

invoking divine punishment on those who offend with regard to other relationships. This may be due partly to the fact that when the gospel was brought to the West it established itself among a people who had not those Oriental traditions which gave religious sanction to malediction.

In the papacy of mediæval Europe, on the assumption that St. Peter's successor represented St. Peter, and St. Peter Christ, and Christ God, it was a legitimate inference that any king or prince who disobeyed the Pope had no further claim on the devout loyalty of his people. He had blasphemed and was under a curse. But though such anathematizing and excommunication might be attempted by high ecclesiastical authority, the invoking of divine punishment never found a

place in the common life of the West corresponding to the 'blasphemies' or imprecatory railings of Oriental custom.

The attempts at coercion in matters of belief that convulsed the Christian Church in Europe were largely due to the view that the Reformation was a schism, and that schism was an act of blasphemy against the Holy Church, the body of Christ. The union which the Eastern Church sought to secure by creed, and the Roman Church by authority, and the Protestant Church by the appeal to the Bible and to conscience, is still the master thought of the Christian Church, and the divisions and contentions which retard the progress of the Kingdom form the chief profanation of the name of Christ.

## The Great Text Commentary.

### THE GREAT TEXTS OF REVELATION.

#### REVELATION II. 7.

'To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life that is in the Paradise of God.'—R.V.

#### THE SITUATION.

This is the promise made to the first of the Seven Churches of Asia, the Church in Ephesus. Ramsay and others discover a special appropriateness in each promise to its own Church, but it is difficult to make the appropriateness always evident. Here certainly there is the promise of food, the tree of life being a fruit tree, and the Ephesians are commended for their hatred of the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, who recommended the eating of food offered in sacrifice to idols. But the Nicolaitans occur also in the Epistle to Pergamum. More generally, Ramsay says that Ephesus had been falling from its original high level of enthusiasm, and for this the fruit of the tree of life is the one infallible cure. Boyd Carpenter brings these two suggestions together: (1) those who had not indulged in the licence of the Nicolaitans shall eat of the tree of life; and (2) the Ephesian Christians, who had lost the paradise of the first loving communion with God, are promised a restored paradise and participation in the tree of life.

#### THE LANGUAGE.

There is no serious difficulty with the wording.

1. *To him that overcometh.* It is a present participle—not 'has overcome,' or 'will overcome,' or even 'is overcoming,' but 'the conqueror,' the victorious member of the Church, as such, apart from all consideration of circumstances (Swete). The idea is characteristic of St. John; this word occurs once in the Gospel, six times in the First Epistle, sixteen times in the Apocalypse; and elsewhere only in Lk 11<sup>22</sup>, Ro 3<sup>4</sup> 12<sup>21</sup>.

2. *To him.* The repetition (omitted in A.V.) is due to anacoluthon, that is, failure in carrying out the originally intended structure of the sentence; cf. 2<sup>17</sup>. 26 3<sup>12</sup>. 21. The sentence is probably constructed after the Hebrew. Blass quotes a striking example from the Septuagint of Gn 28<sup>18</sup>.

3. *To eat of the tree* is lit. 'to eat from (ἐκ) the tree,' i.e. to eat of the fruit that comes from it. We have the same word in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, Levi 18<sup>10</sup>. 11.

And he shall open the gates of paradise,  
And shall remove the threatening sword against Adam.  
And he shall give to the saints to eat from the tree of life,  
And the spirit of holiness shall be on them.

4. *In the Paradise.* A.V., following the Textus Receptus, has 'in the midst of the Paradise,' but the manuscript authority for the reading is insufficient. It was probably added from a recollection of the passage in Gn 2<sup>9</sup>.

#### THE SERMON.

The most natural division of the text is into the three parts of (1) the Gift, (2) the Giver, (3) the Recipients; and this is the division which Dr. Maclaren adopts. But such a division would suit others of the promises equally well. For the sake of distinction let us take (1) the garden of God, (2) the tree of life in it, and (3) the eating of the tree of life.

