

## Deissmann's 'Light from the East.'<sup>1</sup>

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THE brilliant author of *Bible Studies* has given us within the last year two valuable little books in English, *New Lights on the New Testament*, and *The Philology of the Greek Bible*: the first of these became familiar to readers of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES before Messrs. T. & T. Clark gave it us as a book. He has now, as is only proper, presented his own countrymen with a large and important work which covers the same ground much more fully. It coincides appropriately with the recognition which German scholarship has so quickly given to a theologian who has only just passed forty. It is thirteen years since *Bibelstudien*—followed in two years by the *Neue Bibelstudien*—revealed to Germany, and soon after to England, a pioneer of original genius and remarkable freshness and vigour of style. He was soon in the important chair at Heidelberg; and now he has just entered upon his work as Bernhard Weiss's successor in the premier University of Berlin, which continues to possess among its ornaments the world-famous Harnack. No one who has studied Deissmann's work will question his right to such recognition, or doubt that he will confer distinction even on such a body as the Theological Faculty at Berlin.

Deissmann's newest book is abundantly worthy of him. It is crammed with novel and interesting matter, and is written in his characteristically bright and easy style. His vocabulary is so varied and his range of illustration so wide that the English reader will not infrequently sigh for Mr. Lionel Strachan, who has so admirably Englished Deissmann's last two books; but such wishes will never be prompted by complexity of composition or obscurity of thought. To summarize a book of this kind is impossible in a brief review: it is only possible to select a few points which may illustrate its rich variety of matter. It is, however, not difficult to put into a sentence or two the lines on

which the book runs. No one can read at all widely in critical literature without soon realizing that much learning and acuteness misses the mark for want of adequate endeavour on the writer's part to think himself into the actual *milieu* of the New Testament authors. He will study the profane history of the times, and learn all there is to be learnt about the literature of the world that was contemporary with the Apostles. And being thus equipped he will often assume that this is enough; and if, say, a discrepancy is unearthed by the comparison of Luke's writings with those of Greek or Roman writers of the period, the credit of the former is hopelessly compromised. He forgets that the literature and history belongs to a different social stratum from that in which the New Testament was born. The authorities we have trusted so blindly for centuries looked with a disdainful smile on the short and simple annals of the poor; and Christianity did not arise in an upper, or even an upper middle class. To understand the earliest documents of our Faith we must follow up what evidence we can find that will help us to realize the world of the middle and lower classes in the first century, as found in the provinces of the Roman Empire. We may find that we have been making as serious a mistake as if we had tried to understand the origin and history of the present House of Commons with no help beyond the 'society' newspapers and the works of Mr. Rudyard Kipling.

It is in the reconstruction of this *milieu* that the importance of Deissmann's work lies. His *Bible Studies* showed us how to recover the language of the common people, the vernacular Greek of the Empire; and this discovery proved for us the highly suggestive fact that Biblical Greek has remained without parallel all these centuries simply because none but inspired men would condescend to write in the dialect of daily life! During the last ten years Deissmann has been extending his field, and tempting other workers to enter it: he can afford to do this without risking his own easy pre-eminence. *Light from the East* still works the papyri, and there are many interesting novelties presented from documents discovered since the

<sup>1</sup> *Licht vom Osten*. Das Neue Testament und die neuentdeckten Texte der hellenistisch-römischen Welt. Von Adolf Deissmann, D.theol. (Marburg), D.D. (Aberdeen), ordentl. Professor an der Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Berlin. Mit 59 Abbildungen im Text. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1908. M.16 (geb.).

publication of Deissmann's pioneer volume. But the mine does not yield so many sensational finds as it yielded a decade since. We are getting duplicates in plenty, which show that the parallels discovered previously were not isolated freaks. And there is the humdrum work of consolidation—the collection of examples to show the prevailing usage of Biblical words, often, of course, only confirming what we knew already, or warning us off seductive lines which sound exegesis had already condemned.<sup>1</sup> But we hardly expect a new volume of papyri nowadays to provide us with real novelties enough to fill more than a page of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES. Naturally this depends mostly on who the reader is: when it is Deissmann we are constantly hearing of novelties in what other readers had rejected as commonplace. But the most conspicuous feature of this book is the use of the inscriptions. Here, of course, Deissmann has had predecessors, notably Canon Hicks and Sir W. M. Ramsay; but his work in this volume has quite a distinctive note of its own.

