

an Epistle whose every straw is gold; for, in form and content alike, it unfolds the Wisdom of Jesus for the Church of the future, a Church which will insist upon ethics and loving deeds as essential to

the Christian religion. The teaching of Jesus breathes through these jewelled sentences, and we can hear the Master Himself speaking with James when he tells us in this twelve-lined tetrameter—

‘Who is wise and understanding among you?  
Let him show his works in meekness of wisdom.  
But if ye have bitter jealousy and faction in your heart,  
Glory not, and lie not against the truth,  
This wisdom is not that which cometh down from above,  
But is earthly, sensual, devilish.  
For where jealousy and faction are,  
There is confusion and every vile deed.  
But the wisdom that is from above is first pure,  
Then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy.  
It has good fruits without variance and without hypocrisy;  
And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for them that make peace.’

JAS. iii. 13-18.

## The Great Text Commentary.

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

JOHN xiv. 12.

‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto the Father’ (R.V.).

#### EXPOSITION.

‘Verily, verily, I say unto you.’—The transition is marked by the Amen, Amen, which usually intimates such an advance in Divine disclosures as may need ratification, on account either of its greatness or of its strangeness to previous thought. So it stands here, not only in connexion with the words immediately following, but as bearing on all the rest of the disclosure.—T. D. BERNARD.

‘He that believeth on Me.’—One preliminary condition of work for God. And only one. No distinction of age, sex, connexion comes in.

‘The works that I do.’—Not physical miracles only, which are ‘wonders,’ ‘signs,’ or ‘powers.’ It is the works that He does for ever, the works that He is doing at this moment; the works that He was doing at the moment of His speaking in the hearts of the disciples.

‘Shall he do also.’—Not independently of Me, but along with Me.

‘And greater works than these shall he do.’—For the physical was the least of it all, however wonderful to look at. Greater because more unmingledly spiritual. Greater because more multitudinous. And greater because at the Father’s right hand I can do more than I can do here.

‘Because I go to the Father.’—The place of power. And as all the power to do the greater works comes from the Father, and as further it all comes to them by asking, and as finally the asking is successful when in His name, He being, with the Father will give them confidence that whatsoever they ask in His name believing they shall receive.

#### Our Greater Works.

Christ came to bring us to God. He left the Father and came into the world, that when He returned to the Father He might carry us with Him. For this is what we need, and this is all we need, to be restored to the fellowship of the Father. Adam’s state was perfect when he walked with God in the cool of the day. Our state is perfect when we are agreed, and God and we can walk together.

Now there is no way of getting to God but by Jesus Christ. ‘No one cometh unto the Father but by Me.’ Therefore the only thing we have to do in order to be restored to the Father is to be at one with Christ. ‘He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.’ And the way to be at one with Christ is to believe on Him.

Accordingly, in the verse before our text, Jesus takes it for granted that belief on Him is the sole necessity for us. And He says that there are two ways of reaching it. Either we may believe Him for His own sake, or we may believe Him for His works’ sake. To the early disciples the first way was probably the easier. Hard as it must have been to admit the whole claim Jesus of Nazareth made, as when He said, ‘He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father,’ it was probably easier to admit it, and believe that He was in the Father and the Father in Him, than to look at the works and be persuaded by them. For the impression

of His person was always irresistible. It made a man a saint, or showed him up a sinner. It was a savour of life unto life or of death unto death. But the impression of His works was never great or lasting. For the real greatness of them could not be seen till after He had ceased doing them.

With us it is otherwise. The Person of Christ comes to us by hearsay, in written characters. It does not lay its omnipotent hand upon us by the way and imperatively say, Choose. Moreover, it is taken for granted now. It does not impress, because it is not challenged. Now it is the works of Christ mostly that are the means of faith in Him.

What are these works?

They are the turning of sinners from darkness unto light. That and nothing more. If you say He did miracles, that is miracle as great as any that He did. It is not solely the act of conversion, of course, it covers the whole work of salvation. It includes the social effects of the change, as well as its individual experiences. To turn from darkness unto light is to do the works of the light, and these are good works.

These works are Christ's own works still. 'Whatsoever ye ask . . . I will do it.' Observe the same verb—'Ye shall do . . . I will do.' For He has ascended to the Father to work. 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.' The superior greatness, therefore, of these works is not our credit but His.

But He does them through us. 'Ye shall do.' He does all His work now through us. If any are to be brought to Christ, we must bring them. The Father committed all power unto the Son, and then the Son came and said, 'Go ye, therefore, into all the world.' So the responsibility resting on us is very great. How could it be greater? Jesus Christ made the Gospel: it is ours to make it known. To whom have we made it known yet? Whom have *we* called out of darkness into light?

The conditions are twofold: (a) *Faith*. 'He that believeth on me.' There is no work done by unbelievers. It cannot be. It never has been. So this makes the responsibility greater, the number of the workmen being so much reduced. (b) *Prayer*. 'If ye ask . . . I will do.' And the effect will be in proportion to the prayer. The prayer is to be definite, direct—effectual fervent

prayer availeth much for the purpose for which it is offered.

Finally, we ourselves are the works. It is our life as well as our words. We cannot bring them to Christ as Philip brought Nathanael. But they will be able to say, I believe in Christ because I see what He has done for Philip.

