A MODERN DEVELOPMENT IN THE STUDY OF THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT.[1]

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Introduction.

THE controversy as to the language of the Greek Testament has, in modern times, assumed quite a new aspect. Since Hatch wrote his *Essays in Biblical Greek* the situation has undergone a remarkable change. Formerly two opposite schools of thought defined their boundaries, and within the fold of one or the other practically all investigators were to be found.

First was what was known as the Purists. They recognized, as they could not help doing, the peculiarities of New Testament Greek, but they minimized and glossed over these as far as possible, because their object was to bring New Testament Greek into conformity with classical Greek, for their contention was that the language of the New Testament is identical with the language which was spoken in Athens in the days of Pericles or Plato, and which has left us the great monuments of Greek classical literature.

On the other hand, the Hebraists, while they also recognized the same peculiarities, made the very most of them. Their object was to bring the language of the New Testament as much as possible into alignment with Hebrew usage, and to divorce it from classical. Their contention was that the Greek of the New Testament is, as it were, isolated, that it is almost a separate, new language in itself. A "language of the Holy Ghost," as some of the adherents of this school have labelled it.

But "the old order changeth, yielding place to new," and to our modern selves the contentions of these opposing schools are a matter of purely academic interest. Among modern scholars there is an overwhelming consensus of opinion that the authors of the books of the New Testament wrote in the current Greek of their times, in Greek as it was written and spoken by the people among

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whom they lived. The New Testament writers were not aiming at producing any particular linguistic effect. They employed simply the ordinary every-day language of their time. This modern theory has arisen from the results of recent discoveries which are of inestimable value, and which establish the modern theory on a basis which no storms of conservativism are likely to imperil.

Excavations in Egypt have yielded a large number of papyri which afford us admirable specimens of the colloquial Greek of those times, and they show clearly that this colloquial Greek was the language of the New Testament writers. *A priori*, I think, we, should be led to expect this to be the case. It would be almost unnatural that Apostles and Evangelists should have used, as the medium of their message, any other than the language with which they themselves were most familiar, and which would be most readily understood by their hearers and readers. The first papyrus discovery in Egypt was in or about the year 1778; and, for a while, the papyri discovered were neither numerous nor of much importance. As time went on and new discoveries were made collections of papyri were published. The Turin Papyri in 1826, the London Papyri in 1839, the Leyden Papyri in 1843–45, the Paris Papyri in 1865. At present the Oxyrhynchus and Tebtunis Papyri are being published in instalments, under the editorship of two brilliant scholars, Professor Grenfell of Oxford and Professor Smyly of Dublin. At the same time, it must be remembered that the comparison of the papyri readings with the Greek Testament is a branch of science of very recent origin. It was not till 1895 that the value of the old papyri in this direction was, to any real extent, recognized. It is interesting and instructive to trace the rise of this modern development in the study of Biblical Greek. This I purpose doing in the next section.

Historical.

In the year 1826 the Turin Papyri were published, with a preface by Peyron. In that preface he tells us that it was his practice to consult the Septuagint and the Greek Testament to obtain assistance in elucidating the meaning of obscure words and phrases in the papyri. "Consului affines scriptores, præsertim LXX Interpretes, Scriptores Novi Testamenti, Polybium, atque Aristeam" (*Papyri Græci Regii Taurinensis Musei Aegyptii*, i., p. 21, Turin,

1826). It is curious that it never seems to have occurred to Peyron nor even to the brilliant intellect of Dr. Hort, who knew and actually possessed this preface, to employ the papyri for throwing light on some of the dark places of the Septuagint and New Testament. It seems almost incredible that for nearly forty years the value of the papyri in this connection was absolutely unrecognized.

In the year 1863 the value of such a method of investigation was apparent to Bishop Lightfoot. Dr. J. H. Moulton, in his *Grammar of New Testament Greek*, i. Prolegomena, quotes as follows from some notes of a lecture delivered by the famous Bishop: "If we could only recover letters that ordinary people wrote to each other without any thought of being literary, we should have the greatest possible help for the understanding of the language of the New Testament generally." In 1884 Dean Farrar published a work entitled *The Messages of the Books*. On page 151 he remarks on the similarity of form and expression between the papyrus rolls published in London in 1839, and the Pauline Epistles. But it was only a passing reference, and he does not seem to have followed up the idea or to have made any practical use of it; although he certainly appreciated the worth of the papyri in this particular connection. Still we may say that his position marks a transition stage between the pure theory of Lightfoot and the practical application of it under the ægis of Deissmann.