I. THE GARDEN OF GOD. I. Of the gardens mentioned in Scripture three are especially notable—the Garden of Eden, the Garden of Gethsemane, and the Garden of God. They are associated with the whole history of man. One is at the beginning of his history, one in the middle, and one at the end. They also express the essential facts in his spiritual history. Eden is the place of innocence; Gethsemane is the place of testing; the Garden of God is the place of rest after victory.<sup>1</sup>

2. The garden of God is called in our text the Paradise of God. That is to say, the Greek word (*παράδεισος*) is transliterated and not translated. This Greek word has a history. It is itself a transliteration of the Persian *pairidaēza*, which meant a royal pleasure park with its forest and fruit trees. This was the special meaning of the Greek word at first. But the Greeks forgot the original meaning and used the word simply for a garden. This is its meaning in the Septuagint. And this meaning has been found on the Inscriptions in the Papyri. But, again, in the New Testament we find that it takes on a new special meaning. It is used for the abode of the blest.<sup>2</sup> The word occurs three times. In Lk 23<sup>43</sup> ('To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise') it simply means the state or place of the blessed dead; in 2 Co 12<sup>4</sup> it means that supramundane sphere identified with the third heaven, into which men pass in an ecstasy; while here (Rev 2<sup>7</sup>) it is the final joy of the saints in the presence of God and of Christ.<sup>3</sup>

3. Is this paradise in heaven or on earth? It is usually identified with heaven. In the New

Testament, says Dr. Salmond, the primeval Eden gives place to a garden of God that is not of earth, the thought of the Paradise of the past is lost in the hope of a Paradise of the future, and the word becomes a name for the scene of rest and recompense for the righteous after death.<sup>4</sup> That is the sense in which Dr. Maclaren unhesitatingly uses it in his sermon on this text.<sup>5</sup> But Dr. Matheson earnestly pleads for the view that the second Paradise, like the first, is on earth. And certainly the Jewish Paradise of the time, as we find it in Apocalyptic books like Enoch, in the references which the Gospels contain to the Jewish expectation of the Kingdom of God, and in the Book of Revelation itself, is not above the clouds or beyond the tomb, but on earth. It is the earth itself indeed, renewed and made the abode of new men in Christ Jesus. But the distinction is not to be pressed. The Paradise promised to the penitent robber was after death, while Paul was still in the body when he entered the Paradise of his ecstasy. It is not yet a present possession, but a future promise. And Dr. Matheson is right in this at least, that we are to strive with all our might to realize it even here.<sup>6</sup>

Grow old along with me!

The best is yet to be,

The last of life, for which the first was made:

Our times are in His hand

Who saith, 'A whole I planned,

Youth shows but half; trust God: see all nor be afraid!

Therefore I summon age

To grant youth's heritage,

Life's struggle having so far reached its term:

Thence shall I pass, approved

A man, for aye removed

From the developed brute; a god though in the germ.<sup>7</sup>

4. What are the characteristics of the new Paradise? (1) The consequences of the Fall are reversed, and the primeval blessedness of man is restored in Christ; (2) this blessedness is secured from loss or change; (3) there is the immediate presence and vision of God.<sup>8</sup> It is for this reason that it is called the garden of God. His presence is its consecration. Hort observes that the term Eden, 'delight,' does not appear in the Apocalypse,

<sup>4</sup> Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, iii. 669<sup>a</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> A. Maclaren, *The Victor's Crowns*, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> See Matheson, *Sidelights from Patmos*, p. 17.

<sup>7</sup> Browning, 'Rabbi Ben Ezra.'

<sup>8</sup> J. Oswald Dykes, in *Christian World Pulpit*, xxix. 248.

<sup>1</sup> See W. Lee, *From Dust to Jewels*, p. 146.

<sup>2</sup> See Deissmann, *Bible Studies*, p. 148.

<sup>3</sup> See Swete, *Apocalypse*.

so that what is conveyed by 'paradisaical' is misleading. God, not delight, supplies the characteristic.

How know I that it looms lovely that land I have never  
seen,  
With morning glories and heartsease and unexampled  
green,  
With neither heat nor cold in the balm-redolent air?  
Some of this, not all, I know; but this is so:  
Christ is there.