But it is time to give some specimens, which I shall choose from material not presented in *New Lights* or *The Philology of the Greek Bible*. We need not tarry on the introductory pages which set forth the nature of the new material, nor on the long and interesting list of words (pp. 48–72) which have been rescued from the tables of 'Biblical' peculiarities by the documents unearthed in the past decade. Since Deissmann showed us the way, the reduction of the list of specifically 'Biblical' words has gone on so steadily that the burden of proof now entirely lies on those who would claim any particular word as a coinage of Jewish or Christian writers. The new examples are gathered by Deissmann largely from inscriptions and ostraka, including some of the latter which he has himself collected. Of greater importance is the section in which fresh light is brought upon the meaning of Biblical words. Anything new on ἐκκλησία (p. 76 f.) is naturally welcome; and it is of great moment to understand what pagans of Asia Minor meant by ἀμαρτωλός, a word which Christianity was to deepen and strengthen so wonderfully (p. 77 f.). There are many good things in the section on N.T. syntax. Some of us

had already derived great satisfaction from the recently published Berlin papyrus, No. 1079 (41 A.D.), in which the 'Hebraism' βλέπειν ἀπό (as Blass and Wellhausen still regard it) is exploded very neatly: he was hardly a Jew who warned his friend καὶ σὺ βλέπε σατὸν τῶν Ἰουδαίων! (p. 82). On p. 86 Deissmann deals with the curious phenomenon of indeclinable πλήρης. He is satisfied that John was not above using this rather illiterate<sup>2</sup> idiom—a point I very cheerfully concede him in the forthcoming third edition of my *Prolegomena* (p. 50). There is a very instructive section on the style of the N.T. in the light of the new texts. Many a writer has been convinced that John's perpetual 'and . . . and . . . and . . .' is the hall-mark of a Jew. Some excellently chosen extracts from Hellenistic inscriptions are set side by side with Johannine narrative (p. 88 ff.), with convincing effect. Among them is one from an account of the marvellous cures of Asclepios—a class of inscriptions which must strike every reader with their numerous points of contact with the Gospels. The student of style will observe their method of telling a story, which is marked enough to convict all their authors of Jewish birth, on the principles of some of our 'Hebraist' friends; and the student of human ideas will note that neither Lourdes nor 'Christian Science' can substantiate any claim of novelty.

In chap. iii. Deissmann returns to his old thesis (cf. *Bible Studies*, pp. 1–59) as to letters and epistles. He cites, with translations, notes, and facsimiles, a considerable number of letters from our newly recovered sources, mostly, of course, papyri. Twenty-one are given (pp. 100–156), the study of which would be a most remunerative discipline for a theologian who had hitherto read Paul only in the light of classics and Fathers. (It is indeed not too much to say that the most valuable tool we are yet waiting for is a *corpus* of papyrus letters, continuing the admirable little volume of Witkowski, and giving in full all the unpublished letters which are so far only known by brief catalogue descriptions, or not even by these. For the delineation of the genuine popular speech in its unstudied naturalness, the private letters on ostraka and papyrus are by far the most

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps I may refer to the work of this kind Dr. Milligan and I are attempting for our projected lexical record of N.T. words in the papyri and Hellenistic inscriptions, instalments of which are appearing this year in *The Expositor*.

<sup>2</sup> If 'John' was the son of Zebedee, the author had been called ἀγγέλιος long before (Ac 4<sup>18</sup>): the papyri make it abundantly clear that nothing less than *illiteracy* was intended by the sneer, as by that against Jesus Himself (Jn 7<sup>15</sup>).