The year 1895 marks the beginning of a new era in New Testament exegesis, for in that year Professor Deissmann of Berlin published a notable book, *Bibelstudien*, and followed it up by *Neue Bibelstudien* in 1897. The Berlin Professor was the first to make a practical application of the broad principles already enunciated by Peyron and Lightfoot, and recognized by Farrar. The massive learning and keen scholarly insight of Dr. Deissmann well adapted him for his task, and his books are invaluable to the student.

The Papyri.

The Egyptian discoveries cannot be said to include many MSS. of portions of the Holy Scriptures of primary importance. There are a few of interest which I shall mention later on when I come to deal with the direct additions which the papyri have made to our knowledge. The fact that few MSS. of portions of Holy Scripture have come to hand in this way is easily explicable, and, if we

bear in mind the circumstances, the fact is a perfectly natural one. The excavators are really unearthing the rubbish heaps and waste paper baskets of ancient Egypt—the contents of these have been wonderfully preserved by the sand. Among them we should not expect to find many MSS. of the Scriptures, but rather to find just what we are finding—records of very trivial matters, miscellaneous fragments of letters, bills, accounts, official documents, etc. Once these were received and read by the person for whom they were intended, they became so much waste paper. The valuable papyri were stored up, handled, and read until the fragile material of which they were composed fell to pieces, and so no trace of them remained. Indeed it has been calculated that the life of a papyrus roll in ordinary use, or even preserved in a chest, would not, as a general rule, exceed one hundred years. Of what possible value, it may be asked, can these old, trivial records—records and letters of a most casual, commonplace character—be in elucidating for us to-day the meanings of words and phrases in that wonderful and sublime piece of literature, the New Testament? What in the world have the old letters, bills and documents which we are retrieving to-day from the rubbish-heaps of two thousand years ago, to do with the Holy Scriptures? Their value lies in the fact that they are written in colloquial Greek, and that many of them, as well as being roughly contemporary with New Testament literature, contain words, phrases, usages, which are readily paralleled in Scripture. Therefore a detailed comparison is bound to yield valuable results, and to be an important factor in the solution of some, at least, of the problems of interpretation and construction which meet and perplex the student.

The science of papyrology as applied to the Septuagint is already established on a sure basis, and has made marked progress. Excellent results have accrued under the auspices of Thackeray in England (*A Grammar of the Old Testament Greek*; see part i.) and Helbing at Göttingen (*Grammatik der Septuaginta*).

Indirect Aid from the Papyri.

The science of papyrology as applied to the New Testament is, as yet, little more than in its infancy. I am dividing, for the sake of clearness, what I have to say into two divisions. First, I shall give examples of what I call the indirect aid which the papyri

afford to the student of the New Testament ; that is, the instances in which passages from purely profane papyri give assistance and guidance in the solution of textual and exegetical difficulties. Secondly, I shall deal with the papyri which are of a more strictly Scriptural nature, and note their value and usefulness. This latter I call the direct aid from the papyri.

Westcott and Hort prefer to use the form γένημα (" fruit ") in the five places in which this word occurs, i.e. Matthew xxvi. 29 ; Mark xiv. 25 ; Luke xii. 18 ; xxii. 18 ; 2 Corinthians ix. 10. On the other hand the Textus Receptus, except in Luke xii. 18, spells the word γέννημα. In Luke xii. 18 the text is much confused. Probably the true reading is πάντα τὸν σῖτον καὶ τὰ ἀγαθά μου (ℵ[a.k.]B.L.T.X. *Syr. Harc. Boh. Sah. Aeth. Arm.*), " all my corn and my goods." The expression τὰ γενήματα is very common in the Septuagint for the fruits of the earth, and the phrase συνάγειν τὰ γενήματα, " to gather in the fruits of the land," occurs in Exodus xxiii. 10 ; Leviticus xxv. 20 ; Jeremiah viii. 13. I am inclined to think that in this passage of St. Luke the familiar τὰ γενήματά μου, " my fruits," was substituted in some documents for the unusual combination τὸν σῖτον κα τὰ ἀγαθά (ℵ*D), " the corn and the goods," in others for τὸν σῖτον (A.Q.E.F.G.H.). But there still remain four clear cases in which Westcott and Hort oppose the Textus Receptus. It is a small point, but no point, however small, is of no importance. In this instance the preference of Westcott and Hort is fully vindicated by numerous examples in the Ptolemaic papyri.

