

FROM ST THOMAS'S COMMENTARY ON ST JOHN

'These things I have spoken to you, abiding with you. But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you.'—John, 14, 26.

In this passage our Lord promises the disciples understanding of his teaching, through the Holy Spirit whom he is soon to give them, saying, 'But the Paraclete . . . will teach you all things'.

Three points are made about the Holy Spirit. Our Lord first describes the Spirit, secondly his mission, thirdly his effect. Our Lord further describes the Holy Spirit himself in many ways, as the Paraclete, a Spirit and Holy.

He is the Paraclete because he consoles us and particularly consoles us amidst the sorrows and trials of this world. 'Combats with-out: fears within' (II Cor. 7, 5). 'Who comforteth us in all our tribulation' (II Cor. 1, 4). This he effects because he is love and makes us love God and prize him above all: for the sake of whom we suffer insults with joy, according to the passage in Acts 5, 41: 'The Apostles went from the presence of the Council rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus.' 'Be glad and rejoice for your reward is very great in heaven' (Matt. 5, 12). Similarly he comforts us in our sorrow over past sins, about which is said in Matt. 5, 5, 'Blessed are they that mourn'. This he effects because he gives us hope of pardon. 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them' (John 20, 22-23). 'To comfort all that mourn: to appoint to the mourners of Sion' (Is. 61, 3).

He is a spirit since he moves our hearts to obey God. 'When he shall come as a violent stream which the spirit of the Lord driveth on' (Is. 59, 19). 'For whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God' (Rom. 8, 14).

He is holy, since he consecrates us to God; for all consecrated things are called holy. 'Know you not that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost?' (I Cor. 6, 19). 'The stream of the river maketh the city of God joyful: the Most High hath sanctified his own tabernacle' (Ps. 45, 5).

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'And the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it.'—John, 1, 4-5.

'And the life was the light of men.' This may be understood to

refer to the outpouring of the grace of Christ since through him we are enlightened. . . .

In the preceding passage the evangelist treats of the creation of all things by the Word. He goes on, here, to speak of the restoration of rational creatures effected by our Lord, saying: 'And the life'—of the Word—'was the light of men'—of all men, not of the Jews alone, since the Son of God came into the world to assume our flesh so that he might enlighten all men with grace and truth. 'For this was I born and for this came I into the world: that I should give testimony to the truth' (John, 18, 37). And again in John, 9, 5: 'As long as I am in the world I am the light of the world'. And therefore he does not say 'the light of the Jews', for although God was, at one time, known only in Judea, he became known to the whole world afterwards. 'Behold I have given thee to be the light of the Gentiles that thou mayst be my salvation even to the farthest part of the earth' (Is. 49, 6). Most fittingly does the Evangelist unite light and life, saying 'And the life was the light of men', showing thereby that these two, light namely, and life, came to us through our Lord. Life, by participation through grace, as we read further on, 'Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ' (John, 1, 17); light, in the knowledge of truth and wisdom.

The passage which continues 'the light shineth in darkness' can be explained in three ways, according to three ways of interpreting 'darkness'.

1. As some kind of trouble: for any kind of sadness and affliction of heart can be called a certain darkness, just as any kind of joy is light. 'When I sit in darkness, the Lord is my light' (Micheas 7, 8), which means 'my joy and consolation'. Now the opinion of Origen referring to this is as follows: 'The light shineth in darkness' is taken to mean our Lord coming into the world and having a body passible but without sin ('in the likeness of sinful flesh', according to Romans 8, 3). The light in the flesh—that is the flesh of Christ—is said to be darkness in so far as our Lord had in himself the likeness of sinful flesh, as though to say: the Light, which is the Word of God, veiled in the darkness of the flesh, shone in the world. 'I will cover the sun with a cloud' (Ezech. 32, 7).

2. By taking darkness to mean the devil. Ephes. 6, 12: 'For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in high places'. Taken in this sense 'the light', that is the Son of God 'shineth in the darkness' that is descended into a world where darkness, i.e. evil spirits, were all-powerful. (Cf. John, 12, 31): 'Now shall the Prince of this

world be cast out'. And the darkness did not comprehend it' (John, 1, 5), which means that the devils were unable to obscure him by tempting him, as is clear from Matt. 4.

3. By taking darkness to mean error or ignorance, such as filled the world before the coming of Christ, as the Apostle says in Ephes. 5, 8: 'For you were heretofore darkness'. So the Evangelist says that 'the Light' which is the Incarnate Word of God 'shone in the darkness', that is, shone amongst men overshadowed by the darkness of this world's error and ignorance. 'To enlighten them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death' (Luke, 1, 79). 'The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light' (Is. 9, 2).

'And the darkness did not comprehend it', that is, could not overcome it. For—as is clear from the Gospel—however much men, blackened by their sins, blinded with envy, enveloped in the darkness of pride, fought against Christ, inveighing against him with reproaches, insults and contumely, and lastly killing him, even so they could not overcome him by blotting him out since his brightness was shining throughout the whole world. (Wis. 7, 30): 'Being compared with the light, she is found before it. For after this cometh night. But no evil can overcome Wisdom.' Which means that 'no evil of the Jews and heretics could overcome Wisdom', the incarnate Son of God, according to Wis. 10, 12. 'She kept him safe from his enemies and she defended him from seducers and gave him a strong conflict, that he might overcome and know that Wisdom is mightier than all.'



ROYAL SION. Twelve Latin Hymns translated by Walter Shewring. (Pio Decimo Press, St Louis, Missouri, 1950; \$1.00.)

Mr Shewring is already well known to English Catholics as a translator of distinction. His work, in the booklet we are considering, tastes strongly of the seventeenth century: the prefatory quote from Crashaw may be taken as symptomatic. The result, it must be admitted is scholarly rather than inspired, and has at times an air even of parody. The longer stanza form of six lines, which he uses in his rendering of Adam of St Victor's *Sequence of the Blessed Trinity* and of the *Pange Lingua*, is happier than the shorter stanza where there is no room to take off on flights of rhetorical phraseology. To what extent verse translations should be free will always be a point of discussion between experts; suffice it to say then that these are by no means slavishly literal.

O.S.