

THE HEBREW PROBLEM OF THE PERIOD.

OUR LORD'S SECOND TEMPTATION.

THE scene of the temptations is the spirit; the sphere of debate is thought; the visions are wholly subjective. I take this for granted from the argument in the last paper. The literature is pictorial or poetic or semi-poetic; scenes of mind are expressed in sceneries of sense. It vestures idealities. We shall reach the mental disturbances and hesitations of the second temptation by their correspondences with the landscape drawn by the Literary Artist. We read the thought in the painting.

Our Lord is in the Holy City. He is standing on the turreted roof of the superb Temple recently restored by Herod the Great, which was the heart of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem the metropolis of religion and worship. "He who has not seen the building of Herod has never seen a beautiful thing."¹ Fergusson, the accomplished architect, has said of this pile of buildings, "Whatever the exact appearance of its details may have been, it may safely be asserted that the triple Temple of Jerusalem—the lower court standing on its magnificent terraces, the inner court raised on its platform in the centre of this, and the Temple itself rising out of this group and crowning the whole—must have proved, when combined with the beauty of its situation, one of the most splendid architectural combinations of the ancient world."² This structure is the visible representative of the old world, and of the heroic in human history and in the human faculty, which Christ has perceived, when He said, "Man doth not live by bread alone, but by the manifestations of God."

It is no giddy height, but a secure position where Christ

¹ Derenbourg, quoted by Stanley, vol. iii., p. 438.
Smith's *Dict. of the Bible*, vol. iii., p. 1464.

is standing, on the battlemented roof of the tower, surveying the historic magnificence suggested by the architecture, and by the landscape of the city which that architecture commands. Within this pile are collected the representatives of the old system. Here was the Court of the priests, the successors of Aaron; here sat the Council of state, the political heirs to Moses and David; here was the College of scholars named scribes, who took the place of the prophets and represented intellectual eminence; here was the ancient Altar which symbolised the inmost kernel of religion; here was that vacant room, the Holy of Holies, which contained not a scrap of furniture, and the discovery of this emptiness by Pompey was the surprise of the then known world, and which surprise published the spirituality of God's presence with man. That Temple pile looked upon all the synagogues or chapels of worship over Palestine, and over the Roman empire, and was the centre of them. In every city and town of the Roman world was this chapel, where new ideas germinated, where the old system may be seen expanding; here began those innovations which create revolutions, here those heresies which became masterful truths. The aurora is a discharge of electricity from freezing molecules of a stormy atmosphere. From these chapels of ease came flashing those magnetic lights, as of aurora erubescences, which kindled expectations of a change of weather, of a Royal Deliverer to appear in Jerusalem, which startled poets, statesmen, savants, and even peasants, pressed by the burdens of an exhausted world, which guided Chaldæan astronomers to Bethlehem, which Virgil expressed in bucolic verse. The Holy City holds a great hope, and is potential with a new history. Uncounted possibilities for the future lay hidden within that structure, which was so recently restored, as if to make impressive the hope and the potentiality in the Hebrew race.

To take the lead of the Hebrew polity, to conserve its institutions, to work with it, to make Jerusalem the spiritual metropolis of the new world, to restore the monarchy of David in His own person: suchlike are a second class of thoughts which engage the attention of Christ on the Temple towers. There is a Hebrew problem in that age, staring the King of men. He discusses this problem, hearing the fascinating address, "Cast Thyself down."

"The most magnificent part of the Temple in an architectural point of view seems certainly to have been the cloisters which were added to the outer court when it was enlarged by Herod."¹ The Temple was a square building; the cloisters had thus four sides. On three sides the cloisters were supported by a double row of Corinthian pillars, each thirty-eight feet high. On the fourth side the cloister was supported by one hundred and sixty-two Corinthian pillars in four rows. By this splendid cloister the people of the city entered the Temple area, which was always thronged with ecclesiastics and their retainers and clients, gossip-seekers of the city, and visitors from the country.

