

# The Great Text Commentary.

## THE GREAT TEXTS OF DEUTERONOMY.

DEUT. VIII. 2.

'And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God hath led thee these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble thee, to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.'—R.V.

### EXPOSITION.

'And thou shalt remember.'—The remainder of this exhortation, to the end of chapter 10 is taken up with the topic of remembrance. Israel must remember (1) the leading of Jehovah, and (2) their own rebellious perversity in the journey through the wilderness. The same recollection is made the occasion for a separate note of praise in Ps 136<sup>16</sup>, 'To him which led his people through the wilderness; for his mercy endureth for ever.'—WALLER.

'The way which the Lord thy God hath led thee these forty years in the wilderness.'—Not so much the literal journey, but 'the way': *i.e.* the manner. The details of the actual journey are of course included, but only as incidents of the way.'—WALLER.

'That he might humble thee.'—By teaching thee, namely, thy dependence upon Him.—DRIVER.

'To prove thee.'—God *proves* a person, or *puts* him to the test, to see if his fidelity or affection is sincere, Gn 22<sup>1</sup>, Ex 20<sup>20</sup>, Dt 13<sup>4</sup>; and men *test*, or *prove*, Jehovah when they act as if doubting whether His promise be true, or whether He is faithful to His revealed character, Ex 17<sup>2, 7</sup>, Nu 14<sup>22</sup>, Ps 78<sup>18, 41, 56, 95<sup>9</sup></sup> 106<sup>14</sup>.

Hunger, or other privations, according to the spirit in which they are received, are a test of the temper of those who experience them.—DRIVER.

'To know what was in thine heart.'—'To know' is not simply that *He* might know, but that *the knowledge may arise*—to determine, disclose, discover. So in 2 Ch 32<sup>21</sup>, 'God left him (Hezekiah) to try him, to know all that was in his heart.' What God Himself knows by omniscience He sometimes brings to light by evidence for the sake of His creatures.—WALLER.

### THE SERMON.

#### The Religious Use of Memory.

By Professor James Denney, D.D.

The religious use of memory is often appealed to in the Book of Deuteronomy. Let us look at a few examples and consider what suggestions they have for us.

I. *The Day of Deliverance.*—In the third verse of the sixteenth chapter are found these words, 'Remember the day that thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt.' What day was that for the

Israelites? It was the birthday of their nation. What day is that for us? Surely it is the day when God's redeeming love in Jesus Christ first shone before our eyes. Can we date it? John Wesley could. Nine o'clock at night in the Moravian Meeting-House in Fetter Lane was the hour of his deliverance. There are others, again, who are quite unconscious of the hour of their spiritual birth, but who have no doubt as to the fact of it. The Church cannot remain a Church if it forgets the time when God brought it out of the house of bondage. For the day in the life of the Church that answers to this day of deliverance is that mighty act of God which includes the presence of Christ in the world, and His death, resurrection, and ascension, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Recall that day. Dwell on the dimensions of that act of God.

II. *The Memory of Provocation.*—In the seventh verse of the ninth chapter we have another suggestion for memory, 'Remember . . . how thou provokedst the Lord thy God to wrath in the wilderness.' Certain days stood out in the forty years, eminent in badness. These the Israelites were to remember. We forget the day of our conversion, but the day when we gave way to some evil passion we do not forget.

We cannot forget. Apart from that, does the remembering do us any good? It teaches us God's patience, and we repent, not once but every day, for repentance is something that goes on, ever deepened and purified and made more powerful just by the prolonged experience of the pardoning love of God. We need to remember these days also that we may abstain from hasty judgments of others.

III. *The Remembrance of Guidance.*—The verse which we have taken as our text contains another suggestion for the use of memory, 'Remember the way which the Lord thy God led thee.' But if a man says, 'My life has not been led at all. It has been an aimless wandering,' can I prove Providence to him? No, I cannot. Providence is an inference from redemption, and it can be learned only at the Cross. But he who has been at the Cross and has the assurance of love

will be sure that God is with him at every step of his way. We ought to recall our life, and recall it as a demonstration of God's fatherly care. We should remember the influences that have entered into our lives. To remember our life in this way will not lead to egotism. It will lead to reverence for our life, so that of us it may not be said, 'They have counted themselves unworthy of eternal life.'

IV. *Remembrance in Prosperity.*—In the eighteenth verse of the eighth chapter there is a direction for remembering which applies rather to the man who is confident that he has been his own providence, 'Remember the Lord thy God: for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth.' Prosperity engenders the feeling that we are equal to anything. It is only when we remember God that the sense of responsibility attaches to success. A full cup is ill to carry, and it is only the recollection of the Lord our God that gives a steady hand.

