

is required for the reading of the Pentateuchal documents which is proposed for our acceptance. But the necessities of critics do not prove the assumption on which their system rests. In proof of the assumption referred to, the only evidence available is drawn from the Pentateuchal documents themselves. The earliest of these is centuries later than the Exodus. In the misty period when Israel is held to have taken its place on the world as a nation, the critics profess to find a Moses of such proportions as the complexities and perplexities of their system require. The rest easily follows. But it is a case of Moses originating in a critical system, and that same system originating in Moses.

Conclusions arrived at by such a method of procedure (unsatisfactory in the case of any book) cannot be said to be of high value in support of the inspired authority of the book under consideration.

To return for a moment to Deuteronomy with its special ordinance as to the place of worship. In the Deuteronomic code the centralisation of the cultus shows the largest modification or adaptation of previous legislation. This is supposed to be reasonably accounted for by the religious and moral condition of Judah at the time. The ordinance on the same subject in JE was also, as we have seen, most probably a modification of previous

legislation. This code, if the date of the critics is correct, should represent the tendency to centralisation, which, according to Dr. Driver, arose in connexion with the erection of the temple in Jerusalem. The tendency is in an entirely different direction. How is this? If the modification in Deuteronomy is what might reasonably be expected in view of the circumstances of the time, how is the modification in JE so different from what the circumstances of the period of its production naturally suggest? If it be said that the prescription as to the place of worship was not modified in JE, that practically means that Exodus xx. 24 is really Mosaic. In that case it would seem that the analysis of the Pentateuch is not yet complete. An important part of the work remains—namely, the disentangling of the actually-Mosaic from the ideally-Mosaic. And it would help to clear the way if this were done. We should have a solid basis of historical material to start from and work with. Meantime we have simply the assumption of a 'Mosaic nucleus,' which appears to be capable of becoming a great many things, some of them very unlike one another. The whole subject is left in the utmost uncertainty. There is nothing like a satisfactory ground on which to vindicate the inspired authority of the book.

The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.

JOHN i. 4.

'In Him was life; and the life was the light of men.'

EXPOSITION.

'*In Him*.'—There is a gradation from the *by Him* (ver. 3), which referred to the creative act, to the *in Him* (ver. 4). This last expression means that the world, after having passed from nothingness to being by the power of the Word, continued to draw from Him the vivifying forces necessary for its preservation and progress. After having been the root of the tree, the Logos was also its sap.—GODET. •

'*Was*.'—Two important MSS. have *is*; but the weight of authority is against this reading, which

would not be in harmony with the context. The apostle is not contemplating the Christian dispensation, but a period long previous to it. The group of authorities which support *is* has a tendency to insert interpretations as readings.—PLUMMER.

This is in the Greek the same verb of existence that we have had in vers. 1 and 2, and is different from the word in ver. 3. It places us, then, at the same starting-point of time. The Word was ever life, and from the first existence of any creature became a source of life to others.—WATKINS.

'*Life*.'—Life is one of John's characteristic words, used thirty times, denoting the highest blessedness from the creature's point of view. To *live* should mean to have an inexhaustible spring

of felicity in oneself. God's life is the joy of His pure Being. The creature's life is the joy of being dependent on, and finding its end in God. The end for which John writes is that men may have 'life in Christ's name.' This is the true spiritual and eternal life which consists in communion with God; comprehending all lower forms and phases, whether moral or rational or physical, which answer the purpose of God.—REITH.

The Life here must be taken in the most distinct sense. All life, from that of the lichen creeping on the dead rock to that of the Seraphim—all life was in Him, and derived from Him to the various creatures which He brought into being; but not to all in the same degree, but according to the capacities which He gave to each. That life which, in the lower order of creatures, shows itself in unconscious instincts for choosing some lower good, in man becomes the infinitely higher instinct for discerning and choosing what is morally and intellectually good—in fact, which enables him to apprehend God, and choose the highest good; and so, what was only 'life' in the lower forms, became in him 'light,' moral and spiritual light.—SADLER.

'Light.'—This profound word appears to us to denote, in the language of John, the knowledge of moral good, or moral good fully conscious of itself in the living beings who realise it. The word *truth* in John expresses the same thing without a figure. Light, thus understood, is accessible to no being on the earth except man, the one being endowed with the inner organ necessary to perceive moral good. That organ, originally one, but now divided, is the sense which we call conscience and reason. This light did not emanate directly from the Word: it proceeded from life, that life which man derived from the Word. For as bodily sight is one of the functions of physical life, so, in the normal state, spiritual light is an emanation from moral life. The Logos is light; but it is through the mediation of life that He must become so always; this is precisely the relation which the gospel restores. We recover, through the new creation in Jesus Christ, an inner light which springs up from the life, and which gains in clearness in proportion as the moral life grows in intensity. This idea is forcibly expressed by the article *the* which John introduces in the second member before the word *life*. In communion with the Word there was life, normal existence for the world; and from that universal

life there sprang up light in man (by vocation the being of light). Our Lord meant nothing else when He described the pure heart as the organ which sees God (Matt. v. 8).—GODET.

