

all the landowners, including the chief himself. The end of the whole matter is that the tenure of land in Fiji is tribal, and that the title is vested in all the full-born members of the tribe, commoners as well as chiefs. No man, whether chief or commoner, is the absolute owner of the soil; he has no more than a life interest in it.

He may dispose of that life interest, if he please, and if his kinsfolk consent; but he can do no more. Nor is the whole tribe the absolute owner of the soil. Each generation does but hold it in trust for the next, and the whole tribe is under obligation to hand down the tribal estate undiminished for ever.

## The Great Text Commentary.

### THE GREAT TEXTS OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

ACTS XXVI. 19.

**'Wherefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.'**—R. V.

#### EXPOSITION.

**'Wherefore.'**—Literally *whence*, but sometimes logically used, for *which cause* as in Mt 14<sup>7</sup>, 1 Jn 2<sup>18</sup>, an idiom particularly frequent in the Epistle to the Hebrews (2<sup>17</sup> 3<sup>1</sup> 7<sup>25</sup> 8<sup>3</sup> 9<sup>18</sup>). This is the only sense appropriate in this place, where the reference is clearly to the previous description of the work to which he had been called.—ALEXANDER.

**'King Agrippa.'**—This Agrippa II. was the son of the Herod Agrippa who had been king of Judæa, and died in 44 (chap. 12). At the time of his father's death Agrippa II. was only seventeen, and he was in Rome at the Court of Claudius. In 53 he returned to Palestine, where we now find him at the age of thirty.

The emphasis lies on the word king. Christianity is the religion of glad tidings to the poor, and it began with them. But as it affects all human life, sooner or later it reaches the highest ranks and royalty itself. Since the Incarnation all kings and ruling powers within the sphere of Christian influence have had to make their reckoning with the church. They cannot avoid it, for the life of the church is intimately connected with the welfare of their subjects; and because of their public character and the widespread consequences of their actions, the attitude of rulers towards Christianity is at once most conspicuous and most pregnant with results for good or evil.—RACKHAM.

**'I was not disobedient.'**—The language of the apostle is significant in its bearing on the relations of God's grace and man's freedom. Even here, with the 'vessel of election,' 'constrained' by the love of Christ, there was the possibility of disobedience. There was an act of will in passing from the previous state of rebellion to that of obedience.—ELLCOTT.

**'Unto the heavenly vision.'**—The noun is used of Zacharias's vision in the temple (Lk 1<sup>23</sup>), and again by St. Paul, in reference to this and other like manifestations (2 Co 12<sup>1</sup>). It is distinctly a vision as contrasted with a dream.—PLUMPTRE.

THE SERMON.

#### The Heavenly Vision.

By the Rev. Alex. MacLaren, D.D.

St. Paul's words may be translated 'I *became* not disobedient'; as if the disobedience was the prior condition from which he was in the very act of passing by the yielding of his will.

i. Note, then, first, that this heavenly vision shines for us too. The revelation that is made to the understanding and the heart is the same whether it is made, as it was to Paul, through a heavenly vision, or, as it was to the other apostles, through the facts of the life of Jesus, or, as it is to us, by the record of the same facts, permanently enshrined in Scripture. Paul's sight of Christ was but for a moment, we can see Him as often and as long as we will, in the word, in the history of the world, in the pleading of the preacher, in the warnings that He breathes into our conscience, and in the illuminations which He flashes on our understanding. To every one this vision is granted.

ii. The vision of Christ, however perceived, comes demanding obedience. We have not done what God means us to do with any knowledge of Him which He grants unless we carry it into practice in our daily conduct. There is plenty of idle gazing at the heavenly vision, but let us remember that the Heavens are rent, not that we may *know*, but that we may *do*, and unless our knowledge makes us do and keep from doing a thousand things, it is only an idle vision which adds to our guilt. The obedience which we must give is the obedience of faith based upon the recognition of our own unworthiness and Christ's pity and pardon.

iii. This obedience is in our power to give or to withhold. There are two mysteries here, the one that men *can* and the other that men *do* resist Christ's pleading voice. God will not compel obedience. Forced love is useless to Him, and so He has given us the power of choice.

iv. This obedience may in a moment revolutionize a life. Paul fell from his horse a persecutor of Christians and a bitter enemy of Jesus. He rose in a few moments, loving all that he had hated and abandoning all in which he had trusted. There are many analogies of such sudden revolutions. All moral reformation must be done quickly. We know how hopeless it is to tell a drunkard to break off his habits gradually. A great sorrow, a great joy, a great resolve will make 'one day as a thousand years.' The highest instance of thus making time elastic and crowding it with meaning is when we form the swift resolve to yield ourselves to Christ. If we have not already yielded, let us yield this moment, and then renew our surrender hour by hour with the cry, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?'

#### The Vision.

*By the Rev. Canon R. Winterbotham, M.A.*

It is not easy to say why St. Paul threw this statement into the negative form, 'I was not disobedient.' Perhaps it was for modesty. He could not claim that he had been entirely obedient, but he might venture to say he had *not* been wholly *disobedient*. Perhaps there is a sort of deprecation in the negative form, 'of course you will not understand; but I could not find it in my heart to be disobedient to the heavenly vision.' St. Paul may have had no such thought in his mind, however; he may have merely used this small elegance of speech in order to say that he *had* obeyed the heavenly vision.