How know I that blessedness befalls who dwell in  
Paradise,  
The outwearied hearts refreshing, rekindling the worn-out  
eyes;  
All souls singing, seeing, rejoicing everywhere?  
Nay, much more than this I know: for this is so:  
Christ is there.

O Lord Christ Whom having not seen I love and desire  
to love,  
O Lord Christ Who lookest on me uncomely yet still thy  
dove,  
Take me to Thee in Paradise, Thine own made fair:  
For whatever else I know, this thing is so:  
Thou art there.<sup>1</sup>

**2. THE TREE OF LIFE.** 1. The tree has been associated with divinity in the religion of nearly all the nations of the earth. The Greeks of Ephesus were familiar with it as a symbol of life-giving divine power. The Jews were equally familiar with the idea. Of the idealized Tree of Life, says Swete, we read already in Pr 3<sup>18</sup>, but its first appearance in a vision of the celestial Paradise is in *Enoch*. Thus the writer of the Apocalypse found the tree of life in his own Jewish sphere of thought, the tree that was in the midst of the garden of Eden being already used for spiritual purposes in the prophetic literature; but he was aware that the symbol was intelligible also to the Asian Greeks.

Trees had been worshipped as the home of the Divine nature and power from time immemorial, and were still so worshipped, in Asia Minor as in the ancient world generally. On some sacred tree the prosperity and safety of a family or tribe or city was often believed to depend. When the sacred olive-tree on the Acropolis of Athens put forth a new shoot after the city had been burned by the Persians, the people knew that the safety of the State was assured. The belief was widely entertained that the life of a man was connected with some tree, and returned into that tree when he died. The tree which grew on a grave was often thought to be penetrated with the spirit and life of the buried man; and an old Athenian law punished with death any one that

had cut a holm-oak growing in a sepulchral ground, *i.e.* heroön.<sup>2</sup>

2. What is the meaning of the tree of life? It is of course a fruit tree, and the eating of the fruit of it gives life. But what is life? It is in the pursuit of 'life' that men make money, seek pleasure, follow fame. But whatever life these make they do not make life that lasts.

Love, fame, ambition, avarice, 'tis the same;  
For all are meteors with a different name,  
And death the sable smoke, where vanishes the flame.<sup>3</sup>

To eat of the tree of life is to have eternal life. And this eternal life is not a mere continuance of conscious being. Just as we say of men who are sunk in gross animalism, or whose lives are devoted to trivial and transient aims, that theirs is not worth calling life, so we say that the only thing that deserves, and that in Scripture gets, the august name of 'life' is a condition of existence in conscious union with, and possession of, God, who is manifested and communicated to mortals through Jesus Christ His Son.<sup>4</sup>

Mr. G. T. Coster breaks up the life, as you might break up a ray of light, into these seven elements. (1) *Beauty*. It is in a garden. At the end of the Apocalypse it is in a city, but it is a city 'prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.' (2) *Knowledge*. 'The Lamb is the light thereof.' Christ no longer speaks to us in proverbs, but shows us plainly of the Father. (3) *Enjoyment*. Not the sensual pleasures of a Muhammadan paradise, but the satisfaction of spiritual powers. (4) *Fellowship*. They that fear God shall speak often one to another, especially of how they 'handled the Word of Life.'<sup>5</sup> (5) *Holiness*. 'There shall not enter into it anything unclean.' The description is negative, because something unclean did enter into the first Paradise. But the holiness is after redemption, and positive and permanent. (6) *Rest in Service*. 'They shall

<sup>2</sup> W. M. Ramsay, *The Letters to the Seven Churches*, p. 247.

<sup>3</sup> Momerie, *The Origin of Evil*, p. 314.

<sup>4</sup> A. Maclaren, *The Victor's Crowns*, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> I remember hearing once of a little dying child shrinking timidly from the idea of going alone; but just before the end there came a spirit of sublime confidence, a supernatural opening of vision, a recognition of some companionship, and the little one cried out, 'I am not afraid; they are all here.'—Wilberforce, *Sermons preached in Westminster Abbey*, p. 161.

