

shape, and grew, and were purified, passing through a great process of development parallel to that of the history itself. It is an education to hear him or read him as he expounds the great Old Testament conceptions of sacrifice, immortality, the

Messianic hope, the righteousness of God, and the like. We have no one in our time and land who has done so much for us, or who is capable of doing us yet a richer service, in this most vital of all the subjects of Old Testament inquiry.

## The Great Text Commentary.

### THE GREAT TEXTS OF ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.

JOHN xiv. 6.

'Jesus saith unto him, I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by Me' (R.V.).

#### EXPOSITION.

'Jesus saith unto him,'—Unto Thomas, who, as usual, expressed the desire to walk by sight, as well as by faith. Thomas heard Jesus say He was going away, and let that pass, disconcerting as it was. But when he heard Him say further, that they all knew where He was going and the way He would take, he could not let it pass. 'Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?' Jesus answers both questions, but in the opposite order. First He points out the way, and then He tells where it leads to.

'I am the Way.'—This is the answer to the second question. And it turns the question round and makes it personal. The disciples said, 'We know not the way *Thou* goest?' He answers and tells them the way *they* must go. 'I am the way.' 'By *Me* if any man enter in he shall be safe.'

'And the Truth, and the Life.'—That is, according to the Hebrew way of expression, 'the true and living way.' Other ways have been offered, but all that ever came before Jesus were thieves and robbers, and the sheep did not hear them. He is the true way. He is the living way, because He has life in Himself, and He comes to give us life and that abundantly. The thief comes to take life away; He comes to give it. And He gives it by losing His own life. He is the true and living way, because He lays down His life for the sheep.

'No one cometh unto the Father, but by Me.'—This is the answer to the first question now. 'Lord, we know not whither Thou goest?' 'To the Father,' He says. But again it is turned round. It is not where *I* go, but where you go.

#### 'Whither' and the 'Way.'

The conversation is still in the upper room. It is now wholly on the departure of Jesus, His near departure. He had said, 'I go away,' and their hearts were full of sorrow. He must go.

That single fact they seem to have made theirs. *Why* He must go they could not tell, nor *whither*, nor the *way*. He is now explaining all these. He is answering these three questions.

1. Why must He go? His answer is, that He has to prepare a Place for them, and He must go away to do it. Or rather, He must do it in the going away. The Place is at God's footstool. It is in God's presence. It *is* God's presence. Adam and Eve had a Place in Paradise. That *Place* was not a locality so much as a condition. It was friendship and fellowship with God. They walked with the Lord God in the cool of the day. Then Adam and Eve lost their *Place*. They sinned and were driven out of Paradise, and the flaming sword was placed at the entrance gate. It was not the loss of Paradise—the garden—however, it was the loss of the walk with the Lord God in the cool of the day.

Jesus has come to restore that lost Place. But He must go away to do it. He has come to open Paradise again to the seed of Eve. It is by *death* that He shatters the flaming sword, opens the gate of Paradise to all believers, and gives the disciples a Place.

2. Whither does He go? He goes to the Father. The Place is there, and as they are to get there, He must be there also. 'That where I am, there ye may be also.' 'Lord,' they said, 'we know not whither Thou goest.' His answer is, 'I go unto the Father.' He does not go to the Father for His own sake, but for theirs. He is to have their Place ready by entering the Father's presence 'without sin.' It is to the Father they must come. It is back to the walk with the Lord God in the cool of the day.

3. And the way? The way is Himself. 'Lord, we know not the way.' 'I am the way.' It is the

same as when He said, 'I am the door.' 'By Me if any man enter in,' He said then. By Me every man *must* enter in, He says now. 'No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.' Paradise is there, and the Lord God is walking, as of yore, in the cool of the day. But the man is outside with his sin. The sword is there at the gate, turning every way. Then comes Jesus and takes away the sin. The sword is shattered, the gate is open, there is an abundant entrance for sin and for uncleanness,—for that which once was sin and uncleanness. Now the Lord God has His friends again. 'Adam where art thou?' and he answers, 'Here am I.'

Is this a narrow way? 'I am the way: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.' Yes and no. It is narrow enough to keep back everything that worketh abomination or maketh a lie. It is narrow enough to exclude personal merit. 'All these have I kept from my youth up?' Yet 'one thing thou lackest': sell all that thou hast kept from thy youth up, and come, follow Me. Follow Me to the Father, come to the Father by Me. Yet it is not narrow. It is open to every kindred, every tongue, where there is neither Jew nor Gentile, male nor female, where it is 'whosoever will,' and 'I never said to any of the seed of'—Adam—'seek ye my face in vain.' 'No one cometh unto the Father, but by Me;' but every one may come unto the Father by Me.