In Romans xvi. 7 Westcott and Hort, following B.ℵ.A., read γέγοναν, where the Textus Receptus reads γέγοναση. It is worth noting that the translators of the Revised Version have erred in rendering this word " have been," and that the Authorized Version " were " is correct. As Dr. Weymouth points out, " The *Greek* Perfect is correctly employed, because it is intended to convey, and does convey, the idea that they are still in Christ, while the English ' have been ' suggests precisely the contrary " (*On the Rendering into English of the Greek Aorist and Perfect*, p. 26). But γέγοναν, the form which is preferred by Westcott and Hort, is well attested by a contemporary letter from the Fayûm papyri (*Berliner Griechische Urkunden*, ii., p. 241, No. 597[19]).

Westcott and Hort have in many cases, indeed I might say uniformly, for I cannot recall any exception, admitted into their

text, following the chief MSS., the substitution of ἐάν (a conditional particle, introducing something future, but not determining, before the event, whether it is certain to take place = " if " or " in case "), for ἄν (which when joined to relative pronouns, relative adverbs, and adverbs of time and quality = -ever, -soever) after such words as ὅπου, " where," or the relative pronoun ὅς, " who." Matthew xii. 32 is one instance, and Mark xiv. 9 is another. In the latter the form ἄν exists as a variant in some MSS., but Westcott and Hort have the authority of ℵ.A.B.C.L.W.^{b}X.Γ.Δ.Π. for ἐάν. The question of papyrological evidence on the point of this peculiarity is dealt with by Professor J. H. Moulton, *Prolegomena*[3], page 42. He states that during the first two centuries of the Christian era ἐάν predominated, but that, as a form of ἄν, it had almost died out in ordinary usage before the Great Uncials were written. That their scribes preserved ἐάν goes to prove that they " faithfully reproduce originals written under conditions long since obsolete."

St. John i. 14 is a well known passage. Unquestionably the correct reading in the latter part of the verse is πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας, " full of loving-kindness and truth." The difficulty is to discover the case of πλήρης, " full," and with what does it agree. Westcott regards it as in the nominative case, agreeing with λόγος, " Word." How, then, are we to deal with καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός, " and we beheld His glory, a glory as of the only Begotten of the Father." Westcott, the Authorized Version, and the Revised Version concur in regarding the sentence as parenthetic (*The Gospel according to St. John*, Westcott, i., p. 18). Now let us consider the papyri evidence. From the first century A.D., wherever πλήρης occurs in papyri it is regarded as if it were indeclinable. Moreover, there is an instance of similar usage 160 B.C. In *Papyri Græci Musei Antiquarii Publici Lugduni-Batavi*, Leemans, i., p. 118 C., col. 2[14], is the phrase Μαρσείπειον πλήρης. This usage of πλήρης as indeclinable is confirmed by the Septuagint (cf. Thackeray, i., p. 176), and also by some occurrences of the word in the New Testament. For instance, Mark iv. 28. There is some doubt as to the correct reading here. Tischendorf, Tregelles, B.D. Memph. read πλήρης σῖτος; C* 271 read πλῆρες σῖτον. But I cannot help thinking that Hort's solution of the confusion of readings is the true one. He suggests that the original reading was πλήρης σῖτον, " full corn " (*Notes on Select*

Readings, p. 24). If this be so, Hort's reading will account for the other two, and also give us an example of πλήρης being regarded as indeclinable. But in Acts vi. 5 we have a very clear example. The reading ἄνδρα πλήρης πίστεως, "a man full of faith," has overwhelming MS. evidence in its favour. Now, to return to John i. 14, it seems to me that the papyri put into our hands the key to a correct interpretation; πλήρης is here to be regarded as indeclinable, therefore it is most reasonable to take it in an accusative sense, as agreeing with δόξαν, "glory." It was the δόξα (the "glory") of the λόγος (the "Word") that was πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας ("full of loving-kindness and truth"). This relieves us of the clumsy necessity of a parenthetic clause, and the sense is in no way impaired; indeed, it is, if anything, rather better than that produced by Westcott's construction.

