

The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.

JOHN xvi. 33.

'These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world' (R.V.).

EXPOSITION.

'These things I have spoken unto you.'—All that has been spoken since the departure of Judas: the words to the faithful.—WESTCOTT.

'That in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation.'—Peace, Tribulation, Victory—these are the watchwords of the future, and each is assigned to its own source and sphere. Peace, the comprehensive blessing, the sense that all is well, the state of a mind at rest, is to be had in Christ, the grounds of it being in His person, and the enjoyment of it in union with Him. To lead into that union and peace all these words have been spoken. Tribulation, the pressure of outward suffering and inward trials of feeling, is to be endured in the world, because of its opposing forces, its antagonistic spirit, and its generally disordered state. This experience already exists: ('ye have' is the true reading, not 'ye shall have') it is consequent on contact with the world. Thus 'the Church and the Christian lead a twofold life, in Christ and in the world at the same time, the former as exact and real as the latter, and, it may be added, the former often more consciously realized when the latter is most dark and troubled.—BERNARD.

'Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.'—Luther aptly remarks, 'He does not say, Be comforted, *you* have overcome the world, but this is your consolation, that *I*, I have overcome the world; *My* victory is your salvation.' And upon *this* the victor rests the imperishability of the Church.—MEYER.

THEREFORE He says, 'I have conquered,'—marking by the personal pronoun the victory as wholly His. 'It is,' says Luther, in his own fervent way, 'as if He wished to say, Write the *I* with a very large letter, so as to grasp it in your eyes and heart. The victory is already there, and all is overcome; only be undespairing and hold fast to it. All has been done; world, devil, and death are beaten and lying on the ground; heaven, righteousness, and life have the victory.—BERNARD.

How more fittingly could such unparalleled discourse be concluded than by this assurance of peace in Himself, and of triumph—triumph of His own over all the power of the enemy? The end goes back to the beginning (14¹), 'Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in Me'; and it affords the ultimate reason for dispelling fear, and possessing our souls in peace;—this, that Jesus has overcome every cause for fear, both in this world and in the world to come.—REITH.

METHOD OF TREATMENT.

By the Rev. Richard Rothe, D.D.

Tribulation and Comfort.

1. In the world ye shall have tribulation. We have indeed tribulation in the world—pain and sorrow, toil and trouble, vain wishes and hopes, disappointments and losses, the certainty of death, and (with many) the uncertainty of what will follow it. Not only must we bear our own troubles, but the sorrows of others lie on our hearts. Yet many of our troubles disappear before calm consideration, and even when our own life is devoid of joy, we may sympathize with the joys of others. The noblest minds do not wish to avoid the struggle of life and sweep away all difficulty and self-denial. But our Lord does not call all these things tribulation. The wounds of life are often most wholesome, and produce blessed fruit. Tribulation is not every pain, but one to which fear is joined.

The tribulation here is one peculiar to His disciples. There have been times when without any special trouble, when outward life flowed calmly, we yet could not feel joy. No single thing in life oppressed us, but life itself. A home-sickness came to us for a home we do not know, yet which draws us with irresistible power. It seemed that a dark power ruled in the world, warring with the good, the true, and the holy, without us and within us. Our ideals seemed to fade under our hands. We were unable to realize our aims or make progress with good. Then we knew the dark power to be sin, and we no longer felt merely pain or woe, but tribulation. It was this anxious oppression that lay so heavily on the disciples. This was the struggle they had to undergo for Christ with the world. A new divine life had arisen for them in the Redeemer, which the world had not and did not understand. They must bring this life to it, but their appeal to it would be answered by scorn, unbelief, and persecution.

2. But our Lord says, 'Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.' When we lament the power of sin men may laugh at us as pursuing

dreams, and persuade us to enjoy the present. The Lord does not say we should throw our lives away, or despair of what is alone of abiding value. He does not ignore the tribulation, nor is He an idle spectator, but consoles us as one who has Himself fought the battle, and has been conqueror. 'Ye are in the world; it is the world that causes your tribulation, but be of good cheer, it has been overcome. It is not left for you to overcome it in the future; One of your race has already overcome it, not only for Himself but for you. It is really overcome for him who trusts in Me.' Whoever believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God overcomes the world daily. For the Christian the tribulation of the world is swallowed up in victory.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

IN the Pitti Palace, at Florence, there are two pictures which hang side by side. One represents a stormy sea with its wild waves, and black clouds, and fierce lightnings flashing across the sky. In the waters a human face is seen, wearing an expression of the utmost agony and despair. The other picture also represents a sea, tossed by as fierce a storm, with as dark clouds; but out of the midst of the waves a rock rises, against which the waters dash in vain. In a cleft of the rock are some tufts of grass and green herbage, with sweet flowers, and amid these a dove is seen sitting on her nest, quiet and undisturbed by the wild fury of the storm. The first picture fitly represents the sorrow of the world, and the other the sorrow of the Christian.

HE who through long years of unsuccessful struggle has kept a patient heart and done his duty, has more truly 'overcome the world,' than he who by sheer force has mounted to some high pinnacle of success. He who through long, sharp sorrows has been able to keep a kind, unselfish thought for others, has done a more victorious thing, than if he had merely managed to escape the sorrows. He who in some great peril has stood aside to let some weaker have the place of safety, is a truer master of the situation, than if by a Samson's strength he had elbowed a hundred men aside and saved himself.—BROOKE HERFORD.