reliable sources.) One of the facsimiles given (p. 112) is a beautiful illustration of Gal 6<sup>11</sup>: it is *Ox. Pap.* 246, written just after Paul's death, and now in the Cambridge University Library. The body of the letter is in a clear and elegant literary hand, the signatures in a cursive scrawl. The converse was the case with *Galatians*: the scribe wrote a small cursive, and Paul 'a strong, stiff workman's uncial.' On p. 132 ff. we are glad to see the undutiful Theonas' letter to his father (cf. my *Proleg.* p. 28). The young rascal's grammar and vocabulary are so illuminating that it is a great advantage to have the text in a better form than Grenfell and Hunt could give us at first, without having to search in out-of-the-way periodicals for the work that has been done for its elucidation. The illustrative material of this chapter is followed up with a renewed discussion of the distinction between letters and epistles, and the classification of the 'Epistles' of the N.T. I am sometimes inclined to think that Deissmann lays a little too much weight on the casual character of Paul's letters. *Philemon* doubtless is entirely comparable with the private letters of a man with Paul's equipment of Greek culture. But is *Romans* quite as unstudied as this? It seems to me the analogue here is to be sought in the newspaper correspondence of a busy ecclesiastical leader of to-day. There is no thought of posterity—the letter is not revised and polished as if it were a contribution to literature: it is only intended for momentary effect. But the mere fact that it is to be read by hundreds of people instead of one intimate friend makes it a shade more self-conscious. One or two other passages in this chapter must be marked for the student's attention. There is an excellent suggestion made on p. 164 to account for the attachment of the short letter to Ephesus (an *ἐπιστολή συστατική*, or letter of introduction) to the Romans letter as its concluding chapter (cf. also the important note, p. 201 n.<sup>1</sup>). The papyri often show us evidence of the keeping of a book of letters: several documents running, by different authors, will sometimes be in the same hand. If Tertius was the scribe of Ro 1-15 as well as of chap. 16, the association of the two letters is easily understood, it being assumed that Paul kept a *liber litterarum missarum*. Does this suggestion help us in explaining the attachment of '2 and 3 Co'? Deissmann has some ideas as to an Ephesian

provenance of the Captivity letters, and consequent possibilities as to the Pastorals (p. 166), on which we should have liked him to enlarge. Other points in this chapter I must not even mention, but I will refer to the eminently sane remarks (p. 173) on Luke's unfamiliarity with Paul's letters. That this should ever have been elevated to the rank of a difficulty is a good example of the doctrinaire habit some men develop in criticism.

The fourth chapter is entitled 'The significance of the newly discovered texts for the historical interpretation of the N.T. in matters of culture and religion.' Magical and religious texts and inscriptions and papyri dealing with ordinary secular affairs are alike examined for lights on Christian phrase and thought. It is impossible to summarize such material: I will only mention some specimens. Deissmann enlarges (p. 194 f.) on the new evidence as to the census of Lk 2<sup>1</sup>, reported from Kenyon in *THE EXPOSITORY TIMES* for October 1907. Novelties as to the Number of the Beast (p. 199) are naturally worth noting. That the famous number should reasonably be Greek, not Hebrew, is a point which rival interpreters should agree on as *a priori* probable. And the quotations from vernacular documents which show a similar use of numbers certainly suggest a hopeful line of interpretation. A *graffito* is quoted, *φιλω ἧς ἀριθμὸς φμὲ*, 'I love a girl whose number is 545.' This is a riddle which has to be solved on recognized principles: the letters of the lady's name are added up in their numerical value, and the total is 545. Deissmann guesses that the Beast is *Καῖσαρ Θεός*, which totals 616 (the reading of C, 11, and others—altered to 666 by way of assimilation to its contrast Ἰησοῦς (= 888)). Suggestive remarks are made (p. 209) on the great *Prosopographia Imperii Romani*, which catalogues 8644 men and women of note during the first three centuries, but avowedly omits 'the endless crowd of plebeians named in ecclesiastical and legal writers'—Jesus and Paul among them! I pause next<sup>1</sup> on p. 218, where some very helpful parallels for 1 Co 5<sup>4,5</sup> are drawn from formulæ of 'devotion' to a *νεκροδαίμων*: similarly 2 Co 12<sup>8</sup> is well illustrated on p. 223. On the next page, quoting close parallels for 'I have kept my trust'

<sup>1</sup> But I might chronicle a trifle on p. 213 n.<sup>5</sup>. The iambic *πέμψον βοήν, [ἀλαλ]ος, ἀψυχος πέτρα* will not scan. Read [ἀφω]νος, unless the editor of this mediæval verse had some reason for the supplement of which I do not know.