Commentators on the New Testament have based some curious and remarkable subtleties of exegesis upon the variation of Greek prepositions. One after another commentator has failed to divest himself of the shackles of Attic usage, and to recognize the indubitable fact that the Greek of the New Testament is not the Greek of Plato. The Bible authors freely used, says Professor Cobern, "the colloquialisms and even the solecisms of the market place. . . . Wycliffe only did for England what Matthew and Mark did for the Roman world. Christianity, from its beginning, spoke the tongue of the peasant. Its crooked grammar and mixed orthography and peculiar syntax upon which had been built so many theological castles in the air, are all found paralleled exactly in the letters and other familiar documents of that first century" (*The New Archæological Discoveries and their Bearing upon the New Testament*, Cobern, pp. 30–32, 106–111). It seems quite clear, for example, from papyri that the prepositions εἰς = "to" or "into," implying, in classical usage, motion towards, and ἐν = "in" or "at," implying, in classical usage, rest at, are, in the colloquial Greek of the Apostolic period, really interchangeable, and the distinctive usage of each in classical Greek has disappeared. In a letter among the Oxyrhynchus papyri (ii., p. 294, No. 294 [8 and 6], Grenfell and Hunt), a certain man relates how, when he came "to Alexandria," ἐν Ἀλεξανδρίᾳ, he discovered certain things "in Alexandria," εἰς Ἀλεξάνδρι[αν]. Following strict classical usage, the preposition εἰς should be used in the first case, where motion is implied, and ἐν in the second case,

where rest is implied. But clearly the two were regarded as interchangeable, with no special significance attaching to the one which might not be attached to the other also.

Now, in the light of the foregoing, let us review Bishop Westcott's comment on John i. 18, *ὁ μονογενὴς υἱὸς ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρός*, "the only-begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father," or, if we follow the text of Westcott and Hort, *μονογενὴς θεὸς ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρός*, "only-begotten God, Who is in the bosom of the Father." The great preponderance of MS. evidence is in favour of *μονογενὴς υἱός*, "only-begotten Son," which reading our version follows. The *μονογενὴς θεός*, "only-begotten God," which Westcott and Hort prefer, is supported only by ℵ.B.C.*L. 33, which are all kindred MS. belonging to the Alexandrian group. Yet Hort, in his *Introduction*, argues so brilliantly and with such telling force, in favour of *μονογενὴς θεός*, that one cannot help feeling that he is right. The arguments in favour of the generally accepted reading are ably marshalled, in a brief compass, by Godet in his *Commentary on St. John*. To return to Westcott's comment on "*εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρός*," "in the bosom of the Father," he observes that the preposition *εἰς* suggests "the combination, as it were, of rest and motion, of a continuous relation, with a realization of it" (*The Gospel of St. John*, i., p. 28). But this is just one of Dr. Cobern's "theological castles in the air"; the Greek word does not really give any grounds at all for Westcott's inference. Godet and Meyer are two other commentators who, in dealing with this verse, have allowed their exegesis to be swayed by classical traditions. According to the current usage of the times *εἰς* need not necessarily suggest any idea of motion.