The picture paints Christ appearing on the battlements of the Temple towers, and descending thence, superior to the law of gravitation, attended by a choir of angels, and in this pomp passing into the cloisters of the Temple and the colonnade of Corinthian pillars, the hosannas of cherubim declaring Him to be the Son of David. The picture paints Him receiving the homage of the national leaders and being elected to the throne of David.

The halo of miracle is suggested to insure the coronation. The Jews seek signs. It is their hereditary temper to bow to the supernatural; it is the temper wherever religion is deep in human nature; religion ever passes from the supernatural into its own shadows of the superstitious. Christ's temper and methods are violently opposed to the spirit of

¹ Fergusson: *Smith's Dict. of the Bible*, p. 1462.

the nation ; He would be simply intolerable to them. The mood of the nation is almost incurably gross ; the moral tissues are cancered. The teaching of the scribes was a pedantry ; trivial laws about trivial matters were statutes enforced on a law-loving people. The religion of the Pharisees was an etiquette, a social show which purchased the praise of men. Priests worked a mechanical and magical ritual. Sanctity lay in rinsing the cup and the platter. Theology had become a question of cooking, dressing, posturing. This decay was visible ; but then the stimulus of miracles might be tried to heal the distemper, and win the nation to purer thought and finer vision.

The pageantry of an appearance in Jerusalem is only a painting of all the possible wonders which may be tried to secure the Temple for the basis of His kingdom, and to gain that splendid vantage ground for His empire. The visible opposition of the ruling, literary, priestly, and religious orders was going to be a painful element in the situation, and a serious obstruction. The breach with the historic Temple, and the withdrawal of His church from it, are going to be another painful element in the situation. He loves the Temple, and cleanses it ; He claims even authority in it, and it is for the moment conceded to Him. We see that refreshing violence which an indignant meekness shows when He upset the tables of money exchangers and whipped cattle and sheep dealers from the purlieus of the Temple. Christ has studied the nation, and He understands the temper. Decay is all around Him ; her wound is incurable. The spirit is gone ; the shell remains. He comes up to Jerusalem over and over, at the feasts, to gather the Remnant, to rally the elect spirits, to work with the Hebrew materials, and to honour the old system. He clung to Jerusalem to the end. To make Jerusalem His centre was a hopeless task, and He sees it almost hopeless from the beginning. He attempts it, and then abandons it, with the

sickness of despair. When the disciples pointed to the grandeur of the Temple piles, He said to them, "Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." He tried to save the nation from this doom, but it was not saveable. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

The temptation to Him who loved His people is to lay a special stress on the resuscitation of the Temple influences and the revival of the nation, and this by the only feasible instrument, that of miraculous exhibition. To work with the Hebrew materials, to keep the framework of the old system, to persuade the ruling Hebrew powers to His spirit, and this in the only possible way, by the display of signs, is vested in the form of the proposal to astonish the ecclesiastical population of Jerusalem by an apparition in the Temple escorted by angels. The invasion of the seen by the unseen is the medicine by which the sick nation is to be healed. The shock of miracles is the moral electricity which is to revive the fatal lethargy. The capture of the fancy by the supernatural is the expedient to be employed. And this reliance on the supernatural is pictured in literary art by the descent from the roof of the Temple into the courts attended by an angelic train.

To become king and master of Hebraism, to become high priest and director of the ecclesiastical forces, to become chief rabbi and principal of the Jerusalem schools and intellectual forces, to become the visible dictator of invisible powers, is in this temptation. It may be necessary to modify His ideals as a temporary expedient, and not to insist at once upon the unlocal, the immaterial, and the unformal. It will be necessary to meet half way the narrow spirit of the nation, and gradually to awaken

insight and perception. It will require thirty years instead of three for this education. These are the plausible and provisional deviations from the appointments with which He is charged. To ally the spiritual of worship with the traditional sacrifices, to wed idealism with legalism, to combine His enthusiasm with the dulness of the nation, and this as only a provisional compromise till a finer spirit is got,—these are alternatives which are looked at in this temptation. This conservative study, this love of antiquity, this patriotism, this less harassing and more attractive and ambitious method, are hidden in the folds of the poetic symbolism which pictures the ceremonious parade in the words, “Cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone.” Christ has adjusted Himself to the bread problem of the world in one study. He adjusts Himself to the Hebrew problem inherent in that age in another study. It is a profoundly pathetic position.

