

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



**PATREON**

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

**PayPal**

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_expositor-series-1.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php)

*THE HUMAN SPLENDOURS,  
OUR LORD'S THIRD TEMPTATION.*

HISTORY has yet to be written; what history is, is a medley of things to be remembered and things to be forgotten: accidents and incidents confused; excretions unburied; dust-bins exhibited; underlying forces unesteemed. Professor Mahaffy is the chaste writer of the most recent and very charming story of Greek life. He exemplifies the character of the materials at his disposal, when near the end of his book he says, "I have spent so much time in exhibiting the degradation of the principal Hellenistic courts at this critical period, that *I must remind the reader that there were still religion and morals in the world.*"<sup>1</sup> The italics are mine. The fundamentals of morals and religion are forced into a corner, and of course misplacements and misproportions are got. Courts do not represent human nature; village life does: the life of an honest shop-keeper, a widowed mother, a shrewd ploughman represents the humanity of a nation. Courts are only the visibilities of an age; the noisy, showy, superficial sides of things; often demanding oblivion. Court artificialities are on the way to the abyss, to be there engulfed in boiling mud lavas; the perennial of human nature is not there. Professor Mahaffy is helpless; he can only read Polybius to us, who also did his best, as best went in those days, to show and obscure the mystery of man. Even Tacitus and Juvenal show only what like society was at Rome; they do not tell us what like it was in the country. Behind the pawns by which the king plays his game are bishops and knights, which do checkmate the king. It is the sacredness and knighthood of the human idea which the historian should seek to exhibit. The music of man is too orches-

<sup>1</sup> *Greek Life and Thought*, p. 433.

tral to be understood by ordinary minds; only its discords are heard; shrieks of disease under surgical operations; Nemesis hunting its victims. History is only the story of some select movements in a nation's life, commonly movements of frothy inanition and noisy wassail, and then the foam of the wave is mistaken for the ocean deeps. The archæology of the mounds of Troy and Mycæna has dredged up for us monuments of a succession of human strata, which history does not touch, and the minstrelsy of Homer has only sung to us one dynasty of the succession, a fraction of human doings.

Gibbon wrote the later history of the Greek race, of the Byzantine period, and wrote it with the historian's genius, but on the same lines as Mahaffy and Polybius, but without their excuse. Dean Church thus describes this historical performance. "He has brought out with incomparable force all that was vicious and all that was weak in Eastern Christendom. He has read us the evil lesson of caring in their history to see nothing else, of feeling too much pleasure in the picture of a religion discredited, of a great ideal utterly and meanly baffled, to desire to disturb it by the inconvenient severity of accuracy and justice. But the authority of Gibbon is not final."<sup>1</sup> These volumes of history should print in their preface, *HEREIN THE PATHOLOGY OF HUMAN NATURE ; PHYSIOLOGY NOT KNOWN*. Pathology must have its record, but it cannot be understood without a physiology, the basis of health and life. Our theology is partly responsible for this pathology without physiology, by its theory of human depravity, which throws the race out of all respectability and gives it a disreputable career. It is mournful to see our biologists, who should help the theologian, following in the same beaten tracks,

<sup>1</sup> Dean Church, *The Gifts of Civilization*, p. 223, old edition. The Dean calls to his assistance the more recent researches of Finlay, Freeman, and Dean Stanley.

untaught by their own science, and speaking as Herbert Spencer and Huxley do of the superstitions and delusions which govern the human mind. Till Carlyle wrote the life of Oliver Cromwell, and sorted his letters, all Englishmen believed through two centuries that Cromwell was a hypocrite and Puritanism a cant; that English life in one of its most heroic moods was a quackery, or at best a dismal deliriousness. To this day, the mythologies of Greece and our own Norse forefathers are believed to be the productions of the devil, or at any rate credited to the depravities; and yet these myths were the lamps by which the universe was lighted for them, and by which their performances were achieved, and by which they became the living fathers of living generations. We derive ourselves from them, and live still in them. We do not understand our derivation.

Christ in this temptation is asking for a historian who will write of human nature as He saw it, which is the truth of it. He is teaching us to reverse the methods of Polybius and Gibbon. The historian who knows his business should be able to say, reversing Mahaffy's words, "I have spent so much time in exhibiting the religion and morals of the nations, that I must remind the reader that there was still human degradation in the world." The history of the East End of London is not the history of English life in the nineteenth century. It is the history of a sore. Chrysostom, learning from Christ, said, "The true Shekinah is man." Carlyle, deep in the Puritan spirit, has said, "We are the miracle of miracles,—the great inscrutable mystery of God."<sup>1</sup> And again, "Is not man's history and men's history a perpetual evangel?" We must reproduce Christ's vision of Greek, Roman, and Teutonic humanity. He sees the world kingdoms and the real glory of them, not the mimicry or semblance of splendours. Or to repeat, as Luke with his plastic use of the Greek language has

<sup>1</sup> *Heroes and Hero Worship*, Lect. i.

it, He sees the regal habitations and economies of human nature.

