

by Rev. G. Margoliouth, M.A. Privately printed by the Society of Biblical Archæology, 37 Great Russell Street, Bloomsbury, London, 1897.

This publication is a valuable supplement to the *Palestinian Syriac Lectionary* published in the sixth part of the 'Studia Sinaitica' of Mrs. A. S. Lewis, and reviewed in THE EXPOSITORY TIMES for January, p. 190 f., by the Oxford name-cousin of the editor of this piece. It presents us with the biblical lessons from the 'Liturgy of the Nile' (published by G. Margoliouth in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1896). The lessons are: Gn 2⁴⁻¹⁹, 2 K 2¹⁹⁻²², Am 8⁸⁻¹⁴, Ac 16¹⁶⁻³⁴. The first is already known from the lectionary just mentioned, but it is therefore the more welcome. For it confirms the surmise that these texts are not parts of a complete Palestinian Syriac Bible Version, but merely Greek lectionaries rendered into this dialect. It offers some very interesting readings, one in v.¹⁰, for which but three Greek MSS. are known as yet, 25, 130, and 135 (127 in Field's *Hexapla* seems to be a misstatement); for the singular in v.¹⁷ only one MS.

is quoted by Parsons (107). The little bit from Kings comes nearest to the recension of Lucian, despite of the assertion of the editor. And very strange it is how he can repeat from his article in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society* the statement that the form in which the *Gloria in excelsis* appears in his text betrays a dependence on the Harklensian Version. His text runs: On earth peace בְּנִישָׁא בְּכַיִן, i.e. ἐν ἀνθρώποις εὐδοκία (σου). The pronoun must be put in brackets, because in this dialect a pronoun is often used, to replace the Greek article. Therefore we can not be quite positive, whether σου stood in the Greek text or not; it is, however, an interesting contribution to the much ventilated question about the true reading of this verse.

The notes of the editor on this point and others show that he is not sufficiently acquainted as yet with the peculiarities of this dialect; nevertheless he deserves the thanks of all biblical scholars.

EB. NESTLE.

Ulm.

Sermonettes on the Golden Texts.

BY THE REV. J. S. MAVER, M.A., ABERDEEN.

I.

'How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?'—LUKE xi. 13.

JESUS first speaks of the earthly parent's love: a thing about which there is no question. If there is genuine unselfish love in this world, it is that of a father or a mother for their child. And that is a thing which they mostly know how to give: good gifts. Do you want to know what parents value? Just see what they try to obtain for their children. A better education, it may be, than they had the opportunity of getting for themselves. 'I hadn't your advantages,' the father may say, 'but I am going to do the best I can for you. I know the value of a good education.' And good gifts to the children make the children good gifts to the world. Nothing gives such satisfaction to a father's heart as to see his boy climbing to a higher rung of the ladder than he himself has reached; that is, if it be

honourably done, for, if he is a worthy father, he must desire to respect his child. That is his deepest wish. 'The best satisfaction for a father,' says one father, 'is to deserve and receive loyal and unflinching respect from his sons. No, that is not quite the best. Shall I reveal the secret that lies in silence at the very bottom of the hearts of all worthy and honourable fathers? Their profoundest happiness is to be able themselves to respect their sons.'

Sometimes, however, he has difficulty in knowing what is best for the child: what line to take. There are great trunk lines and little suburban branches, and the gauge is the same on both. The same locomotive could run on the thousand miles, or the ten. And, as in railways, so in human life. It is a pity if a boy is started to run his whole life backwards and forwards on a little loop, if he be capable of journeying through vaster tracts of knowledge and of usefulness. There is a

story told of a farmer, who was in doubts what to make of his son, and who took a rather strange way of trying to decide. He shut him into a room, with a Bible, an apple, and a half-crown. He himself was to go in a few minutes later, and if he found his boy reading the Bible, he was to make him a minister, if eating the apple he would make him a farmer, and if he had taken the half-crown he would make him a merchant. But he was as much nonplussed as ever, on entering, to find the boy sitting on the Bible, eating the apple, and with the money in his pocket. It is said that the lad became a great politician in after years. But the story exemplifies what is often a real difficulty with parents, viz. what to decide upon as best.

Now, it is not so with our heavenly Father. He knows what is best for us. The difficulty lies on our side, for we often wish and choose so poorly. Few, with any earnestness at all, will question that the great gift we need, and that the world needs, is the gift of the Holy Spirit. The heart of the world would be far happier if the spirit of the world were holier. It is a gift that would unite us with God and bring all that we most need into our life. It is a gift, too, that unites men with each other, and gets over all barriers. 'There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.' I was once at the Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church in Cape Town, with a deputation of ministers of various denominations. At the close we sang, 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow.' Some sang it in Dutch and some in English. The blend was not good, but possibly

Up in heaven, where hearts are known,
It made sweet melody.