#### ILLUSTRATIONS.

OBSERVE the peculiar sense in which our Lord uses the word 'works.' He says, 'The *words* that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself, but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the *works*.' The works of which Christ is here speaking, then, are primarily the 'works' of *words*, the achievements of speech. And it would not be difficult to show that the same works which Christ did in this way His disciples did also; and that, in point of *results*, far greater works than He ever did by His words did they do, because He went to His Father.—W. ROBERTS.

SOME time ago a New York scientist wrote a book to show how Christianity had opposed itself to the progress of science and civilization at every step. An equally effective book might be written to show the indebtedness of science for its sustained activity of research and invention to the motives created by the Christian faith. It is from the congregation of pitiful hearts Christ has gathered round Himself, that through a thousand arts and appliances healing virtue is going out to the weary, suffering world.—T. G. SELBY.

It was by the influence of the Church, as no impartial historian will question, that out of the corrupted elements of the Greek and Roman world, and the fierce and untamed energies of the Teutonic races, the grand and enduring fabric of our present civilization was built up. The moral and spiritual energies of Christian missionaries exerted a creative force and a power of control which was lacking alike to Greek arts and to Roman arms, and they thus sowed the seeds of an ever-growing Christendom. All other civilizations and faiths have fallen into decay, while this alone exhibits the elements of an enduring vitality.—H. WACE.

I NEED only remind you that the poorest Christian who can go to a brother soul, and by word or life can draw that soul to a Christ whom it apprehends as dying for its sins and raised for its glorifying, does a mightier thing than was possible for the Master to do by life or lip whilst He was here upon earth. For the redemption had to be completed in act before it would be proclaimed in word; and Christ had no such weapon in His hands with which to draw men's souls, and cast down the high places of evil, as we have when we can say, 'We testify unto you that the Son of God hath died for our sins, and is raised again according to the scriptures.'—A. MACLAREN.

THERE are works of an absolutely higher order than material miracles, for, say you, 'I cannot open the eyes of the blind. My poor little girl comes and stands by my side, and lifts up her hand, and passes it over my hair and down my garments, and then says, "Oh, papa! I am sorry I cannot see you." I cannot do anything for her; she is blind—stone blind—and I cannot heal her.' No; God has not given you that power, but I will tell you what you can do. There, by the wayside, is a poor soul blinded by sin, with a dark, dark hand stretching forth its empty basket for alms. You can take that soul to Him, into His light, and bid him 'behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!' and as he looks he lives. Which is the grander achievement—opening your dear child's eyes on your own face, or turning the gaze of that stone-blind sinner on Christ? Your poor boy carries in an almost empty sleeve a withered shrunken arm. Paralyzed, it hangs motionless and helpless. You tell him to stretch it out—he cannot do it. You make the attempt to restore the flesh, and to give elasticity to the sinews; but there hang those shrivelled helpless fingers. The mother never washed them that she did not baptize them with her tears. You cannot straighten them. No; but you can teach the boy, in his sin, to reach out the spirit-hand and clutch the Infinite; to lay hold on One mighty to save, and hold on there, even in his wrestling, crying—

'In vain thou strugglest to get free;  
I never will unloose my hold;  
Art Thou the Man that died for me?  
The secret of Thy love unfold,  
Wrestling, I will not let Thee go  
Till I Thy name, Thy nature know.'

and clutching, holding there, until his glad soul sings out—

'Tis Love! 'tis Love! Thou diedst for me;  
I hear Thy whisper in my heart;  
The morning breaks, the shadows flee;  
Pure, universal Love Thou art.'

And you can send him over his Jabbok, to find the first real sunrise that he ever knew. Which is the greater of the two?—T. M. EDDY.

#### Sermons for Reference.

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## Two Interesting Biblical Quotations in the 'Apostolic Constitutions.'

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### II.

THE interest of the second quotation to which I wish to call attention lies in quite a different direction. It is found in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, ii. 22 (Lag. p. 42, ll. 12 ff.) = *Didascalia Syriace*, 27, 28ff. = *Didascalia Lat.* p. 18-20.

At the outset the introduction to the quotation claims our attention. In the *Constitutions* it runs:—

Γέγραπται γὰρ ἐν τῇ τετάρτῃ τῶν βασιλείων (sic) καὶ ἐν τῇ δευτέρᾳ τῶν παραλειπομένων τῇ (sic) τῶν ἡμερῶν οὕτως: Ἰὺδς Μανασσῆς, etc. βασιλείων is of

course a mistake<sup>1</sup> for βασιλειῶν; what we are to think about τῇ will appear presently.

The Latin Text has:—Scriptum est in quarto libro Regnorum et in secundo Paralipomenum quod est prætermisssarum, sic: *In diebus filius erat duodecim annorum Manasses.*

Hauler comments on the spelling *Paralipomenum*,

<sup>1</sup> The spelling βασιλειων for βασιλειῶν is further found in de Lagarde's edition of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, ii. 34 (p. 61, l. 13), and ii. 57 (p. 85, l. 9). From the latter passage it is repeated in Brightman's *Eastern Liturgies* (Oxford, 1896), p. 29, l. 26.