V. *Remembrance of Evil.*—In the twenty-fifth chapter, verse seventeen, we have, 'Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way.' Amalek followed on the rear of Israel and showed every kind of cruelty to the defenceless people. Why should this be remembered? It is not for vengeance, but for wisdom. The Lord would have us beware of men and institutions that have shown their character to be evil. To remember this is just to gather the heart of wisdom, that God means us, by our experience, to get.

It is the religious use of memory that makes godly men. If you want to see godly men again, you must cultivate this habit of recognizing God over all the length and breadth of your life, and taking home to yourselves what life means as God's discipline for your souls.

#### Golden Memories.

*By the Rev. C. Silvester Horne, M.A.*

There are no counsels for those beginning life like his for whom life is over. The leader of Israel is about to be taken from his post, and our text is a part of his last great speech. The Israelites have now grown to be a vast multitude, and their days of wandering are over. They are to exchange the staff of pilgrimage for the sword of battle. They are to be summoned to be

resolute and to give determination to their uncertain hopes and purposes. And they are to do this under the shock of an overwhelming loss. The old pilot is to give up the helm, and they are to venture on stormy waters without the man on whom they have learned to lean. In every Divine education there comes a time when our crutches are withdrawn and we are commanded to stand upright on our feet and walk alone. It is well we should know that there is no man God cannot do without.

Moses' intention was to hearten the people for the future by an appeal to the past; they were to gain *strength from experience*. Somehow he had to make valiant men, heroes, knights out of tribes of craven and mean-spirited people. And he did it by making their past clear to them, until God's will, God's hand, and God's presence became manifest to the dullest. They knew not only the way they had travelled, but all the way they had been *led*. To keep alive these golden memories is half the battle. It was in this knowledge that a greater than Moses said, 'Do this in remembrance of me.' For He knew that all things were possible to be endured and achieved by those who brooded over His life and death and love.

Another purpose of this appeal to the golden memories in their past was to lift this people out of *the enervation of self-pity*. There is a description in one of Mr. Robert Louis Stevenson's fascinating books of travel, of the impression made upon his mind by listening to the wail of the *Miserere* in a continental cathedral, 'I take it,' he said, 'to be the composition of an atheist.' The verdict is severe, but at any rate the deliberate rehearsal of all the miseries of men must cultivate in them the feeling of self-pity. The Hebrews were lifted out of this by the voice of their aged leader vibrating with hope and courage. If remembrance there be, let it be the remembrance of the hand of God and His leading in Providence.

How this brave counsel to the tribes of Israel has been confirmed by the example of Jesus Christ! Full of compassion beyond all dream of ours, He yet had no infinitesimal drops of pity for Himself. 'Forgetting the things that are behind,' the Apostle wrote from his prison. No murmuring, no complaint.

For there is work to be done—an inheritance

to be entered into by those who have the courage and enterprise and resolution.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

HE had to bear a series of devastating calamities. He had loved the warmth and nearness of his home circle more deeply than most men, and the whole of it was swept away; he had depended for both stimulus and occupation upon his artistic work, and the power was taken from him at the moment of his highest achievement. His loss of fortune is not to be reckoned among his calamities, because it was no calamity to him. He ended by finding a richer treasure than any that he had set out to obtain; and I remember that he said to me once, not long before his end, that whatever others might feel about their own lives, he could not for a moment doubt that his own had been an education of a deliberate and loving kind, and that the day when he realized that, when he saw that there was not a single incident in his life that had not a deep and an intentional value for him, was one of the happiest days of his whole existence.—A. C. BENSON, *The Altar Fire*.

THE arguments by which John Robinson tried to gain the assent of King James to the emigration of those Separatists who three years after were the Pilgrim Fathers and founders of New England, turn on just the same wilderness experience as this.

'We verily believe and trust the Lord is with us, unto whom and whose service we have given ourselves in many trials, and that He will graciously prosper our endeavours according to the simplicity of our hearts therein.

'We are well weaned from the delicate milk of our mother country, and enured to the difficulties of a strange and hard land, which yet in a great part we have by patience overcome.

'We are knit together as a body in a most strict and sacred bond and warrant of the Lord, of the violation whereof we make great conscience, and by virtue whereof we do hold ourselves straitly tied to all care of each other's good, and of the whole by every one, and so mutually.

'Lastly, it is not with us as with other men whom small things can discourage, or small discontentments cause to wish themselves at home again' (Governor Winslow's Report in Arber's Reprints).

Thus the founders of nations and Churches are always led through the wilderness, and when they are humbled and tested, and it is shown that they will keep His commandments, God uses them to effect His design.