HAVE you ever gazed upon one of those puzzle pictures, now so popular, in which there lies buried, as it were, the face of some distinguished statesman? At first, perhaps, you can detect nothing but a mass of foliage upon a gloomy background; as you look more and more steadily, however, the shadowy outline of a well-known countenance comes into view, and as it grows every moment clearer to your vision, you marvel that you did not recognize at once the portrait of Lord Salisbury or Mr. Gladstone. So is it in the mystery of human sorrow. Why are things thus so strange and utterly inexplicable? We gaze and gaze again, but all is gloom. No kindly countenance looks down on us

from out of the cloud. Ah! thus we think, though all the while the trouble is but the frame encompassing the form of Jesus, and dreary weeks, and months, and years roll by before we can discern His loving face through all the grief and mystery: *yet He was always there*, and could we but have seen Him immediately, how would it have calmed the heart and soothed the spirit!—HUGH D. BROWN.

A SHIP'S compass is so adjusted as to keep its level amidst all the heavings of the sea. Though forming part of a structure that feels every motion of the restless waves, it has an arrangement of its own that keeps it always in place, and in working order. Look at it when you will, it is pointing—trembling, perhaps, but truly—to the pole.

IT is often surprising to see how much pain there may be in the sensibility, and yet peace in the depths of the mind. In crossing the Atlantic some years ago, we were overtaken by a gale of wind. Upon the deck the roar and confusion was terrific. The spray from the crests of the waves blew upon the face with almost force enough to blister it. The noise of the waves howling and roaring and foaming was almost deafening. But when I stepped into the engine-room everything was quiet. The mighty engine was moving with a quietness and stillness in striking contrast with the war without. It reminded me of the peace that can reign in the soul while storms and tempests are howling without.—C. J. FINNEY.

'TRAVELLER, what lies over the hill?

Traveller, tell to me;

I am only a child; from the window-sill
Over I cannot see.'

'Child, there's a valley over there,

Pretty and woody and shy,

And a little brook that says, "Take care,
Or I'll drown you by and by!"'

'And what comes next?' 'A lonely moor

Without a beaten way.

And grey clouds sailing slow before

A wind that will not stay.'

'And then?'—'Dark rocks and yellow sand,

And a moaning sea beside'—

'And then?'—'More sea, more sea, more land,

And rivers deep and wide.'

'And then?' 'Oh, rock and mountain and vale,

Rivers and fields and men,

Over and over—a weary tale—

And round to your home again.'

'Is that the end? It is weary at best.'

'No, child; it is not the end.

On summer eves, away in the west,

You will see a stair ascend,

Built of all colours of lovely stones—

A stair up into the sky,

Where no one is weary, and no one moans,

Or wishes to be laid by.'

'I will go!' 'But the steps are very steep;
If you would climb up there,
You must lie at its foot, as still as sleep,
And be a step of the stair

For others to put their feet on you
To reach the stones high-piled,
Till Jesus comes and takes you too,
And leads you up, my child.'

GEORGE MACDONALD.

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Bruce (A. B.), Training of the Twelve, 442.
Calthrop (G.), Preacher's Commentary, 157.

Easton (T.), Year's Ministry, 52.
Ellerton (J.), Holiest Manhood, 154.
Fraser (J.), Parochial Sermons, 272.
Herford (B.), Courage and Cheer, 114.
Keble (J.), Sermons for the Christian Year; Holy Week, 338.
Knox-Little (W. J.), Mystery of the Passion, 137.
Lang (J. M.), Last Supper of our Lord, 227.
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Zoroastrian Influences on Judaism.

BY THE REV. J. H. MOULTON, M.A., LATE FELLOW OF KING'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

FEW problems in these days agitate more extensively the minds of thinking men than that which concerns the nature and the history of Inspiration. Had the Jews a monopoly of Revelation, and, if so, why? What is the difference, if any, between the inspiration of Isaiah and that of Robert Browning? I am about to summarize some modern researches into the history of two great systems of religion, and I am not without hope that the results described may do something to alleviate the difficulty which perplexes so many, and alleviate it the more effectively as it is approached by an indirect way. Before, however, I embark upon the special investigation which has done much to confirm me in what I have found a satisfying answer to these problems, I think it will be well to state prematurely the nature of this answer, that we may be able to fit into their proper place as we go along the successive steps in the evidence I wish to offer.

Had then the Jews reserved for themselves the exclusive possession of Revelation? In one sense most assuredly yes. Nothing can touch the fact that Jesus Christ came to the Jews and the Jews alone. Nor is anything more obvious or more encouraging in these days than the tendency

to identify Revelation with the Person of Jesus Christ. Outsiders have always loved to taunt Christendom with its divisions, and hosts of well-meaning and earnest Christians have striven to heal these divisions by schemes of external union. Meanwhile, all the human wisdom is being silently anticipated by a mighty movement which is flooding all the Churches. More and more does the divinity and supremacy of Christ form the beliefs and the lives of those who profess and call themselves Christians; and when such a movement has had time to perfect itself, we shall find ourselves one before we know it. In Christian Evidences this tendency produces splendid effect. The apologist no longer leads up to Christ: he starts with Him, deduces all other truths from His personality, and leads back to Him at the end. No longer does he pause to prove the miracles or the accuracy of Scripture: the Gospels may, for the sake of argument, be late and the miracles unsupported, but the figure of Christ stands there and *somehow* has to be explained. No candid explanation can fail to draw the inquirer on till he admits what he never would have admitted had he begun at the other end. If, then, Jesus Christ is what we claim Him to be—using no