In this connection we may profitably notice St. Matthew xxviii. 19, *βαπτίζοντες αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος*, "Baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Some fanciful inferences have been drawn from the use of the preposition *εἰς*, mainly under a lingering influence of classical traditions, and, perhaps, under the stimulus of doctrinal prejudice. The plain fact is that no special significance can be attached to the preposition *εἰς*, "in," in the expression *εἰς τὸ ὄνομα*, "in the name." I am perfectly aware that critics assail, and I believe (I confess), correctly and successfully, the authenticity of this passage. I am satisfied to accept, as

approximately true, the view that it was incorporated in the Gospel in the second century, and, furthermore, that its literal accuracy is very questionable. Eusebius quotes it as follows, " *μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου*," " make disciples of all nations in My Name." For various reasons I conjecture that Eusebius is quoting the original text of the Gospel, and that somewhere in the second century the longer clause supplanted the shorter. But my present point is that the Eusebian quotation confirms the papyri; that, with the New Testament writers, *εἰς* and *ἐν* were interchangeable, that *εἰς τὸ ὄνομα* and *ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι* are phrases of identical meaning.

Greek Language.

The Greek language is characterized by its wonderful flexibility, and by the ease with which it adapts itself to the expression of the most delicate shades of meaning. In a Greek author the appreciative student looks for these things; he looks almost instinctively for niceties of construction, and a certain fine discretion in the selection of words and phrases which shall convey, not only with fidelity, but also with inherent gracefulness and exquisite beauty, the various tones and shades of meaning. From what has been said so far, it would seem as though the New Testament writers were deficient in these qualities, that they are characterized by laxity where we should expect strictness, and even a certain lack of care where we should have expected the opposite. From the point of view of the classical purist these strictures are, in some degree, justified by the facts of the case. But let us remember that we are not dealing with classical Greek, we are dealing with the vernacular of the shop, the market, and the farm; a vernacular which no literary man of that day would ever have dreamed of using in his compositions. I do not assert for one moment that the New Testament writers were always careful to obey the rules of classical Greek; overwhelming evidence to the contrary could be promptly produced. But I do say that some of them, at least, possessed literary talents of no mean order, that they were well able to appreciate the facility of the language which they employed as the medium of their message, to convey subtle distinctions and fine shades of meaning. The careful student of the Greek Testament will discover fresh mines of wealth and many hidden depths of meaning in proportion as he appreciates this fact.

In St. Paul's impassioned treatise on the great doctrine of the Resurrection, 1 Corinthians xv., in one verse (4) the tenses are most significant and carefully chosen. . . . χριστὸς ἀπέθανεν . . . καὶ . . . ἐτάφη . . . καὶ . . . ἐγήγερται." Christ ἀπέθανεν, "died," the aorist tense denoting an act done and completed at a definite point of past time; ἐτάφη, "he was buried," still the aorist, expressing a similar shade of meaning. Then comes a striking and dramatic change to the perfect tense, ἐγήγερται, implying an act done in past time with continuing consequences. It is not easy to express in English the exact meaning of ἐγήγερται without employing cumbersome phraseology. I take it to be: "Christ hath been raised, and consequently, by implication, lives for ever, the earnest of His people's resurrection" (Milligan). The Revised Version "hath been raised" scarcely does justice to the Greek. But the Authorized Version, by making no distinction between the translations of the three words, completely misses the point which the change of tense involves. And one might say that it is on that change of tense that the whole argument of the chapter hinges. By such errors and want of care and appreciation on the part of translators, the sense of the words, and the vital point of an argument, are again and again completely obscured to those who are acquainted only with the English versions, for the Revised Version is, in this respect, little, if any, improvement on the more familiar Authorized Version.

To take just one other example as illustrating the appreciation of the expressiveness of the Greek language displayed in the New Testament. We find the verb πιστεύω, "I believe," sometimes followed by εἰς and the accusative case, sometimes simply by the dative case. In John viii. 30 πολλοὶ ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτόν, the meaning is πολλοὶ ἐπίστευσαν, "many believed," εἰς αὐτόν, "on Him." Their belief was not only an acknowledgment, it was an acknowledgment to which appropriate trust was added. The belief was effectual as influencing life and conduct. This is a characteristic Johannine construction. In the Synoptic Gospels it only occurs once, Matthew xviii. 6. The reason of this may be, and no doubt is, that the Synoptic and Johannine conceptions of faith were not quite identical. The Synoptic conception of faith is "a condition of obtaining some special miraculous benefit." The Johannine conception is "allegiance to Jesus Christ, and, as such, a condition of eternal life." In

John viii. 31, *τοὺς πεπιστευκότας αὐτῷ*, "those which believed on Him," suggests the acknowledgment without the appropriate trust, mere belief as a mental phenomenon, which had, as yet, neither resulted in anything nor effected any change in life and conduct.