<sup>1</sup> Christina G. Rossetti, *The Face of the Deep*, p. 206.

rest from their labours.' 'Neither shall there be any more pain.' But 'His servants shall serve him.' Their service will be worship; their worship will be song. (7) *Eternity*. The life of the Tree of Life is incorruptible and undefiled and fadeth not away.

3. THE EATING OF THE TREE OF LIFE. It is to him that overcometh.

1. This word 'overcometh' is a great word with St. John, and it is especially frequent in the Apocalypse. That book, says Swete, is a record and a prophecy of victories won by Christ and the Church. The note of victory is dominant in St. John, as that of faith in St. Paul; or rather faith presents itself to St. John in the light of a victory (1 Jn 5<sup>4</sup>).

2. What is it that is overcome? St. John does not specify. It is just overcoming. It is patient continuance in well-doing. It is not the victory over a single temptation. It is continual overcoming, the life of victory. The final victory and its reward are the fruits of innumerable antecedent victories.<sup>1</sup>

3. Still there are certain spheres in which the victory has usually to be obtained.

(1) Hort suggests a possible reference to the Greek games. It may be that some of the Ephesian Christians had once been runners or wrestlers or had been training for it. To overcome the desire even to witness the games was a great victory. Still more to overcome the desire to overcome. This is the usual verb (*νικάω*) found on the inscriptions for victory in the games.

(2) The victory is found in facing the tasks of life. The boy knows well enough that if he wants his kite to rise he must fly it in the teeth of the wind. It is easy enough to drift down-stream; but it is better to swim against the stream; the resistance of the water holds one up.

'I have a theory,' says Hubert Bland, in his volume of essays entitled 'With the Eyes of a Man,' 'I have a theory that the people which shortens its weapons wins its battles. I am not clear as to how that theory would work out in the sphere of lower warfare; but in the sphere of the higher warfare it is certainly true. If you want to win you must shorten your weapons; you must look your enemy in the white of his eyes; you must come to close grips with him.'—E. W. Lewis, *The Unescapeable Christ*, p. 228.

(3) It is found especially in suffering.

<sup>1</sup> C. Anderson Scott, *Revelation*, p. 139.

Wrote one of my friends to me the other day, from his home, which had suddenly been darkened by the shadow of death, and out of a heart stricken by one of the bitterest and sternest of earth's losses: 'I have never felt so near to God as I have done during the past week.' He had won past the flaming sword, and had eaten of the Tree of Life.

Said another of my friends to me not long ago, referring to a time in his life when everything that was stable in it seemed to be threatened by a tragic shock which robbed him of a friend as well as a father: 'I really never knew what it was to pray; I never knew the help and the power and the peace in prayer, until those dark days came and the burden almost crushed me to the ground.' He had won past the cherubim, and had eaten of the Tree of Life.—E. W. Lewis, *The Unescapeable Christ*, p. 220.

(4) But, above all, it is the victory over selfishness. 'I know,' said Dr. Welldon, as he resigned the headmastership of Harrow School, 'I know you will be brave in the face of danger; but oh—that I could be sure you would be equally brave in the face of temptation. You will conquer others; but, my boys, will you conquer yourselves?'<sup>2</sup>

4. This victory is *given*—and again we have one of the characteristic words of the Apocalypse. For the victory that overcometh the world is not our effort, but our faith. It is faith working itself out in effort, in effort of life and in endurance. 'Go into a mill,' says Dr. Maclaren, 'and in a quiet room, often detached from the main building, you will find the engine working, and seeming to do nothing but go up and down. But there is a shaft which goes through the wall and takes the power to the looms. We are working here, and we are making the cloth that we shall have to own, and say, 'Yes, it *is* my manufacture!' when we get yonder. According to our life to-day will be our destiny in that great to-morrow. Life is given to the victor, because the victor only is capable of possessing it.'<sup>3</sup>

Above the doorway of a house in Edinburgh there was once a legend which read as follows: 'He that tholes overcomes.' A youth who day after day passed that door, read the writing again and again, and as often wondered what it meant. One day he made inquiry, and found that to 'thole' was a pithy Scotch word which meant to *bear with patience*. He there and then made up his mind to *thole*. In after years that lad became one of the founders of the famous firm of Chambers, the publishers, and he, when relating his early experiences, unhesitatingly attributed his success in life to his early determination to *thole*. This

<sup>2</sup> *Youth and Duty*, p. 251.

