

cherish it until it takes possession of our souls is the object of every dispensation of His Providence, of every manifestation of His Grace. For this He waits and labours with a persistence of which the solicitude of a human parent is but a dim reflexion. In this is our hope, our life, our salvation. For,

'There's a wideness in God's mercy like the wideness of the sea.' Yea—

The thoughts of God are broader  
Than the measures of man's mind;  
And the heart of the Eternal  
Is most wonderfully kind.

## 'Light from the Ancient East.'<sup>1</sup>

By PRINCIPAL THE REV. J. IVERACH, D.D., ABERDEEN.

OUR indebtedness to Dr. Deissmann is steadily increasing. From him we already have the two series of Bible Studies, translated by Mr. Grieve, and published in one volume by Messrs. T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh. We have also had the volume on the Philology of the Greek Bible, translated by Mr. Strachan, and published by Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton. These works have opened a new world to the student whose notions of Greek were founded on his knowledge of classical Greek. It brought home to him that Greek was the ordinary medium of intercourse in the Græco-Roman world, and that the Greek of the New Testament was the common language of the period. Dr. Deissmann has been fortunate in those who have rendered his books into English. No more competent translators could be found than Mr. Grieve and Mr. Strachan. They have been able to think over again the thoughts of Dr. Deissmann, and to clothe them in pure, lucid, idiomatic English, so that the reader is never conscious that he is reading a translation. We take special notice of the worthy work done by Mr. Strachan. He has not confined himself to the work of translation. He may be said to have edited the book as well. Certainly he has bestowed on it a great deal of painstaking labour, and he has made a book which the student can use more readily than

he can use the original. The elaborate and careful indices place the vast treasures of the volume at the service of the reader. By the use of these every fact and statement of the book can be readily referred to, and all the contents are at once available to the student. How great an advantage this is, is well known to those who have to work with a book which has no index, or only an imperfect one. The loss of time, the irritation caused by the lack of an index, need not be dwelt upon. Happily there is no such want here. Translating, indexing, and the other qualities of a good book are all here, and here in their perfection. We note also an item in the translator's preface, to wit, that there is in preparation a Lexicon of Patristic Greek, and that many workers are gathering material for it. This is good news to the student.

We note incidentally a fact which shows how difficult it is even for an expert to keep pace with the progress of discovery in recent times. Dr. Deissmann says (p. 5): 'No tablets have yet been found to enable us to date exactly the years of office of the Procurators Felix and Festus, or of the Proconsul Gallio, which would settle an important problem of early Christian History, and Christian inscriptions and papyri of the very earliest period are at present altogether wanting.' While this is true with regard to Felix and Festus, it is no longer true about Gallio. In various publications Sir William M. Ramsay has called attention to the inscription found at Delphi, in the French excavations. 'The time when Gallio governed the province Achaia has been determined by a recent inscription as A.D. 52 (probably from Spring 52 to Spring 53)'—Ramsay, *Pictures of the Apostolic*

<sup>1</sup> *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Græco-Roman World.* By Adolf Deissmann, D.Theol. (Marburg), D.D. (Aberdeen), Professor of New Testament Exegesis in the University of Berlin. Translated by Lionel R. M. Strachan, M.A., English Lecturer in the University of Heidelberg, formerly Scholar of St. John's College, Oxford. With sixty-eight illustrations. London: Hodder & Stoughton. 16s. net.

*Church*, p. 207. This inscription gives us one more sure point in the chronology of the first century.

We note one other point, mainly because of what was written by the Editor of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES in the December (1910) number. Dr. Deissmann writes:

‘The “letters of the Captivity” will perhaps gain most in meaning when treated seriously as letters. We shall come more and more, as we weigh the epistolary possibilities and probabilities of actual letter-writing, to shift the problem of their date and origin from the profitless groove into which the alternative “Rome or Cæsarea” must lead; we shall try to solve it by the assumption that at least Colossians, Philemon, and the “Epistle to the Ephesians” (Laodiceans) were written during an imprisonment at Ephesus. The contrast both in subject and style which has been observed between Colossians and Ephesians on the one hand, and the rest of the Pauline Epistles on the other, is likewise explained by the situation of those letters. Paul is writing to Churches that were not yet known to him personally, and what seems epistle-like in the two letters ought really to be described as their reserved impersonal tone. The greatest stone of offence has always been the relationship between the contents of the two texts. Now I, for my part, see no reason why Paul should not repeat in one “Epistle” what he had already said in another. But all astonishment ceases when we observe that we have here a missionary sending letters simultaneously to two different Churches that he is anxious to win. The situation is the same in both cases, and he treats practically the same questions in like manner in each letter. The difference, however, is after all so great that he asks the two Churches to exchange their letters. The most remarkable thing to me is the peculiar liturgical fervour of the two letters, but this is the resonance of notes that are occasionally struck in other Pauline epistles and which are not without analogies in contemporary non-Christian texts of solemn import’ (pp. 229-230).