(2 Ti 4<sup>7</sup>), Deissmann cites the record of a victor from the theatre at Ephesus which he thinks Paul may have seen.<sup>1</sup> His doctrine on *διαθήκη* (p. 232) will startle many: relying on the invariable use of papyri, he would translate *testament* all through.<sup>2</sup> Less disputable is the beautiful application in this context, by which Deissmann illustrates Paul's doctrine of ransom from the bondage of sin. He brings to bear on it the Greek use in manumission—the slave was bought by Apollo or some other deity ἐπ' ἐλευθερίᾳ. The important word *παράκλητος* is freshly handled on p. 242: I will only cite the reminder that the word must have had a special *nuance* in the vernacular, inasmuch as it was transliterated in Hebrew and in Aramaic instead of receiving a native equivalent. The next thirty pages have peculiar importance, but cannot be even summarized here. They are a sketch of heathen religious phraseology as adapted by Christianity. It is not enough to trace Christian words and conceptions back to their roots in Judaism. That is necessary enough, and has been done, and done well, by generations past. When the new faith spoke in Greek, its

<sup>1</sup> For τὸν καλὸν ἀγῶνα ἠγωνίσαι I would add an inscription of 267 B.C. (Dittenberger, *Syll.* 214): πολλοὺς καὶ καλοὺς ἀγῶνας ἠγωνίσαντο μετ' ἀλλήλων (sc. the allied Athenians and Lacedæmonians) πρὸς τοὺς καταδουλοῦσθαι τὰς πόλεις ἐπιχειροῦντας. The allusion is to warfare, not to the games, as it has been too hastily assumed that Paul's reference must be.

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps I may refer to our discussion of this word in *The Expositor*.

hearers at first hearing attached to its vocabulary the meaning they already knew. It is therefore vital that we should know what associations the pagans of Corinth or Rome or Ephesus had with such words as θεοῦ υἱός, σωτήρ, κύριος and κυριακός, θεὸς ἐκ θεοῦ, ἐπιφανής, βασιλεὺς βασιλέων, εὐαγγέλιον, παρουσία, ἱερὰ γράμματα, and many others. This is perhaps the most valuable part of Deissmann's work. Its suggestive and largely novel material is worked up with the writer's well-tryed skill; and it leads to a passage of splendid eloquence and force in which Deissmann discourses on the relations between theology and religion, and daringly pleads that Jesus and even Paul are wholly 'untheological.' But any D.D.'s who read my summary must please suspend judgement on this thesis until they have read the exposition!

There is much else in this noble volume which is not even catalogued in the present notice, but what has been said must suffice. I hope I am not betraying secrets when I say that Deissmann's next gift is likely to be on a yet greater scale. Thayer's *Grimm* has served a generation magnificently, but the march of knowledge is passing it by. New Testament students know enough of Adolf Deissmann now to expect with lively satisfaction the Lexicon he is soon to give us, gathering together, for the interpretation of the words of the Book, knowledge accumulated through ages past, and the new knowledge of this productive generation, to which he has himself been the greatest contributor.

## Literature.

### ANCIENT JERUSALEM.

ANCIENT JERUSALEM. By Selah Merrill.  
(Revell. 21s. net.)

WE have scarcely had time to read Professor George Adam Smith's book when another great handsome volume on Jerusalem is with us. Dr. Selah Merrill was for sixteen years American Consul in Jerusalem. He is best known by his little book on *Galilee in the Time of Christ*, unless his articles in the *Dictionary of the Bible* may have carried his fame further. There he wrote on GALILEE and the SEA OF GALILEE, on GILEAD and KEDESH-NAPHTALI, on the CITIES OF REFUGE and

on TIBERIAS. And it is all the work of a man who has walked 'those Holy Fields' until he is quite familiar with them. His new work is the work of one who knows Jerusalem just as well as it can be known.

It is not a history of Jerusalem; it is its topography. No doubt, to describe the walls of Jerusalem, its towers, its temples, its hills and its valleys, is to write its history. But it is not a formal history of the city; it is a description of Jerusalem during the siege. The volume opens with the arrival of Titus before the city in 70 A.D. And although it ends with Nehemiah, and has carried us through the interval of time historically,