This train of thought gives a natural basis to the temptation; the mission of Christ becomes the sublime occasion of a temptation to make another diversion from appointed methods and the approved programme. The question regarding this address is, What is the concrete form, the practical direction, the actual circumstances in which His Divine power is tempted into experiment and doubtful action? The author of *Ecce Homo* has said with insight, “what is called Christ’s temptation is the excitement of His mind which was caused by the nascent consciousness of supernatural power.”¹ But our author leaves the temptations in a beautiful vagueness as something which Christ “might be expected to experience.”² If the temptations had been described as Christ’s inspection of the structure of human nature and the problems of the day,

¹ *Ecce Homo*, p. 12.

² *Ibid.*, p. 11.

and the examination of His supernatural power in its bearings on man and the opportunity of His mission, our author would have hit upon the specific concreteness of these addresses. Christ is considering His plan, adjusting Himself to His programme, looking into the scheme of things entrusted to Him. He is not in a phantasy of the future such as dreamers indulge. The literature of the reflections is the work of Christ Himself, and it is a fresco drawn by an exquisite hand, to express the surveys and debates, the possible modifications and the likely deflections, which started before Him. What does the fresco of the Holy City and the Temple, and the angelic irruption, and the pomp of the apparition suggest as to the real ideas which disturbed and engrossed Him? His relations to the Jerusalem authorities, His use of the Hebrew system, the subjugation of Judæan forces, are undoubtedly the ideas to be read in the painting. To inaugurate His society in Jerusalem, and to radiate Himself from thence, is a fascinating idea, in harmony with His best feelings. The employment of miraculous power for the founding of His royalty and metropolis in Jerusalem is the definite method to be used.

This reading gives vividness both to the psalm quotation which lends a glamour to the temptation, and to the quotation from history which dispelled the glamour.

The temptation is to an experiment, an excursion not included in the original programme. It is an experiment worth trying. It commends itself to the highest in Christ. It is an experiment of love for the ancient people, and of veneration for a sacred antiquity. The law of continuity is on its side. It is a conservative movement, and has the sanctions of history, which moves not by deluges, but by graded evolutions. Christ has come to fulfil the law and the prophets, not to destroy them. The subserviency of

the Temple power to Him is the best for this fulfilment. The method really entrusted to Him is revolutionary, which leads to the disintegration of the Hebrew system, and apparently to a decisive breach with Hebrew history. But may not the conservative method be first tried, and a continuity obtained before the extreme course of demolition is taken? The esoteric will be found in the exoteric. And it is a promiseful experiment. It will bring the nation into submission to Himself, it will recast its tone and temper, it will be a regeneration of faculty and feeling. A regenerated Hebraism will supply a powerful leverage to His whole work.

This experiment is an excursion into an unexplored country of contingences. Peril is visible in the experiment along with the advantages, and it is a region of probabilities. Power and applause are in it; it holds a likely kingdom; it is sure to make marks on the nation, which will not be effaced. There is an indispensableness in the past. This veneration of a loved antiquity, this heirship of the law and the prophets, even though it jeopardise some interests, cannot in the end be injurious to the Divine plans. The danger of force is in it, of the tyranny of the miraculous over the mind. Miracles leave no freedom to the soul; the mind is crushed by their proof. It will enthrone a monarchy of force. As the supernatural is withdrawn, and nature resume its courses, the power will collapse; the excitement will even make reactions. A tyranny over inclination does not convince the mind; and a tyranny of logic does not persuade the will. As soon as the external force is withdrawn, apostasy will take place, embittering and enraging the whole nature. The danger of even a temporary suspension of the spiritual, and a compromise with the temper of the nation, is also in this experiment. How royalty and death are to be reconciled, how a kingdom of sacrifice is to be inaugurated in the obtuse moods of the nation, is

difficult to see. The experiment has its equations with a new plan.

These debates of hazardous gains and of historic emotions, these visions of dangerous departures and of temporary triumphs, these cross waters and chopping seas of thought are calmed by a Scripture citation, and the quiet restored by the piety of the citation, "Cast Thyself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee: and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone."