The heavenly vision comes to every one, and the heavenly vision is always Jesus. We may not recognize Him. We may think that it was a vision of some lofty morality, of some fair charities unconnected with the Lord Jesus, or even superior to Him. So long as we are not disobedient that will all clear itself, for there is *no* goodness, save of God in Christ. If we follow our vision, sooner or later we must all find Christ.

Have we been obedient to our Vision? Perhaps we answer that we have not been obedient

because we could not. If that is so, it was not a heavenly Vision at all, but a product of our own fancy. If we want to follow the heavenly vision we can, God helping us.

Let us go and learn first what that meaneth, 'I will have mercy and not sacrifice.' The Master does not come demanding gold and time and thought and effort of you and me. That is sacrifice; and before sacrifice comes mercy, that is love. Go, says the heavenly Vision, go and learn to love your brothers and sisters who are in misery and despair; and if we have learnt to love, we will not be disobedient to the heavenly Vision any more than St. Paul was. He received his crown of righteousness, not because he was a great apostle and a holy martyr, but because he was not disobedient to that heavenly Vision. For us also, if we are obedient to our Vision, there awaits the same crown.

#### The Law of Progression in Respect of Creeds.

*By the Rev. Alex. Macleod, D.D.*

Everyone will admit that it is a right and necessary thing to contend for truth. But very few have realized clearly that Christian truth is at once a deposit, a trust committed to men and also an ever-developing power by which they are to conquer the world. Some men are guardians and defenders of truth, and others receive a heavenly vision and become interpreters and prophets. St. Paul was both. In his youth he defended the faith of his fathers, sincerely and fervently. And then one day, on the way to Damascus, the scales fell from his eyes and the Crucified One spoke to him and he was *not* disobedient. He became the interpreter and prophet of the new form of the truth. It is our imperfection that the truth committed to our trust does not lead all its stewards from the relationship of defender up to that of interpreter and prophet.

We have seen now that there are two forces in the Christian Church working upon one another, the *Conservative* force and the *Progressive* force. The Divines who drew up the Westminster Confession saw one truth more clearly than all others, that Salvation came from God; that it was the grace, the will, and the election of God, and no adhesion to a Church would secure it. But as the years went on we have discovered that there were sides to the truth which Calvin and those West-

minster Divines failed to perceive. We see that the Bible reveals a love of God for man more tender than the love we find in the Institutes of Calvin. The conclusion we come to is this. It is not a necessarily narrow-minded function to stand by the truth of the old Documents. But, on the other hand, we should be on the outlook for fresh views, for newer visions, and for enlargements of the Creed.

On both sides there are dangers, however. The progressive force in our faith is exposed to the danger of putting novelties before truth. It is a force which tends to dream and to be fascinated by new aspects—when, perhaps, they are only new. The conservative force of faith is exposed to the more terrible danger of making an idol of the forms of truth. The soul in that case becomes shut in by a crust of orthodoxy, and does really sacrifice vital things to this holding fast to the form of words; sometimes goes so far as to sacrifice truth, brotherly kindness, and charity. Safety lies, then, in the interaction of the two forces—the fidelity to received truth and the openness to new truth which is not disobedient to the heavenly vision. So be that the living Christ is in the truth we cleave to—we cannot cleave too closely, too firmly; so be that the living Christ is the new vision which appeals to us, we cannot surrender ourselves too absolutely to its light.

#### ILLUSTRATIONS.

**Not disobedient.**—It is said of Henry of Bavaria that at one time, becoming weary of Court life, he determined to enter a monastery. When he presented himself to Prior Richard, the faithful monk gave him the strict rules of the order. The king listened eagerly, and enthusiastically expressed pleasure at the prospect of such complete consecration. Then the prior insisted that obedience, implicit and uninquisitive, was the first requisite of sainthood. The monarch promised to follow his will in every detail. 'Then go back to your throne and do your duty in the station God assigned you,' were the prior's words to him. The king took up his sceptre again, and from then until he died his people said of him, 'King Henry has learned to govern by learning to obey.'—G. COATES.

**Power of Choice.**—In Holman Hunt's famous picture of 'Christ the Light of the World' there is no latch of the door *outside*. The Christ stands knocking, waiting to be admitted, but the ivy-festooned door must open from the inside. Our Lord never destroys the will, but sweetly inclines us, makes us willing in the day of His power. It is always 'Whosoever will,' or 'Ye will not' that secures or loses us salvation. To Jerusalem, with tears of bitter sorrow, He said, 'I would, but ye would not.'—H. O. MACKAY.

**The Heavenly Vision.**—So was I speaking, and weeping in the most bitter contrition of my heart, when, lo! I heard from a neighbouring house a voice, as of a boy or girl, I know not, chanting, and oft repeating, 'Take up and read; take up and read.' Instantly my countenance altered; I began to think most intently, whether children were wont in any kind of play to sing such words: nor could I remember ever to have heard the like. So, checking the torrent of my tears, I arose; interpreting it to be no other than a command from God, to open the book and read the first chapter I should find.—*Confessions of St. Augustine* (Smellie's ed.), p. 223.