#### ILLUSTRATIONS.

BEFORE the Roman civilisation there were scarcely any carefully constructed public roads. Men journeyed from point to point as best they might, by watching the heavens, or by taking note of any traces they might find of earlier travellers through the forests and mountains of the West, through the deserts of the East. In these early days, and long after, the metaphor was too natural and too welcome not to be generally employed to describe any plan of moral or religious guidance; and thus, to go no further, it appears in the later treatises of the Stoics, in the system of some Chinese mystics, in the Mohammedan Koran, although here it is undoubtedly derived from the Jewish and Christian Scriptures. In the language of the Jews it meant the path which a soul should follow in order to reach the true goal of its destiny, in order to conform with the will of God.

The expression 'the way' had a fixed and well-understood religious meaning. 'It meant a path uniting two worlds, the seen and the unseen, earth and heaven, traversing regions through which, without such guidance, the thought and heart of man could not safely penetrate.—H. P. LIDDON.

MAN'S primal communion with God in Eden was broken by his fall. Henceforth, humanity became as an islet in mid-ocean, without material for bridge or boat. And the Eternal Word became flesh in order that He Himself might become the causeway which should reconnect the island-man and the continent-God. He not only shows the way as our Teacher, He is the way itself, the true ladder connecting earth and heaven. He is alike the portal, the line of direction, the true *Scala Santa*, 'The world's great altars—stairs that slope through darkness up to God.'—G. D. BOARDMAN.

'WHAT is truth?' was asked of a deaf and dumb boy one day. He drew on his slate a straight line; and for falsehood a crooked line. It was a significant answer. You must beware of crooked ways and crooked character, if you please, and be worthy of that Master who *is* the Truth.—C. A. SALMOND.

WHEN a man is, with his whole nature, loving and willing the truth, he is then a live truth. But this he has not originated in himself. He has seen it and striven for it, but not originated it. The one originating, living, visible truth, embracing all truths in all relations, is Jesus Christ. He is true; He is the live Truth.—G. MACDONALD.

IN Christianity we have the only way home. All other modes and courses of life stop at the edge of a great gulf, like some path that goes down an incline to the edge of a precipice, and the heedless traveller that has been going, not knowing whither it went, tilts over when he comes there. Every other way that men can follow is broken short off death.

On the other hand, the path that Christ makes runs clear on, without a break, across the gulf, like some daring railway bridge thrown across a mountain gorge, and goes straight on on the other side without a curve, only with an upward gradient.—A. MACLAREN.

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## The Oxyrhynchus Fragment.

A LECTURE DELIVERED AT CAMBRIDGE, 29TH JULY 1897, TO THE SUMMER MEETING OF CLERGY.<sup>1</sup>

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WHEN some months ago a report reached us here in Cambridge that a discovery in Egypt had brought to light either the work of Papias or the Logia of St. Matthew himself, the highest hopes were raised of a speedy solution of some of the problems connected with the literary history of the first century. These hopes have been disappointed by the publication of the single leaf which proves to be the measure of our gains. There is some risk that the disappointment may tempt us to undervalue what we have actually secured. Yet the value of the find is considerable, if it is very far less than what report led us to expect. It would be premature to attempt anything like a precise estimate. But it has been suggested to me that the members of this meeting may be glad to carry away with them some general ideas upon a subject which is exciting much interest, and I shall therefore endeavour simply to place before them the impressions which a first study of the

<sup>1</sup> A few paragraphs have been rewritten, and some passages slightly abridged.

fragment has left upon my own mind. It must be understood that both the suggested restoration and the remarks which I shall offer upon the interpretation of the fragment are tentative only; fuller knowledge or consideration will doubtless lead to truer and better results.

Those among us who have been up the Nile will remember the town of Abû Girgeh on the right bank, 119 miles south of Cairo, and 30 or 40 north of Minyeh. A ride of 7 miles N.E. from Abû Girgeh brings the traveller to the wretched Arab town of Bêhnesa, which occupies the site of Oxyrhynchus. The Greek name of the old city reveals its antiquity; it was so called, as Strabo tells us (xvii. p. 812<sup>2</sup>), from the worship of a Nile fish of the sturgeon class, with pointed head (ὄξυρυγχος). In Christian times the place acquired a reputation as a stronghold of Egyptian monasticism. Ruffinus (*Hist. Monach.* c. v.) describes its monastic establishments in glowing colours. 'No one,' he writes, translating appar-

<sup>2</sup> τιμῶσι δὲ τὸν ὄξυρυγχον.