

me.' But the answer comes from the lips of the Sinless One, 'Get thee behind Me, Satan.' The words show in their sternness the bitterness of the trial which drew them forth. They are used but once again, and then they are occasioned by the self-same suggestion of evil, when the Apostle St. Peter would have had his Master refuse the cross.¹ To have refused the cross would have been to have left evil unconquered; it would have been a recognition of its right to a place in God's world; and thus it would have left humanity unredeemed. It is only through the merits of the Passion that a Christian can say, 'I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me.'² And it is deeply significant that the two occasions on which the Lord was

¹ Mt 16²³.² Ph 4¹³.

comforted by a ministry of angels were the two great occasions on which He resisted the impulse to shun the cross, and thus leave the work of Redemption but half done. 'Angels came and ministered unto Him' in the wilderness, says St. Matthew.³ 'An angel appeared to Him' at Gethsemane, says St. Luke.⁴ For in both cases the voice of the Kingly Victim has been heard, 'Get thee behind Me, Satan; Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.' Evil must ever be an intruder in the kingdom of righteousness; it has no joint sovereignty with good; it must be overcome by Him who alone is able to overcome it. But the path to victory is 'the royal road of the cross.'

³ Mt 4¹¹.⁴ Lk 22⁴³.

The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.

JOHN xx. 29.

'Jesus saith unto him, Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed' (R.V.).

EXPOSITION.

'Jesus saith unto him.'—Our Lord does not bid Thomas rise, nor say, as the angel did to John in the Apocalypse, 'Worship God'; nor did He reject the homage which is here so grandly paid; but He describes this very state of mind which induced the disciple to say, 'My Lord, and my God!' as that high, holy acquisition which throughout His ministry He had treated as the main prime condition of all spiritual blessings. 'Thou hast believed,' said He, 'because thou hast seen Me; thou hast become a believer in all that I am, because thou hast received this crowning proof of the reality of My victory over death.'—REYNOLDS.

'Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.'—The change from perfects to aorists should be noted: 'Blessed are they who *saw* not and (yet) *believed*.' There were already disciples who believed without having seen the Risen Lord; and from a point of view in the future, Jesus sees many more such.—PLUMMER.

THE contrast which Jesus indicates is that between a faith which, to accept the miraculous fact, insists on *seeing* it, and a faith which consents to accept it on the foundation of *testimony*. In the first way, faith would be possible for the world only on condition of miracles being renewed unceasingly, and appearances of Jesus being repeated to

every individual. Such was not to be the course of God's operation on the earth, and hence Jesus calls those blessed who shall believe by the solitary means of that faith to which Thomas insisted on adding the other.—GODET.

THIS last great declaration of blessedness is a beatitude which is the special property of the countless number of believers who have never seen Christ in the flesh. Just as it is possible for every Christian to become equal in blessedness to Christ's mother and brethren by obedience (Mt 12^{49, 50}), so it is possible for them to transcend the blessedness of the apostles by faith. All the apostles, like Thomas, had seen before they believed; even John's faith did not show itself till he had had evidence (v.⁸). Thomas had the opportunity of believing without seeing, but rejected it. The same opportunity is granted to all believers now.—PLUMMER.

Seeing and Believing the Resurrection.

The great external fact of the Christian religion is the Resurrection of Jesus from the Dead. Jesus died to satisfy Divine justice. When He died He did satisfy Divine justice—the Law of God had no more dominion over Him. But He rose from the Dead. So here *on earth* was One over whom God's Law had no power. And as He died not for His own sins but for ours, here on earth was One under whom we could find shelter from the Law of God. We flee to Him, and 'there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.' If He had not died, there

was none to bear our penalty; if He had not risen, there was none to whom we could flee for refuge.

He rose as He died—in the flesh. It was in the flesh that sin was committed, it is in the flesh it must be destroyed. It is in One who is a Man—flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone—that we can find refuge from sin. It will not do to believe in any kind of Resurrection that makes it less than an objective, physical, historical event—the rising again of the Man Christ Jesus who was crucified. The record demands that, the case itself demands it.

Now there are two ways of believing that Jesus rose from the dead.

1. By seeing Jesus in the Flesh as He rose. This was the way in which the apostles believed. They were to be His messengers. They had to break ground—hard, stubborn ground. They were made able to say, 'That which we have seen and heard and our hands have handled of the Word of Life, declare we unto you.'

2. By believing the word of those who say that they saw Him. At first there was nothing to prove the Resurrection except the fact stated that He had risen. Every one therefore would wish to get at those who had seen Him after He rose, and hear the statement directly from their lips. Next to seeing Him themselves, this was the best that men could do. But after a time, the *effects* of this belief would be seen. Peter was quite a different man after he believed that Jesus rose from the dead. So in time was every man who believed it. And this change of life was a proof of the Resurrection that could be added to the statement of the fact. And by and by it was not so necessary to hear the fact from the first authority. The evidence of the fact made the fact credible whoever related it.