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RUDYARD KIPLING.

God of our fathers, known of old,  
Lord of our far-flung battle-line,  
Beneath whose awful Hand we hold  
Dominion over palm and pine.  
Lord God of Hosts be with us yet,  
Lest we forget—lest we forget.

The tumult and the shouting dies—  
The captains and the kings depart—  
Still stands Thine ancient Sacrifice  
An humble and a contrite heart.  
Lord God of Hosts be with us yet,  
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

Far-called our navies melt away—  
On dune and headland sinks the fire—  
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday  
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!  
Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,  
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

If, drunk with sight of power, we loose  
Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe—  
Such boasting as the Gentiles use,  
Or lesser breeds without the law—  
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

For heathen heart that puts her trust  
In reeking tube and iron shard—  
All valiant dust that builds on dust,  
And guarding calls on Thee to guard—  
For frantic boast and foolish word,  
Thy mercy on Thy people, Lord!

Amen.

'To humble thee.'—'Play the man,' the desert mutters; 'it is better to fight than fly.' Thus the Divine interpretation of all deserts. Thou shalt remember all the way the Lord thy God led thee in the wilderness to humble thee. 'In the wilderness to humble thee?' Then, on God's revealing, the desert is a process of discipline. I think it was Frederick the Great who recorded one of his reverses in the following characteristic dispatch: 'I have lost a great battle; it was entirely my own fault';—a humility that, born of the 'pain-throb triumphantly winning intensified bliss'; a spirit, indeed, which only battle could have so exquisitely wrought. For God to have deprived Israel of the desert, to have given them forthwith

The shady glen  
And twelve sweet wells of water,  
And palms threescore and ten,  
would have been to stifle them with arrogant ease and selfishness.  
ERNEST DOWSETT.

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## Recent Oriental Archaeology.

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### A Boundary Stone.

THE vast stores of material bearing upon the archæology and history of early Babylonia which have been brought to light by the expedition of the University of Pennsylvania to the site of Nippur are being rapidly made available for study. One of the latest volumes to be published is that on *A New Boundary Stone of Nebuchadrezzar I.*, by Wm. J. Hincke (Philadelphia, 1907, volume iv. of Series D). The book is an admirable example, not only of printing, but still more of Assyriological research. It is, in fact, a model of what a work of the kind ought to be, and approaches perfection as nearly as is possible for human endeavour. It is full of new light, as well as of photographs and other illustrations of the symbols found on the Babylonian boundary stones.

A complete review is given of these boundary stones, or *Kudurri*, as the Assyriologists sometimes call them, of their origin, nature and use, their contents and the emblems engraved upon them. This is followed by a translation of the new and important specimen of the class which has been discovered at Nippur, together with a commentary, philological, historical, and geographical, and the volume concludes with indices and a glossary. Nothing has been omitted.

The emblems engraved upon the stones have been supposed to represent the signs of the Zodiac and other astronomical figures. Thanks to discoveries at Susa, however, it is now known that they are really the shrines, weapons, and symbols of the Babylonian deities. As the Babylonian deities were officially identified with certain of the heavenly bodies at an early date, Professor Hincke is inclined further to see in them emblems not

only of the gods, but of the heavenly bodies as well. But this is a concession to the 'astral theory,' which does not seem to me to be necessary, and I much question whether the Babylonian on whose field the stones were erected regarded them as anything more than divine symbols. At all events the cylinder-seal recently found at Gezer, to which Professor Hincke refers in the addenda, cannot be invoked in favour of the theory, since, as I have shown in the *Quarterly Statement* of the Palestine Exploration Fund, it has nothing to do with the Zodiacal signs. That the figures of Sagittarius, Aquarius, and Capricorn in the late Græco-Egyptian Zodiacs should be taken from the Centaur and Goatfish of the Babylonian monuments proves nothing for the astronomical origin or connexion of the latter. The Greek centaur was certainly not an astronomical symbol. On the other hand, the association of each sign of the Zodiac with an animal name in the late Egyptian and East Asiatic systems of astronomy was undoubtedly derived from Babylonia. But the derivation cannot be traced back to an early date.

The weapons of the gods, some of which are represented on the boundary stones, all bore special names, like the flaming sword of the cherubim which, according to Gn 3<sup>24</sup>, kept 'the way of the tree of life.' Most of the weapons, like the other symbols on the stones, have now been identified with the divinities to whom they belonged, and Professor Hincke himself has added to the list the column with two lion-heads, which he has shown must be the emblem of Nin-ip.

Professor Hincke has a very interesting section on the exact place of Nebuchadrezzar I. in the