The experiment is a dislocation of the original plan, to be saved by a miracle: "lest Thou dash and dislocate THY FOOT against a stone." The competency of the miracle is in the piety of the psalm. The excursion will be rendered innocuous by reason of the Divine powers which after the baptism are pulsing in Him. The freedoms of His divinity lend authority to this royal movement; the forces of divinity can mend any number of dislocations. The deviations can be regulated. The royalty to be won by the crucifixion can be won with more dignity by the crowned divinity. Christ is deep in thought about His empire over men; deep in design is the temptation to supplant the royalty of death by the royalty of force. The rugged, the steep, and the tragic are to be exchanged for the smooth and the brilliant. Stress is laid on the divinity; He is warmly conscious of a timeless and spaceless being. Where in Him the divine and the human meet, at the joints of this august harness of being, in this as yet unadjusted and incompatible region of being, there cross purposes are suggested. The reconciliation of independence and subjection is not easy. One of Christ's difficulties is His composite being, just as it is our difficulty to be body and mind and spirit. Frontier lands are scenes of historic strifes. On this border region, where the confluences of divinity and humanity are, is going on this battle of freedom and alterna-

tives. Will He postpone the sovereignty which is in full view from the roof of the Temple? Will He prefer the road of death and the appointments of the crucifixion, and refuse the stake visible before Him from these precipices, and to be had by His divinity. The greatness of Christ, the consciousness of power, invites this address. Mountain crests are beaten by storms from which the lowly valleys have an immunity. Mists and darkness envelop hilltops, while the meadows below are bathed in sunshine. "As Thou art the Son of God, take the independence, and command the homage of Jerusalem, yoke the forces of the Temple to Thy authority, revive the monarchy and the spirit of prophecy, and realize the ideal of kingdom and prophetship. Make the excursion out of the appointed lines. There is no danger; for angels are here, and there is every competency, for Thou art free."

This dislocation of the original plan is also a precipitation of events. It is indeed leaping the precipices of the Temple roof; it is vaulting over the ordination of events. The supernatural as a despotism or as a precipitation is not permissible; it must not go roughshod over mind or nature. It must help nature to be more natural. Precipitation bowls time out. But it is argued that a supernatural order is ever present, allied to time and nature. The sun, moon, and stars constitute a superior order, modifying and qualifying the natural of our planet; and its latent capabilities are unmeasured and unknown, though enough is known that it may disturb the order of our planet, and raise it to another level, or sink it below its present level. Angels is the name for that supernatural order of spirits which are in alliance with the order of spirits to which we belong, and which work in similar latent and unknown ways as electricity and magnetism. Christ in this temptation is conscious of this higher order which presses upon us and whose forces can be borrowed. He Himself is in

this higher order. A finer system can be got by the employment of higher forces, without disturbance; and this recommendation is enforced, with pious opalescences glittering on its lines, by the literature of devotion: "He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee: and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone."

In the first temptation Christ has acceded to work with one large law—the Struggle for Existence. Law is honoured. In this temptation, this respect for law is conceded; and it is shown that there already exists a correspondence and an interaction between the higher and the lower order, and that the precipitation has the sanctity of law. Angels, higher agencies, spirits of other qualities, like ether and electricity, are assessors and intermediaries, and the spiritual world admits of their action. This excursion is not into fairyland; this precipitation is not a raid of the supernatural. It appears rooted in order. It has the authorization of law and order.