So Jesus says, Blessed are they that have not seen the Risen Christ and yet have believed. They are blessed because this belief transforms their lives. He does not, however, say that they are more blessed than those that have seen and believed. Whether we see or do not see is nothing, if we believe. It is the belief that transforms and gives the blessing. Thomas had perhaps no right to say that he would not believe until he had seen. Jesus might not have intended him to see. But it does not follow that Jesus reproves him, or calls him less blessed than those who did not see

and yet believed. He was blessed because he believed when he saw; we are equally (not more) blessed if we believe without seeing.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

THE late Dr. Arnold of Rugby, one of the most serious-minded and earnest men which England has produced in this century, was suddenly summoned to meet death and judgment. In the midst of perfect health he was attacked with spasm of the heart, and learned that in a moment he would be called into the infinitely holy presence of his Maker. He knew what this meant; for the immaculate purity of God was a subject that had profoundly impressed his spiritual and ethical mind. He felt the need of mercy at the prospect of seeing God face to face; and as he lay upon his deathbed, still, thoughtful, and absorbed in silent prayer, all at once he repeated firmly and earnestly: 'And Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed.'—W. G. T. SHEDD.

To fancy that every doubt is of itself a sin, is altogether to mistake God's love and mercy. Rather let us endeavour to see why such doubts are sent. Doubts are, in many cases, the birth-pangs of clearer light. They are the means by which we grow in knowledge, even in knowledge of heavenly things. Better far, no doubt, to grow in knowledge by quiet, steady increase of light, without these intervals of darkness and difficulty. But that is not granted to all. Many men, perhaps most men, have to grow by often doubting and by having their doubts cleared up. In that way only is the chaff separated from the grain, and the pure truth at last presented to their minds. In that way are prejudices, false notions, frivolities shaken off from the substantial truth, and they are blessed with the fulness of the knowledge of God. These doubts are often the fiery trial which burns up any wood, hay, or stubble which we may have erected in our souls, and leaves space for us to build gold, silver, precious stones. They are, in fact, as much the messengers of God's Providence as any other voices that reach us. They may distress us, but they cannot destroy us, for we are in the hands of God. They may hide God's face from us, but they cannot stop the flow of His love; for He is our Father, and Christ hath redeemed us.—F. TEMPLE.

HARSH faith, and wouldst thou probe those signs of woe?

O cruel fingers, would ye prove God so?

Touch them lest thou shouldst doubt? Then have thy will;

But ah, thy doubting makes them deeper still.

RICHARD CRASHAW.

IT matters not *how* faith comes—whether through the intellect, as in the case of St. Thomas—or through the heart, as in the case of St. John—or as the result of long education, as in the case of St. Peter. God has many ways

of bringing different characters to faith; but that blessed thing which the Bible calls Faith is a *state* of soul in which the things of God become glorious certainties. It was not faith which assured Thomas that what stood before him was the Christ he had known; that was sight. But it was faith, which from the visible enabled him to pierce up to the truth invisible: 'My Lord, and my God.' And it was faith which enabled him through all life after to venture everything on that conviction, and live for One who had died for him.

Remark again this: The faith of Thomas was not merely satisfaction about a fact: it was trust in a Person. The admission of a fact, however sublime, is not faith; we may believe that Christ is risen, yet not be nearer heaven. It is a Bible fact that Lazarus rose from the grave, but belief in Lazarus' resurrection does not make the soul better than it was. Thomas passed on from the fact of the resurrection to the Person of the risen: 'My Lord, and my God.' Trust in the Risen Saviour—that was the belief which saved his soul.—F. W. ROBERTSON.

By constant sight, the effect of objects seen grows less; by constant faith, the effect of objects believed in grows greater. The probable reason of this is, that personal observation does not admit of the influence of the imagination in impressing the fact; while unseen objects, realized by faith, have the auxiliary aid of the imagination, not to exaggerate them, but to clothe them with living colours, and impress them upon the heart. Whether this be the reason or not, the fact is true, that the more frequently we see, the less we feel the power of an object; while the more frequently we dwell upon an object by faith, the more we feel its power.—J. B. WALKER.

Is there on earth a spirit frail
Who fears to take their word,
Scarce daring through the twilight pale
To think he sees the Lord?
With eyes too tremblingly awake
To bear with dimness for His sake?
Read and confess the Hand Divine
That drew thy likeness here in every line,
For all thy rankling doubts so sore
Love thou thy Saviour still.

Him for thy Lord and God adore,
And ever do His will.
Though vexing thoughts may seem to last,
Let not thy soul be quite o'ercast;
Soon will He show thee all His wounds, and say,
'Long have I known thy name, know thou My Face
alway.'
KEBLE.

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At the Literary Table.

NOTES OF RECENT BOOKS.

THE *Guardian* of 6th July contains a review of Dr. Adamson's *Studies of the Mind in Christ*, strikingly able and open. The central idea of the work is put in this way: 'As God, our Lord had absolute knowledge and power at His disposal; nothing less than this satisfies the Unity of Person. But the actual limitation of both was real, and in each case the limitation was moral.

When He was challenged to "prophecy who is he that struck Thee," it was as impossible for Him to tell their names as to make bread . . . during the Temptation, or to come down from the Cross and deliver Himself by legions of angels.'

Dr. Adamson's work is described as 'a welcome aid in the investigation of a problem which we cannot evade.' That problem is furnished by the