Why then, it may be asked, does our heavenly Father not give this gift in greater measure? There is no doubt that it *is* given. Many have it, and kingdoms would not part them from its blessedness. Why not in larger measure? Ah, just because it would be no gift unless sought for. God will not thrust His best gifts on unappreciative hearts. Many things we get without our asking; often we get more than we would even dare to ask. But this—this above all—must be sought for. 'How much more,' Jesus says, 'to them that ask Him.' And yet, that is not quite the last word, for the Bible speaks about *resisting* the Holy Ghost. Yes, He is offered, He is at the

heart's door, waiting only for our *yielding*. We ought to resist the devil, and, instead, we often resist the Holy Spirit. It is worth yielding to, and worth seeking with our whole heart, this gift, for it alone can bring us the life that is life indeed, and enable us to 'meet the future without fear and with a manly heart.' And it is a gift which the world, with all its power of giving, cannot give, and which the world, with all its power of robbing, cannot take away.

II.

'Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.'—Ps. lv. 22.

THERE are four young people singled out and referred to at some length in the Gospels in special relationship to Jesus: the daughter of Jairus, the daughter of the Syrophenician woman, a nameless father's demoniac son, and a nobleman's son at Capernaum. And in all four cases it was suffering that led to their connexion with Christ. This is hardly what we should expect. We might more naturally expect it in those older, for trouble is almost universal as life advances. And yet, even children are not exempt from it. Indeed, there is no period of life that in various ways is exposed to so much. There are many bodily troubles specially connected with childhood, that have all to be gone through, with the risks attending them. And mentally, too, perhaps there is no period of life so peculiarly susceptible to suffering as childhood. In one of the magazines, some time ago, there was a discussion as to which is the best season of life, and not one of those who took part in it seemed to regard childhood as the best. Most poets, hitherto, have sung high the praises of childhood, but, even among the poets, there is a reaction from that view. Browning, for instance, sings

Grow old along with me,
The best is yet to be.

Sometimes those of us further advanced in life look back with longing to the happy, careless, irresponsible days of childhood. There was many a day when it was indeed a pleasure just to live and breathe and move about in constant activity. But if the joy was intense, equally so, at times, was the grief, and the foolish dread under which we lived. What an awful misery childhood often is in connexion with the terror about ghosts and

such like! With what agony have we lain in the dark, afraid to move from fear of the mysterious creatures that peopled our imagination! And then, too, if you did anything wrong—lost or broke anything—life took on such a hopeless look. You did not think it possible you could ever recover again the happiness that was gone. The whole of existence would hereafter be coloured, you thought, by that event. We are almost inclined to agree with Olive Schreiner when she says, 'There are some of us who in after years say to Fate, "Now deal us your hardest blow, give us what you will, but let us never again suffer as we suffered when we were children." The barb in the arrow of childhood's suffering is this: its intense loneliness, its intense ignorance.' Of course, there is another side, a brighter side of child-life, but we are looking rather at the burdens just now, which are real enough.

Well, then, what are we to do with the burdens of life, the burdens peculiar to five years, or twenty, or three score and ten? There is one privilege mostly enjoyed by childhood: the privilege of bringing all troubles to the mother, and finding the shadows often flee away in the telling of them to her. And what if the burden be a burden of guilt,—some angry or false word spoken, something that afterwards leaves you miserable and ashamed? All the more bring it to that same source of loving forgiveness. I saw a boy at a railway station, the other day, parting from his mother. It was the first time he had been away from her for any length of time. He was in the same compartment, so I could not help overhearing partly what he said. Something troubled him specially, and he put his lips to her ear, and whispered. 'Oh, that's all right,' was the reply; 'it's all forgiven and forgotten.' 'Now, mother, there's nothing else?' 'Nothing else, my dear; go away quite at rest as to that.'

Mothers are often the first confessors, the First-Aid societies, giving such help and relief as they can, till the Great Physician comes along and takes up the work they have begun. By and by the lad will not be so ready to come to that first receiver of confession, but well if he is led, through that, a step higher, in the freshness of youth, and later still in the burden and heat of the day—led to Him who invites the heavy-laden to come unto Him and find rest.

For the heaviest load on life's journey is the

burden of sin. Oh the deep sense of deliverance that many have felt in casting *that* burden upon the Lord! Even death may come then when it pleases. They are ready then for whatsoever their heavenly Father chooses to send. They are prepared for all that He has prepared for them.

III.

'Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved.'—JER. xvii. 14.