It is curious that attention should be called so emphatically by the Editor of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, by Dr. Deissmann, by Professor Robinson, and J. H. Lisco (*Vincula Sanctorum*, Berlin, 1900) to the probability of an Ephesian Captivity of Paul. We do not give an opinion here and now, but we call the attention of New Testament scholars to the question, as it needs investigation. Dr. Deissmann tells us that he ‘introduced it when lecturing at the Theological Seminary at Herborn in 1897.’

In all the works of Dr. Deissmann we notice that, while they have the academic note of exact scholarship, and the distinction which adequate scholarship confers, yet they contain that quality of actuality which comes from personal experience alone. These works are not the product of merely academic study. He has been out in the actual world. He has been in close contact with men and things. He knows what men are thinking, what motives actuate them, what hopes and what fears pass in them, and in his books we live and move in an actual world. The works of many German thinkers and theologians seem to move in an abstract, unreal world, in which men and things have been attenuated into aspects. Here we are in a real world. Dr. Deissmann has twice visited the East, has for himself seen the scenes of New Testament story, and he has caught the glamour, and can reflect the glory, of the nearer East. He is no recluse, nor does he lead his readers into the darkened shades of a cloistered land. He leads us into the market-place, into the village, into the life of the Cæsarean soldier, and allows us to feel the pulse of life beating in the hearts of Cæsarean men and women. We hear them speak, we read their letters, we look at the monuments they raised to their loved ones, and we bridge the centuries, and find that there was really a human need in existence nearly 2000 years ago. We allow him to state the problem for himself.

‘It is not merely that the systematic study of the new texts increases the amount of authentic first-hand evidence relating to the Imperial period. The point is that the literary memorials are supplemented by an entirely new group, with quite a new bearing on history. In the literary memorials, what we have is practically the evidence of the upper,

cultivated class about itself. The lower class is seldom allowed to speak, and when it does come to the front, in the comedies, for instance, it stands before us for the most part in the light thrown upon it from above. The old Jewish literature, it is true, has preserved, along with its superabundance of learned dogma, much that belongs to the people—the Rabbinic texts are a mine of information to the folk-lorist—yet it may be said of the Græco-Roman literature of the Imperial age that it is on the whole the reflection of the dominant class, possessed of power and culture; and this upper class has been almost always taken as identical with the whole ancient world of the Imperial age. Compared with primitive Christianity, advancing like the under-current of a lava stream with irresistible force from its source in the East, this upper stratum appears cold, exhausted, lifeless. Senility, the feature common to upper classes everywhere, was held to be the characteristic of the whole age which witnessed the new departure in religion, and thus we have the origin of the gloomy picture that people are still fond of drawing as soon as they attempt to sketch for us the background of Christianity in its early days' (pp. 5-6).

It is this background that Dr. Deissmann, with the help of the papyri, and inscriptions, and other memorials of the resuscitated past, sketches for us in this living and most fascinating book. He writes so as to be 'understood' of the common people; and rightly so, for he writes about the common people. 'They have,' he tells us, 'suddenly risen again from the rubbish mounds of the ancient cities, little market towns and villages. They plead so insistently to be heard that there is nothing for it but to yield them calm and dispassionate evidence.' Dr. Deissmann has heard their voices, and has here and elsewhere made them speak so that we moderns can hear and understand them.

With intense sympathy and admiration we read the argument of Dr. Deissmann, which goes to prove that the New Testament is a book of the people. We are made familiar with the new texts drawn from papyri, inscriptions, and ostraca. The language of the N.T. is illustrated from the

new texts. The N.T. is written in colloquial Greek, a series of examples in six divisions makes the assertion good. For many reasons the theme which Dr. Deissmann discusses is of importance for the right understanding of the N.T.

