; happy such as believe without sight." Yes, Jesus, the meek and lowly, who made Himself of no reputation, accepts this ascription of Deity as calmly as a king, born to the throne, and long upon it, accepts the ascription of loyalty from a humble subject. He only bends to His Apostle in loving censure for his past reluctance, and then gives, by anticipation, a royal blessing to—ourselves.

"*Happy such as saw not, and believed.*" Not, Happy such as believed without a reason, without a ground, but, Happy they who did not create out of themselves reasons against belief. Such, surely, is the point of this precious last Beatitude. It refers to the special difficulty of Thomas, to that obstacle to faith which individualism, which self (for this it was assuredly), had raised in the way of his accepting evidence altogether adequate. The truth had looked like a phantom to him because seen through that mist. Happy they, says the Lord, who are free from that! Happy they, oh how happy, whatever else they see or do not see, who see the witness borne to Jesus with the simplicity of a soul which seeks not self's way, but pardon, and holiness, and heaven; which indulges no jealous comparison of self with others, and allows no restless, morbid discouragement to come from that quarter! That soul grudges no privilege, experience, freedom, power to other believers; but, in the unspeakably happy consciousness of the reception for itself of such a Saviour on His own terms, believes indeed, rests on Him, in perfect simplicity and with perfect reason. It demands no peculiar and privileged demonstration, for it needs none. It is happy, it is assured, it loves, it obeys; for it is emancipated from those subtle influences of the Protean spirit of self which alone can make the evidence of the Gospel pages and the glad witness of already blessed believers unconvincing.

How would the released and adoring Apostle, standing free at length from self, at the feet of Jesus, exhort us, if we could hear him, to listen every day to this Divine assurance of the blessedness of believing, and, for that purpose, to use every day the precious written record; for (ver. 31) *these things have been written that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, we may have life in His name.*

I would go from pole to pole
 To behold my risen Lord;
 But content thyself, my soul,
 Listen to thy Saviour's word:
 They who Me by faith receive,
 Without seeing who believe,
 Trust My word and therein rest,
 They abundantly are blest.

Moravian Hymn-book.

H. C. G. MOULE.

ART. V.—THE CHURCH AND THE GENERAL ELECTION.

I MAY conveniently initiate the remarks which I am now desirous of making by proposing the following question: "What concern has the Church of England in the pending General Election?" The answer must be, "Much every way," and it is extremely important that this fact should be brought clearly home to Church people, the more so as there is for a particular reason much risk of the fact being lost sight of. Not many weeks before the General Election of 1885 the intentions of the Radical party with respect to the Established Church were blurted forth in a now celebrated book with an ostentatious frankness which, though praiseworthy, had a most mischievous effect on the fortunes of many Radical candidates. Churchmen of all shades of opinion were suddenly and thoroughly roused, with the result that the Disestablishment party were completely routed and their cause put back several years, to say the least of it. Since then they have learnt wisdom. The Dissenting section of the Liberation party has been much less demonstrative, whilst the Atheistical section, of whom Mr. John Morley is as good a type as any, has been professedly occupied more with social and general questions, and has been rather taciturn in regard to ecclesiastical matters. Herein resides the danger to which I alluded above, the danger being that the Disestablishment question as a plank in the Radical platform will be forgotten by us and concealed by our opponents amid the pressure of more