THESE are great biblical words: 'heal' and 'save.' We all know what it is to get a wound healed. The man with the gift of healing is sent for, and he binds up the wound and anoints it with the ointment. But God's healing goes far deeper than bodily wounds. It is the soul that is irreparably wounded, and there is no earthly physician can heal it. We do not need any interpreter of the prophet's words. Each heart is here its own interpreter.

And then, 'save.' That means more than heal. We shall have to wait till the Hereafter to know all that is meant by that great word. The whole Bible, you may say, is about that great subject; and if you were to take it out of the Bible, and all the words that come from the same root, as safety, salvation, you would take the very heart of the Book away.

Did you ever notice how little the word meant on one occasion when it was used of Jesus? 'Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He. Take Him, and lead Him away *safely*.' Lead Him away safely—through revilings and mock trials and scourgings—safely to the cross! Oh the mockery of the word as applied by men to Jesus! Not in any such sense, we may be sure, does Jesus use the word in connexion with men. No mockery, no deception, but a glorious reality that has kindled joy, and put the power of a new affection, in many a heart.

Now the prayer implies a helpless condition, in which we can only cry to God for healing and salvation. There is a place sometimes called 'the back o' beyond,' another name for it being 'wit's end.' 'They are at their wit's end. Then they cry unto the Lord.' With regard to the soul, it is well to find ourselves there, and the sooner the better; for it is not a hopeless place by any means. The Help of the helpless is ready there at the call of distress. He can do little for us

indeed till we thus learn that really there is no other help but He. Jesus never passed by heedless a call of distress. No one ever called to Him and called in vain.

The Earl of Aberdeen tells how on one occasion, going up the Nile in his yacht, he saw a little steamer coming puffing rapidly down. He was told it was Gordon's steamer, who was Governor of the Soudan at the time. On hearing that, he was anxious to speak with Gordon if possible, but the question was how to accomplish it, for in a few minutes the steamer would be past. Suddenly a brilliant idea struck the Earl. He gave orders to his men to hang out signals of distress. He was sure Gordon was not the man to pass by heedless a signal of distress. The ruse proved successful. The steamer began at once to veer round, and in a very short time was alongside the yacht. Now we all know that the helpful spirit was very characteristic of Gordon, but where was it he learned it? Just by sitting at Jesus' feet. And we may be sure that the disciple is not greater than the Master in that readiness to heed and help at the call of need, and that what Jesus was in the days of His flesh, He is now and ever will be.

One thing more is implied in the text—the assurance that the help will be all-sufficient. The prophet is sure that God will perfect His work of healing and saving. And that is a great matter, to know that it is something that lasts. The body may be healed and wounded again: life may be saved and yet lost again, but in the hands of the Divine Physician and Saviour we shall be healed and saved indeed. Our soul shall be restored and shall bless the Lord who healeth all its diseases. Yea, and so will the world in the good time coming, when all lands shall be healed, and God's saving health shall be known among all nations.

IV.

'The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them.'—Ps. xxxiv. 7.

A SENTINELSHIP equal, as it were, to that of a whole camp round about their life. I remember going out on several occasions to see the Boys' Brigade in their summer camp near Cape Town, and a noticeable thing was the keen desire the lads had to act on sentry duty. So many were told off nightly to watch the camp. There was no

danger to speak of, but it was interesting to see the alertness of the sentinels all night long. Not even a cat could have crept within the camp unchallenged. 'Who goes there?' would ring out, at times, even at the fall of a leaf or a gust of wind. Their watchfulness, indeed, was just too acute, and their challenging too frequent, for the peace of the sleepers. But where there is real danger from wild beasts or human foes, the sentinel's post is one of great importance. He has to act up to the sentiment that

To the sentinel

That hour is regal when he mounts on guard.

Now it is that idea that is suggested here—unseen protection. Miss Havergal said that one word summed up what her life had been—'Kept.'

Two camps are with us. We know what it is to have the visible camp—those who have been our protectors from childhood. The mother encampeth round about the child. For a year and more it is mostly in her arms. How helpless we should be without such protection in our early days! And how beautiful when in after years the situation is reversed, and the children, grown up, surround with comfort and care their parents' declining years!

Is there any sentinelship like that of a mother's love in the dawn of our life? She is never off duty. She croons over the cradle, and goes softly by the sleeper, and has the language of love ready for his awakening. And yet, 'Can a woman forget her sucking child? Yea, she may forget, yet will I not forget thee.' 'Love divine, all love excelling.' An old man, dear to the writer, and now in the unseen camp, was heard to exclaim one day amid the ordinary conversation of those around, 'It is wonderful,' and on being asked what, his reply was, 'The love of Christ.' He had been lost in the thought of that, and it was what gave 'peace, perfect peace' to his whole life, and, above all, to his last days. 'The essence of religion is absolute trust in a Person.'