<sup>3</sup> *The Victor's Crowns*, p. 8.

message bears the same burden to us—it bids us *thole*, that we may overcome. It bids us be faithful, that we may be partakers of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God. It is a figure which carries us back in thought to the first Paradise and to the tree of life in the midst of the garden, and the promise cannot mean less than perfect

restoration to all the blessings and privileges which Adam lost. But it means more. To eat of the tree of life in the Paradise of God is better than to eat of the Symbolical tree of Eden. For Christ Himself is the true 'Tree of Life,' and to be a partaker of Him is to have life for evermore.

## Recent Criticism of the Synoptic Gospels.

BY THE REV. WILLOUGHBY C. ALLEN, M.A., PRINCIPAL OF EGERTON HALL, MANCHESTER.

THE criticism of the Synoptic Gospels seems to have reached this point. It is very generally agreed that Matt. and Luke have edited and enlarged the Second Gospel. The points still debated in this connexion are details. The main fact is, as it would seem, undeniable. There is further a very widely held belief that Matt. and Luke had also before them a second source, consisting mainly of discourses; and for some years attempts have been made to reconstruct it, none of which have met with much approval.

It was at one time usual to call this alleged discourse source *the Logia*, but as that term seemed to beg disputable questions connected with a statement of Papias about *the Logia* written by Matthew, recent writers have preferred to adopt for it a colourless symbol Q (= Quelle). Harnack<sup>1</sup> has recently set himself to the reconstruction of Q, and as his results are likely to be widely accepted, it is the purpose of this paper to offer some criticism to both his methods and his results.<sup>2</sup>

*A. Methods.*—Briefly put, his method is to place in the source any section or saying that is found in both Matt. and Luke, but not in Mark. The assumption behind this is that wherever two writers agree closely in their records they are borrowing from a common source. As regards this I would only say that I am not prepared to contest the general position that the literary agreement between Matt. and Luke in sections common to them is so great that literary dependence in some form must be assumed.

But I would only urge that it does not follow from the fact that these two writers agree closely in many sections, that all these sections must have come

from a single source. They agree, *e.g.*, closely in the case of the Sermon on the Mount. They also agree closely in the account of St. John's preaching. It does not follow that the sermon and the account of John were found in the same common source. They may have been found there. They may also have been in two separate sources. So far as St. Luke is concerned, he expressly tells us that he was acquainted with the works of many gospel writers.

On this method of collecting together passages common to Matt. and Luke in which there is close verbal agreement, Harnack builds up a document which he supposes that these writers used. It contains:

1. An account of John's preaching.
2. The Temptation and perhaps the Baptism.
3. A good deal of the Sermon on the Mount, followed by the healing of the Centurion's servant.
4. The two aspirants.
5. Sayings to the disciples about their mission.
6. The discourse about the Baptist, with the two sequels, Woes against Bethsaida and Chorazin, and the Thanksgiving to the Father.
7. The Beelzebub section and sign of Jonah.
8. Woes against the Pharisees.
9. Discourse about the Parousia, and other sayings.

Now a document which contained the material above tabulated would be a very curious sort of gospel writing. Presumably the purpose of the writer was to collect noteworthy sayings of Christ, and most of the material is of that nature. But what then has the record of the preaching of the Baptist to do in such a work? This would be intelligible enough as an introduction in any historical or biographical narrative of Christ's

<sup>1</sup> *The Sayings of Jesus* ('Crown Theological Library').

<sup>2</sup> For criticisms of Harnack from a different point of view, see Dr. Moulton in the *Expositor*, May 1909.