'From whatever side the N.T. may be regarded by the Greek scholar, the verdict of historical philology, based on the contemporary texts of the world surrounding the N.T., will never waver. For the most part, the pages of our Sacred Book are so many records of popular Greek, in its various grades; taken as a whole the N.T. is a book of the people. Therefore we say that Luther, in taking the N.T. from the doctors, and presenting it to the people, was only giving back to the people their own' (pp. 140-141).

or again:

'The development of the literature is a reflex of the whole early history of Christianity. We watch the stages of growth from brotherhoods to church, from the unlearned to theologians, from the lower and middle classes to the upper world. It is one long process of cooling and hardening. If we still persist in falling back upon the N.T. after all these centuries, we do so in order to make the hardened metal fluid once more. The N.T. was edited and handed down by the Church, but there is none of the rigidity of the law about it, because the texts composing it are documents of a period antecedent to the Church, when our religion was still sustained by inspiration. The N.T. is a book, but not of your dry kind, for the texts composing it are still to-day, despite the tortures to which literary criticism has subjected them, living confessions of Christian inwardness. And if, owing to its Greek idiom, the N.T. cannot dispense with learned interpreters, it is by no means an exclusive book for the few. The texts composing it come from the souls of Saints sprung from the people, and therefore the N.T. is the Bible for the many' (pp. 245-246).

One would like to linger over the rich treasures contained in the book and to trace the evolution of the arguments, but we forbear, inasmuch as the

main theme is to set forth the fact that the N.T. is written in the language of the common people. It is

'a book from the Ancient East, and lit up by the light of the dawn—a book breathing the fragrance of the Galilean spring, and anon swept by the shipwrecking north-east tempest from the Mediterranean—a book of peasants, fishermen, artisans, travellers by land and sea, fighters and martyrs, a book in cosmopolitan Greek with marks of a Semitic origin—a book of the Imperial age, written at Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, Rome—a book of pictures, miracles, and visions, book of the village and the town, book of the people and the peoples—the N.T., if regard be had to the inward side of things, is the great book, chief and singular of human souls. Because of its psychic depth and breadth this book of the East is a book for both East and West, a book for humanity; a book ancient but eternal. And because of the figure that emerges from the book—the Redeemer, accompanied by the multitude of the redeemed, blessing and consoling, exhorting and renewing, revealing Himself anew to every generation of the weary and heavy-laden and growing from century to century more great—the N.T. is the book of life' (pp. 399-400).

It is almost needful to apologize for quoting so much, but there are reasons why we quote. The enthusiasm of Dr. Deissmann is refreshing, his success in making the N.T. an actual living thing, his power of making us feel the warm, liquid power of primitive Christianity is so great, that we feel little inclination to criticise. Then, too, we have just been reading Drews on the Christ

Myth, and we were almost frozen with it. The best answer to Drews, and the school to which he belongs, is just to follow Deissmann, and steep ourselves in the reality of the N.T. as he discloses it to us. The N.T. has always been a real book to them who have submitted themselves to its guidance, it has become more real, more living than ever, for we see that its sources and springs are from the life of the people.

If in the enthusiasm of the new discovery, if, in the brightness of the light cast on the N.T. by the New Texts, Dr. Deissmann goes a little too far, and forgets that the language of the common people may also be literature, he may well be pardoned. Surely the great eulogy of love in 1 Cor. is literature, and literature of the highest kind. Think also of the rhythmic splendour of Eph 1<sup>3-11</sup>, and the rushing epic grandeur of Mt 7<sup>24-27</sup>. It is well that he should insist on the popular character of the book, but we may not refuse to recognize the grandeur of the N.T. from the point of view of literature. One reflects also on the fact that the N.T. translated into a modern tongue has become the classic of that tongue. Who can measure the influence of Luther's Bible on the German language and literature, and who can say what the Authorized Version has been to English literature? How much would have been lost in our highest poetry if the Authorized Version had not set a standard for pure and undefiled English?

A great deal might be said on the great learning and exact scholarship displayed in this volume. But in the case of Dr. Deissmann that goes without saying. We have aimed, in this brief notice, at the result of sending many to peruse this book. There are treasures without number both for the scholar and for the man in the street.

## The Great Text Commentary.

### THE GREAT TEXTS OF THE PSALMS.

#### PSALM XVI. II.

'Thou wilt shew me the path of life:  
In thy presence is fulness of joy;  
In thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.'

1. The author of the sixteenth Psalm has a direct and personal consciousness of a relation to

God as *his Lord* which forbids him to turn aside after idols, or in any way to conceive to himself a good beyond God, or a dignity beyond consecration to Him. For God is his inheritance—a portion awarded to him by supreme grace, and rich enough to satisfy all his desires. This portion