Still another fascination of love and hope gives colourableness to the temptation. The problem of the Hebrew Church is the resurrection of a nation, and who that has undertaken a mission to men has not felt that there is a rapture in seeing men resile from evil, and live lives recast to fine issues? Human nature is capable of revolutions, carrying improvable reserves of promise. No nation has shown this deathless capacity for finer conditions in her darkest days as Israel. Her prophets had seen this latent power, and shaped a robust truth of enduring force, and which they handed down as a consolation for good men. Isaiah was called to his ministry when the people were prostrate in perverseness, who had abused their privileges and prostituted their opportunities, who present an aspect of a conscience-hardened and a vision-blinded nation. He found, in a baffled ministry, that his commission was

written all over with despair, that the people had become more hardened. His prophetic mandate, judged by events, was an irony, best expressed, "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and grease¹ their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted and healed." When his heart sickened at his fate, and he knew how long this hardening and deadening were to last, he saw the form of that hopeful truth, that even in a hopeless stage of decadence, in its very dissolutions, humanity has a Remnant, a vital seed, an inner circle of life, from which a resurrection surely comes. Decimated by captivities and famines, though even the last tenth of the nation be consumed, there is in it a substance: like the terebinth and the oak, when they are felled, have a stump and roots left, from which they sprout again; so is the holy seed the stump and roots.²

THE REMNANT became the light and the song of the prophets, and one of the most fruitful ideas which our world has got, a ruling conception which became a theology with Paul and Calvin, and which inspired the robust practice of Reformers and Puritans. In the inspections of these forty days, Christ has seen the disease of the nation, and reflected on the ferment in Jerusalem which John's baptism had excited. The Temple is a nest of uncleanness; religion is a mechanism; literature, a pedantry of words without ideas; politics is a game of ambition; morality a casuistry of laws; philosophy has run into sophisms; the people are blindly following blind guides; the nation is consumptive all through. When He entered upon His ministry, He saw the same conclusions as Isaiah, and found the most adequate expression of His conclusions in the irony of Isaiah's commission. Matthew says

¹ Delitzsch on Isaiah, vol. i., p. 199, Clark's Series.

² Isa. vi. 9-16.

He spoke in parables, and found a repetition of Isaiah's experience, "The people's heart waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed" (Matt. xiii. 15). John says He worked miracles, and found a fulfilment of Isaiah's experience: "He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart" (John xii. 40). But still the prophet's REMNANT is there. In the tenth part is the holy seed, the living stump; the substance is in the fallen terebinth and oak. This kernel and nucleus of life is a vision in these debates, and its vast capabilities throw a charm into the temptation, and excite the pious enthusiasm of restoring and reviving and redeeming from deeps of degradation. There is an election in humanity; Israel is indestructible. A blessing is hidden in the curse; a morning is the promise to the stormiest night; life is in death. The remnant is a text of thought and rhetoric; back and back upon it the mind reverts. And so the temptation recurs and recrosses, "Cast Thyself down,"—use the force of the supernatural for a monarchy of spirit: "for He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee: and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone,"—there is no danger, and there is hope of a national revival.

Piety commands angels and harmonizes higher law to lower law; piety and miracle and angel can meet any unforeseen contingency in a change of front.

The fresco of the Literary Artist is thus adequately rendered into history. But the historic picturesqueness of the reading will be more felt as we go on to see the aptness of the repulse. The attraction and the disillusion, the charm and the disenchantment, are in perspective. "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

There is no more unfortunate word in the English language than tempt, of incongruous meanings. The Revisers

have retained it in the Bible, as if there must always hang a haze of obscurity over religious ideas. It is undeniably a curiosity of philology, shading down from one meaning to another through several grades till it ends in a meaning which has apparently no connexion with the beginning, though really it is another pole of the same axis, and summons an interesting metaphysics to unravel its gradations.

God tempted Abraham is the north pole of meaning. The Israelites tempted God is the other pole. The temptation of Abraham contains the primary meaning of trial and proof, with a good intention, and which is preserved whole in the word attempt. God tested Abraham's relations to the economy from which he has come out, whether he would see that a kernel lay in the tragic custom of human sacrifice, and take the spiritual kernel and refuse the shell. It was meant to develop and articulate his attainments. When the Israelites tempted God, they provoked Him and invited punishment and disaster. When God tempted Abraham, He trusted him, and brought his trust into affirmation. When the Israelites tempted God, they distrusted Him, and brought their distrust into affirmation. This bad meaning of tempt is preserved in the passage where the additional word is given to express the consequences, "Yet they tempted and provoked the Most High"; and in the New Testament, "As some of them tempted, and were destroyed of serpents."¹ Between these extremes, of simple trial and disastrous provocation, of trust and distrust, we have a number of other meanings. In one the idea of suffering dominates: "He Himself hath suffered, being tempted";² "My temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not."³ We have the idea of test, when the lawyer tempted Christ, testing His capacity as a teacher or His claim as a ruler of men. Then we have the idea of seduction, or wishing to lead into evil, when the Pharisees