Notice one thing more: the relationship between the watcher and the watched—'them that fear Him.' Do you want to be watched and protected? Then here is the condition. And what is fear? Just another name for love. We fear those we love. Would that we had no other fear. 'Fear God, and keep His commandments' is the Old Testament conclusion of the whole matter.

And the New Testament gives just another version of the same when it says in the words of Jesus, 'If ye love Me, keep My commandments.'

What a beautiful encamping around Peter was the thoughtful love of Christ! 'The Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.' Shortly thereafter, at the time of his fall, the Lord turned and looked upon Peter; yes, and Peter turned

and looked upon the Lord, for to whom else can we go even in our guilt? By and by came the 'Feed My sheep' and 'Feed My lambs,' and still later, 'Lo, I am with you alway.' Christ, the Angel of the Lord, encampeth round about them that love and fear Him.

Surely the peace of God would garrison our hearts, could we go in and out, journey and rest, live and die, in the faith that the Everlasting Arms are around us!

Ezekiel's Temple.

BY PRINCIPAL THE REV. GEORGE C. M. DOUGLAS, D.D., GLASGOW.

IV.

ALONG with these changes there is a certain alteration in the regulations for the priesthood, as is brought out in the first half of chap. 44. This is in agreement with the principle laid down in He 7¹², 'For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.' In Ezekiel's vision there is an important though by no means a total or even a violent change of the law around the new central principle, and there is a corresponding change in the law for the priesthood. In neither of these changes is there a subversion or abolition of the original law; but there is important modification. The priests are to be 'the Levites, the sons of Zadok' (v.¹⁵; also at chap. 40⁴⁶, 43¹⁹, 48¹¹). The priests are to have a portion of land assigned to them, separate from that assigned to the Levites (chap. 45³⁻⁵, 48¹⁰⁻¹⁴). But nothing else is said of the priests apart from the Levites, except what is unavoidable, about the different services at the altar and in the house. Nay, even as to their respective portions of land, these are slumped together at chap. 48²², as 'the possession of the Levites.'¹ The law of the priest-

¹ The verses, chap. 44⁹⁻¹⁶, are often represented as the first step from the alleged Deuteronomic equality among the Levites, who were indiscriminately either actual or possible priests, to the teaching of the so-called priestly code, which made an impassable distinction between 'the priests the sons of Aaron,' and the other Levites. This exposition attributes the supposed degradation of the Levites to their having gone astray and become priests of the high places hitherto lawful, which the Deuteronomic legislation is said to have aimed at suppressing. I fail to understand the reasoning involved in

hood is brought in here in connexion with the daring sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, often described as he that made Israel to sin; especially

this exposition. For (1) what Ezekiel speaks of is never *these high places* scattered up and down the country, at which it imagines the Levites ministering. He speaks throughout of 'My sanctuary,' that is, the temple at Jerusalem (vv.^{5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 15, 16}), which is also called 'My house' (v.⁷), and 'the house' (v.^{11, 14}). It is at this sanctuary (v.⁸) that the house of Israel sinned, by not themselves keeping the charge of His holy things 'but ye have set keepers of My charge in My sanctuary for yourselves.' (2) This exposition assumes that these high places had been places of lawful worship for Israel, according to what I believe to be a misunderstanding of Ex 20²⁴. Even if that were no misunderstanding, the decisive fact remains unquestionable that it is not any worship of *Jehovah*, whether in accordance with the law or otherwise, of which Ezekiel speaks: it is a worship of *idols* (v.^{10, 12}), and the emphatic word for idols is used by him throughout his book more than by all the other sacred writers. (3) The new priesthood of which Ezekiel speaks is *for the whole twelve tribes of Israel*, as is evident all through his description, yet is most directly asserted in chap. 48. The miraculous reunion of all Israel, already prophesied in chap. 37¹⁵⁻²⁸, stands contrasted with their sad condition at the time 'when the *children of Israel* went astray from Me' (v.¹⁵), that is, when the ten tribes, at the instigation of Jeroboam, cast off the priests of the house of Aaron. (4) No reason is assigned, in this exposition, for the returned exiles making a literal change from a priesthood of the whole house of Levi, to a priesthood restricted to the family of Zadok, in obedience to Ezekiel's vision, at the same time that they refrained from taking the rest of the vision literally, as if it had laid down a rule which they were to obey. (5) The history of the Jews knows nothing of this priesthood restricted to the sons of Zadok. The true historical and grammatical exposition of the passage is given in the text of this article.