'Of men.'—Of men as a class, and not of individuals only. Man as made in the image of God stood in a special relation to the Word.—PLUMMER.

Man shares life with all organic creatures: light, or revelation, is for him alone; but for the whole race, male and female, Jew and Gentile (Luke ii. 32). What is specially meant is the communication of Divine Truth before the Fall.—WESTCOTT.

A SUMMARY AND SUGGESTION.

By the Editor.

1. The Prologue to St. John's Gospel is a History of the World. It is the shortest History of the World ever written. And the reason of that is this: John writes his History of the World from the side of the Creator. Other histories are written from the point of view of the Creature, and the innumerable things which are of interest to the Creature are related in them. St. John writes from the side of the Creator, and tells only the few epoch-making things. He starts at a point earlier than the creation of the world, what he calls 'the beginning': 'In the beginning was the Word.' Next he mentions the Creation of the World: 'All things were made by Him.' Then he touches on the state of the newly-created, the blissful condition of man in Paradise: 'In Him was life; and the life was the light of men.' He proceeds to the Fall and what followed it: 'The light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness apprehended it not.' And after referring to the several Comings of the Word into the world before the Incarnation, especially His comings to His own people, and their rejection of Him, he reaches the Incarnation itself: 'The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.' That was the end of St. John's History of the World, for that event had just happened in his day.

2. St. John tells the story of Paradise in a single verse: 'In Him was life; and the life was the light of men.' He has just mentioned the Creation: 'All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that hath been made.' Now the most important of the 'things' made are those that have life. This class of things is marked off from the rest by a clear separation. So St

John lets the rest go, and gives his attention to the things that have life. And what he says about the things that have life is, that they have not the life in themselves. They have life, and it is a glorious thing to have. It lifts them clean above the things that have not life. But it does not belong to them. It is not theirs in virtue of their creation. It is a separate gift. It is given to them, and may be taken from them. He who created is still the only One who has life in Himself.

3. St. John learnt this from Jesus. This was a frequent thought of Jesus when He was upon the earth, and St. John frequently heard Him utter it. The fullest and most unmistakable utterance of it was this: 'As the Father hath life in Himself, even so gave He to the Son also to have life in Himself' (St. John v. 26). That is to say, there is a distinction now to be made, a clear and emphatic distinction, among those who have life. Some have life in themselves, others have life only as it is given to them. The Father has life in Himself, the Son also has life in Himself; but all others have life only as they receive it from the Son. 'I am come that they might have life.' There is no spontaneous generation, then, in any of the spheres of life. There is no life in any creature—physical, moral, spiritual—but what is derived. Only the Father and the Son have life *in themselves*.

4. But of the things that were created, the highest (men) were created for the very purpose of receiving life. So St. John passes silently into that. 'In Him was life;' then the next sentence is, 'and the life was the light of men.' The suppressed sentence in the middle is, 'and men lived in Him.'

5. And this life is not physical life merely. It is not *merely* any kind of life. It is life of all kinds. There is no thought of different kinds of life in St. John's mind. It is simply Life. Perhaps St. John passed to this simple idea of Life by so often hearing Jesus speak of Life. What Jesus spoke of was what we call Spiritual Life. But He spoke of it only, and so He did not need to define it. St. John in that way came to think of it as the only life. In any case, when he is now referring to Paradise, he has no room for any distinction between one kind of life and another. There was no lower and higher. The life lived before God, then, was simply LIFE.

6. Thus it is a most comprehensive word. It is even more comprehensive than we have yet seen. It includes all that is distinctive of man,

all that he has and all that he needs to have. His life is his existence; it is the exercise of all his faculties; it is his intercourse with other men; it is his intercourse with God. 'The life was the light of men.' That is to say, men walked by it then. It was their conscience; it was their Bible; it was their perfect law of liberty and of love.

7. And now—to get it back! That is the meaning of the Incarnation, that is why Jesus came to earth: 'I am come that they might have life.' That is why St. John writes his Prologue, and why he writes his Gospel.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

It is well known that the prologue or preface of St. John's Gospel—that is, the first fourteen verses of the first chapter—excited the admiration even of heathen philosophers; so that one of them, who lived in the third century, declared it was worthy to be written in letters of gold, and to be everywhere set up in the most conspicuous places for the instruction of mankind.—C. WORDSWORTH.

CHRIST has the power of life, Satan has the power of death. It is, however, further said of Christ that He is life (St. John xiv. 6, etc.), it is never said of Satan that he is death.—J. MACPHERSON.