¹ 1 Cor. x. 9.² Heb. ii. 18.³ Gal. iv. 14.

tempted Him, asking for a decision in the case of adultery, expecting to put Him into a false position between Roman and Jewish law. In the prayer, "Lead us not into temptation," temptation must mean the pain of trials which are good for us, not to take us into a situation which involves pain, because God tempteth no man into evil. The classical scholar will notice an interesting mental process in the Greek word for tempt, *πειράω*, and the Latin *piratus* and English pirate. The pirate no doubt was regarded as attempting a dangerous enterprise, and provoking reprisal and inviting disaster.

We start with the primary meaning of trial for good purposes, and we reach the extreme, where the idea of distrust and anger at God, involving destruction from Him, rules the word. This sense is frequently given to the word in the rural districts of Scotland, where a mother will say to a provoking child, "You are tempting me," meaning, tempting me to punish you. It is this sense of provocation and disaster which attaches to the word tempt in the quotation which our Lord makes: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." By this word the Divine Artist paints in lurid colours the conclusion to which He has arrived in those days of anxious dialogue and debate with Himself, that it is not feasible, and will be certainly disastrous, to make the Hebrew system the basis of His operations. He would miss His mark, which is the essential idea in the Greek word (*ἀμαρτάνω*) which we render by sin. The Hebrew organization is all gone to rust and fast going to dust. An alliance with it would be writing His work in water. The Divine monarchy cannot work with any possible Davidic monarchy. You cannot square the circle.

This experiment of love and veneration distinctly involved the prolonged postponement, if not virtual abandonment, of His death as the new moral force for the new æon and economy. The idea of a royalty by death would be a

revolting foreignness to the temper of the nation. Insight was lost, and they could not see the ideality of their own elaborate system of sacrifices in a Divine death, nor of the crown of their King in the crucifixion. The Emmanuel and God-Hero of Isaiah has developed into the suffering Servant of God in the second Isaiah, but this was glossed. Death was no force; a Divine death as a royal power is an ineptitude of the mind. Christ crucified remained to the Jew a stumblingblock. Even the Remnant, the election of Israel, the select students, could not endure Christ speaking of His death. The new moral force would have to be postponed if any treaty had been made with the temper of the Temple power.

This experiment would further be the localizing of a universal religion. The Christian religion is to be a world-wide monarchy. It is to hold the essence of both Hebraism and Hellenism, to mingle Hebrew, Greek, Roman, barbarian life into a new complexity. The prophets of Israel, the philosophers of Greece, and the statesmen of Rome, and the bards of paganism are to find their fulfilment and desire in the Son of man. This is the surprise waiting on the Greek, that the soul of all the philosophies will be found in Christ; and this the surprise to the Jew, that the substance of his religion will be found in crucifixion. The original of the theocracy of Moses and the republic of Plato is the Church founded on death and divinity. Jerusalem cannot be the metropolis of the new religion; it has no centre, its centres are everywhere. Neither time nor space can bound it; no nationality can claim it. If Christ is to negotiate with the spirit of Hebraism, this postponement and provincialism must be the immediate concession. A negotiation will introduce complications and confusion. But the condition of the Hebrew Church makes even negotiation impossible. The system is unworkable.