It was at the beginning of these somewhat reckless years that I came to the great decision of my life. I remember it well. Our Sunday-school class had been held in the vestry as usual. The lesson was finished, and we had marched back into the chapel to sing, answer questions, and to listen to a short address. I was sitting at the head of the seat, and can even now see Mr. Meikle taking from his breast-pocket a copy of the *United Presbyterian Record*, and hear him say that he was going to read an interesting letter to us from a missionary in Fiji. The letter was read. It spoke of cannibalism, and of the power of the gospel, and at the close of the reading, looking over his spectacles, and with wet eyes, he said, 'I wonder if there is a boy here this afternoon who will yet become a missionary, and by and by bring the gospel to cannibals?' And the response of my heart was, 'Yes, God helping me, and I will.' So impressed was I that I spoke to no one, but went right away towards home. The impression became greater the further I went, until I got to the bridge over the Aray above the mill and near to the Black Bull. There I went over the wall attached to the bridge, and kneeling down prayed God to accept of me, and to make me a missionary to the heathen.—*James Chalmers' Autobiography and Letters*, by RICHARD LOVETT, p. 23.

WHOSO has felt the Spirit of the Highest,  
Cannot confound, nor doubt Him, nor deny;  
Yea, with one voice, O world, though thou deniest,  
Stand thou on that side, for on this am I.

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## The Evangelion Da-Mepharreshe.

BY F. C. BURKITT, M.A., LECTURER IN PALÆOGRAPHY, CAMBRIDGE.

IN criticizing my new book, *Evangelion da-Mepharreshe*, Mrs. Lewis has made certain statements about the readings of the Sinai palimpsest of the Gospels which I cannot allow to pass unchallenged, seeing that mere statements about such things are very easily believed by the non-expert public. I must begin by explaining that *Evangelion da-Mepharreshe* is the Syriac name for the Old Syriac version of the Gospels, and that my new book contains the Syriac texts of the two extant MSS. of that version, together with a literal English translation and a full introduction to the many difficult problems connected with the subject. In the course of my work I have had to go once more over the text of the Sinai palimpsest, which, as all the readers of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES know, is the better MS. of the Old Syriac version of the Gospels. In the course of doing this I have succeeded in correcting the hitherto published readings of the Sinai palimpsest in about 300 places, by means of the photographs generously given to the Cambridge University Library by Mrs. Lewis. Some 50 out of these 300 corrections occur in pages read originally by myself at Sinai; the rest were from pages read by the late Professor Bensly, by Dr. Rendel Harris, or edited by Mrs. Lewis in her book called *Some Pages of the Sinai Palimpsest*. I gather that Mrs. Lewis disputes my new readings in several places,—she enumerates fifteen,—and that she considers that in some 70 places more she has been able to read the MS. where I have stated that it is illegible. She says, in fact, 'the text of these passages has been for three years in my desk.'

When the reading of a difficult palimpsest is in dispute, it is not easy to conduct an argument except in the presence of the MS. itself. There is very little left for the contending parties to do, except to assert their own views. This, however, may be said at the outset, that the Sinai palimpsest,

wherever it is clearly legible, presents a text remarkable for its idiomatic and nervous Syriac. There are in it, of course, a few scribal errors, but they are very few. When, therefore, we are trying to make out a passage where the text is blurred and the reading more or less uncertain, we shall not be satisfied that our decipherment is correct, unless what we assert to be the reading of the MS. is itself idiomatic Syriac. It is more likely that the eye of the modern decipherer should fail than that the grammar of the ancient scribe should go wrong. For instance, Mrs. Lewis has 'happily no longer any doubt' that the Sinai palimpsest makes the shepherds say נתעלל in Lk 2<sup>15</sup>. I do not profess here to be able to read the photograph, but Mrs. Lewis' suggestion is not very probable. The word נתעלל does mean 'to make an entrance,' it is true. But it is only used of evil spirits taking possession of men. I cannot believe that the shepherds made use of terms which would be appropriate only in the mouth of Beelzebub.

To come to details. With regard to Mt 5<sup>20</sup> I can only repeat that I believe my reading to be correct, and that I divide the lines thus—

דאלא תאתר זדיקוחון | מן ס[פ]רא ופרישא  
 לא [תעלל] [ל]מ[לכותא] דש[מי]א

The last line is not really crowded: it contains 19 letters, and several lines in this part of the MS. contain 20 letters. Besides, I see the decisive letters דש in the photograph! Mrs. Lewis misses the point when she asks whether our Lord may not have spoken of 'the kingdom.' The full phrase 'kingdom of heaven' is read in Mt 5<sup>20</sup> by all known MSS, and is certainly the true reading in this passage.

I see the מ in מלכותא, but I cannot see whether ל was prefixed or not. Readers may be reminded that in Syriac writing initial ל takes no more horizontal space than י itself. When Mrs. Lewis states