If we stand by this text—the life was the light of men—we shall gain thoroughly human ideas of what the gospel, and the preaching of the gospel, is intended to be. The real gospel is God's life through Christ, touching our life and making it new. We do not preach the gospel, therefore, if we are content merely to teach a system of biblical truths. The prime object of this Bible is not to make men theologians, but to make them Christians, and good Christians. It is not of so much importance that we should be able to justify God's ways towards man, as it is that we should be able to walk ourselves with hearts right toward God, and blameless among men. God's eye, through the Bible, is fixed upon character.—N. SMYTH.

IN such a context is it not natural, whatever Meyer may say, to see in the two words *life* and *light*, and in the relation which John establishes between them, an allusion to the tree of life and to that of knowledge? After having eaten of the former, man would have been called to feed on the second. John initiates us into the real essence of these primordial and mysterious facts, and gives us in this verse, as it were, the philosophy of Paradise.—F. GODÉT.

You are giving a child a lesson in botany, and desire to convey to its mind the nature of a buttercup. You talk to it about cryptogams and phanerogams; about monocotyledons and dicotyledons; about petioles and peduncles, stipules and bracts; stamens, styles, and stigmas; sepals, carpels, and ovaries; until its poor little brain is completely befogged and bewildered, and it fancies a buttercup is one of the most terrible objects in God's creation.

But some fine spring morning you are seized with the happy inspiration to take the child for a walk in the meadows, agold with yellow buttercups 'all a-blowing and a-growing'; and it claps its little hands with glee, and fills its arms with posies to carry home. In one moment it has seen the glory and felt the poetry of the living buttercup. 'The life was the light.'—J. HALSEY.

At a discussion in London, a working man was showing what Christ had done to enlighten the world. An infidel next rose, and said it was all nonsense; gas had done more to enlighten the world than the Bible. 'Well, then,' replied the Christian, 'when you are dying, send for the gasman.' The laugh was turned against the scoffer.—J. WELLS.

A MAN of science, who had not thought much about the Light of men, was asked on his deathbed how he felt. 'I feel,' he said, 'just like a poor sheep, carried down a cold, dark river.'—J. WELLS.

I WAS called lately to visit a poor, dying woman in the Infirmary. I had never seen her before, and I asked why she had sent for me. 'Oh,' she said, in a tone that might have melted a heart of stone, 'the doctor says I'm deeing, an' I ken I'm no ready. I hae been very careless. It's dark, dark, awfu' dark, an' I dinna ken the richt road. Oh, ye maun tell me it quick.' It was the shadow of the second death, rather than of the first, that frightened her. You see that the learned and the unlearned, who have not Christ's light, meet together in that thick darkness which destroys all distinctions. But Christ 'hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel.'—J. WELLS.

A SMYRNA native agent came across a Turk from some town in the interior, who showed considerable acquaintance with the Christian Scriptures. He said he had long studied the gospel, and had once nearly got into trouble through it. He was called before the authorities for reading Christian books, but before judgment was passed he begged to be allowed to ask a question. Permission having been granted, he said: 'I am travelling; I look around for some direction and discover two men; one is dead, the other alive. Which of the two am I to ask for advice—the dead or the living?' 'Oh, the living, of course,' all cried out. 'Well,' he added, 'why require me to go to Mahomet, who is dead, instead of to Christ, who is alive?' 'Go, go about your business!' were the words with which he was dismissed.—H. W. BEECHER.

SOME English miners were lately shut up in a mine. Their comrades dug with a will, and after three days got within hearing distance. 'What do you want first?' they cried. The prisoners made answer: 'We want everything, but light before all things.'—J. WELLS.

ON the rock-bound coast of Cornwall a fisherman had gone out to fish. Before he got back it was late at night, and a storm had set in. The billows were dashing in fury on the rocks, and the mother with the children prayed for the father at sea. But prayer was followed by works. 'Go, boy,' she said, 'take this lantern, and sit upon the rock; it may be a guide to the haven of refuge.' For hours the boy

sat listening and watching, till at last he heard a splash. 'Father, is that you?' 'Ay, ay! my lad.' 'Steer straight for the light, father; the harbour is here.' And he did, and was saved.—L. CROOKALL.

WHEN a boy, I puzzled myself to find out how potatoes in an underground house could shoot their sprouts so far up the wall. I noticed that the sprouts were all growing towards a little hole in the roof, through which the life-giving light came. If flower-pots in your windows are not moved for a week or two, the plants all grow to the side on which there is most light. These flowers and sprouts have good *inclinations*; they all bend unto the light. The living soul likewise bends towards the Light of men. All living things cry, each in its own way, 'Hail, holy light'; they are all lovers of the sun.—J. WELLS.

I HEARD the voice of Jesus say,
'I am this dark world's Light;
Look unto Me; thy morn shall rise,
And all thy day be bright.'
I looked to Jesus, and I found
In Him my star, my sun;
And in that light of life I'll walk,
Till travelling days are done.—H. BONAR.

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