VOCABULARY.

The papyri discoveries have shed a flood of light upon the vocabulary of the New Testament. The result has been, in the words of Deissmann, "to bring out once more the simplicity, inwardness, and force of the utterances of evangelists and apostles" (*Light from the Ancient East*, p. 418). Professor Cobern, to whose work I have previously referred, brings out a most important point in this connection. He observes that the papyri of the first four centuries A.D. have given us the vocabulary of colloquial Greek. "It is, therefore, a remarkable confirmation that the New Testament originated in the first century to find practically its entire vocabulary in the first century texts, and not even one single word in all these many New Testament books which originated later than the first century." The papyri have thus given us powerful evidence that the New Testament is a product of the first century A.D. A great deal of light has been shed by the papyri upon the peculiar colloquial meanings of many New Testament words.

For instance, the word *σκάνδαλον* (which is probably the Alexandrian form of *σκανδάληθρον*) really means that part of a trap to which the bait is fastened, and by means of which the victim is ensnared. We are accustomed to the translation "stumbling block" for this word, but if we look up the various passages in which it occurs (Matt. v. 16, 20, 25, etc.), and substitute the papyrus meaning, the word becomes instinct with meaning.

Ἰδὼν δὲ τοὺς ὄχλους ἐσπλαγχνίσθη περὶ αὐτῶν ὅτι ἦσαν ἐσκυλμένοι, "But when He saw the mulitudes He was moved with compassion for them because they fainted" (St. Matt. ix. 36, A.V.). But "faint" is a poor translation of the verb *σκύλλειν*, from which *ἐσκυλμένοι* comes. In the Berlin Papyri (757. 14) of 12 A.D. it means "to plunder." In a fourth century Fayûm papyrus it means, "to hasten." A near approach to a suitable meaning for it in Matthew ix. 36 is to be found in the phrase *ποίησον αὐτὸν σκυλῆναι* "make him put himself to some trouble," or "make him worry himself," in the Oxyrhynchus Papyri i. 123, 10. The meaning in

Matthew ix. 36 appears to be "bewildered" or "at their wits' end"—a description, vivid and graphic, of their religious state of mind. For in the Matthæan passage we can really discern elements of all the papyri meanings. The people had been plundered or robbed of true teaching, they were hurried to and fro in a maze of doctrinal puzzles and sophistries. These things had caused them such trouble and concern that they were utterly bewildered and at their wits' end to know what was truth, or to comprehend something of the curious tangle which their religious leaders had brought about.

Εἰς τέλος ὑπωπιάζῃ με. "Lest by her continual coming she weary (*ὑπωπιάζῃ*) me." The verb *ὑπωπιάζω* was a slang expression among boxers. We might translate it here, "lest by her continual coming she beat me to the ropes," and similarly in 1 Corinthians ix. 27, *ἀλλὰ ὑπωπιάζω μου τὸ σῶμα*, "I beat my body to the ropes."

F. W. E. WAGNER.

(To be continued.)

EPICUREANS AND STOICS.

"Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans and Stoics encountered him."—*Acts.*

THE Gospel Message is encountered now
With two like Godless, subtle sophistries:
The first,—outspoken, blatant Wordliness—
Before material things the knee to bow—
Rejecting Revelation's Mysteries:
Trusting things seen and felt the soul to bless.

The second,—teaching Destiny and Chance;
Worship of luck; looking for good or ill,
Not to the wisdom of a God above,
But to blind Fortune; casting wistful glance
To Fate, all mortal wishes to fulfil;
Regardless of Divine and Sovereign Love.

Epicureans—Stoics—both to-day
Meet us in multitudes, and still they say:
Let Pleasure be our god; or, Destiny
Must rule us, whether good or ill we see.
We meet them both by pointing to that Tree
Where Blood-bought Peace gives Faith her certainty.

WILLIAM OLNEY.