The Hebrew Church is exhausted, and in the last stage

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of exhaustion. The very passion of the nation is perverted. *Religion* has become a dramatic representation; prayers the motion of a machine exhibited in the street; sacrifices the sorceries of an official caste. *Morality* was reduced to frivolous rules and vexatious details. One school of theology contended that an egg laid on a festival day may be eaten, another as gravely that it cannot be eaten. You may walk so many yards on the Sabbath day, and not an inch more. *Literature* had become an intellectual fatuity. A whole treatise exists on the way of killing a fowl, and another on the washing of hands. It was discovered that there were 248 commands and 365 prohibitions in Mosaism. The resources of the dialectic faculty were spent in drawing inferences from the commands which became more commands. Inferences were drawn from the prohibitions which became more prohibitions. Then two or three commands were united and became another command, and two or three prohibitions were united and became a new prohibition. And so went on these literary permutations, while the application of them to every trivial situation was seriously discussed. It was seriously asserted that heaven and earth could not last but for circumcision, that the whole moral law was summed up in circumcision, that angels hate an uncircumcised person. Ten folio volumes of this ethical dilettantism is the sacred literature and verbiage of the age. *Piety* has become an ominous egotism, when goodness was produced without a root within, and a righteousness without motive; as Ewald says of the Pharisees, that "they made piety into a sort of art or trade,"¹ as the Sadducees are known to have said of the Pharisee, that if he could he would wash the sun. *Thought* had become a shallow cynicism. Idealism was lost. The ideal priest is not seen in the actual priest; the ideal kingdom not in the actual polity; the ideal prophet not in the

¹ *History of Israel*, vol. v., p. 366.

actual scribe. It has not been noticed that it is this fatal absence of idealism which the Johannine life of Christ articulates. Christ is there presented as discharging electricities of idealism into the cancerous materialism of Jerusalem and its slumberous afternoon atmosphere, startling and irritating and for a period galvanising into a fitful life the Jerusalem Jews, whom John calls "the Jews." "How can a man enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" is the dazed answer to the idealism of water as the plasma of a birth. "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?" is the stupid query to the idealism of bread. "Whither will He go? will He kill Himself?" is the only idea which materialism can suggest. Electricity is an analytic force in nature; a current passed into water, and the water is reduced into its primordials of oxygen and hydrogen. Christ is represented all through John's gospel as sifting the material from the spiritual, transfiguring the earthly and the natural, showing the idealities which lie behind water and bread and light and body and death. He finds the nation mentally too fatigued for His originalities, spiritually too diseased for His idealities. A consumptivity had set in which must run its fatal course. Carlyle described a decadence in his day, with the stormy exaggeration innate in him, not true of our time, but applicable to this insane and insanitary period of Hebraism: "So dark and abstruse, without lamp or authentic finger-post, is the course of pious genius towards the eternal kingdoms grown. No fixed highway more; the old spiritual highways and recognised paths to the Eternal, now all torn up and flung in heaps, submerged in unutterable boiling mud oceans of hypocrisy and unbelievability, of brutal living Atheism, and damnable dead putrescent Cant: surely a tragic pilgrimage for all mortals; Darkness and the mere shadow of Death, enveloping all things from pole to pole, and in the raging gulf-currents,

offering us will-o'-the-wisps for loadstars,—intimating that there are no stars, nor ever were, except certain old-Jew ones, which have now gone out.”¹

Religion in the hands of the priests had become a mechanism, law in the hands of the scribes a scrupulousness, morality in the hands of the Pharisees a pride, philosophy in the hands of the Sadducees a dull scepticism and a political shift. The priests were magicians, the scribes pedants, the Pharisees moralists without a morality, the Sadducees self-seeking politicians. The Jews of Jerusalem were a mixture of all this in various proportions. An unreason possessed the people; a disreason, a diseased reason, the ruling magnates. The old genius for holiness has become a genius of sorcery and sophism. Christ satirized the priest in His story of the good Samaritan, and the Pharisee in His story of the praying publican and Pharisee. When Jerusalem was not redeemable, He threw the blame of her fall and fate upon the ruling caste, with mingled invective and indignation.

W. W. PEYTON.

(*To be concluded.*)

NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING ON THE FUTURE PUNISHMENT OF SIN.

VII. MODERN OPINIONS.

IN the former papers of this series I have endeavoured to show that the writers of the New Testament agree to teach that utter ruin awaits those who reject the salvation offered by Christ, that we have from the pen of St. Paul words which he could not have written had he not believed that in some cases this ruin will be final, and that

¹ *Life of John Sterling*, p. 85. People's edition.