This, then, is the mountain spectacle: on the distant northern horizons a rusticity of family virtues in which our English homes began, the rudiments of a justice in which lay a Court of Queen's Bench; the principle of representation, in the Tunmoot and Folkmoot, in which lay the parliamentary history of Britain. Here were that Viking energy in which English colonies and American commerce are latent, and that untamed courage in which Waterloo and Sedan were dormant; here those flat-bottomed boats, seventy feet long and nine wide, which could be beached on any coast, the rudiments of our ironclads and liners, which can be beached nowhere. This is the Teutonic spectacle of protoplasms.

More visible and very obtrusive is the spectacle of Roman Law ruling the Mediterranean basin of three continents, the faculty of government and administration; public spirit, subordination of the individual to the general good; the power of conquest and dominion; deference to authority, loyalty to the State, and faith in a mission. This is the masculine Roman splendour of potences. More internal and pervasive are Greek idealism; art, literature; the perception of beauty and proportion, the sense of retribution and necessity; dependence upon the higher scheme and unknown plan. This is the Greek feminine splendour of pregnancies.

In this landscape of human splendour, the Literary Artist introduces the Time Spirit. On the canvas now come the purples and crimsons of passion and victory. Satan appears claiming this opulence and offering it for sale. He will transfer the estate to Christ on the condition of worship,—“if Thou wilt fall down before me.” Christ does not refuse the estate, but the blatant terms in the deed of

conveyance. "Get thee behind Me; avaunt, Satan." We must read into the lines and colours of this picture the subjectivity of Jesus.

Christ gives to this devil of deviation a special name. He is Satan. We are not concerned in poetic literature with the person of Satan, but with the principle of Satanism. Any one who sees bad spirits here believes in bad spirits in worlds of spirits. No one believes in a Miltonic Majesty of Evil who divides empire with the Almighty Father. Evil is confusion, and cannot be an organization. The Time Spirit is Satanism, the spirit that regards man as a creature of mere years, and his affairs as lost in the grave, which works for temporal comforts and rules these limited interests. This is the Satanism of the poem of Job. The Time Spirit enters into the council of heaven, and interprets men's actions by the principle of selfishness; human goodness is governed by the stomach; the worship of God has its equations with a pocketful of guineas. Religion is not indigenous, but it helps men to live, and that is its value; it is often inconvenient, but men suffer it. If they could only manage to get on comfortably, they would not give God a thought. Zeus, father of men, is son of Time, old Kronos. The same Satanism Christ discovered in Peter, when he refused to let Christ die, unpercipient of eternal forces, percipient only of the monarchy of David and the placemen in it. Satan is the Time Spirit, the prophet of secularism, the mocker of spirituality, the sceptic of goodness. When Christ said, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven," He pictured a vision which blazed for a sudden before Him, that His mission and name will unseat Time from the human heaven, Satanism from the throne of the world kingdoms.

It is not a lying assumption for the Time Spirit to claim possession of the world kingdoms, and the right of transferring them. To whom can the transiencies belong but

to the Time Spirit? "For that is delivered unto me" by God Himself. Obey the laws of this world, be prudent, wise, thrifty, and the world is on your side. Use the forces of time, be calm, brave, persevering, and you will be victorious. Men of genius have ruled the world by using the forces of the world. Sow money, and you reap money. Sow brains, and you reap a harvest of learning. Sow labour, and you reap brains and money. Satanism bereaves of spirit the world of matter; bereaves time of eternity; bereaves man of God. This deprivation and sorrow are the Satanic power around us. To worship Satan is to give the primary homage to the intents and aims which secure this life for us. We honour men, we love relatives, we worship God only. We worship Satan when we make Time interests supreme over us. The proposition which flits athwart the mind of Christ is to place a supreme reliance on the Roman, Greek, and barbarian powers; to unite them, to vivify them, to give them a finer potency; to redeem the world by conquest, culture, civilization.

The question which Christ discusses with Himself is the proposal to take charge of both the riper and the nascent civilizations, to transform them, to make them more productive and ennobling; reinforcing human nature by means of them. This life is a substantial reality. We are in it and cannot shuffle out of it. It demands and repays all the attention we can give it. Man's beginning at any rate is here. With the Greek genius of philosophy went dreary vices; with Roman aptitudes for law went cruel injustices and perjuries; the Teutonic promise was a wild world of warfare, village with village and family with family, with perpetual blood feuds. Make virtue more potent, justice universal, develop the finer capabilities of barbarism, make goodness supreme. The splendour of humanity has serious detractions. And here is the temptation before Christ; to-

take the splendour and work it to produce vaster and finer results; expand and sublime civil life, make the world more peaceful, inspire a higher manliness and a finer womanhood and a richer truthfulness; banish vice and misery, raise the present natural into a higher level, call out the unsuspected reserves of goodness, and make secularity a power and beauty. The materials are already here in Greek and Roman and Teutonic humanity. The Afterlife is far off, shadowy, unknown. It is there; it may be there; and a finer civil estate for man can do it no harm; when it becomes actual men will know what to do with it. It is at best a feebleness; religion a height which the human faculty refuses to climb; which likes liturgies and sacrifices, but finds godliness an irksomeness. God is an unknown Being, whose unknownness is a vague awe. Leave Him alone for the present.

In the two previous discussions Christ has consented to work with nature. He has denied Himself the supernatural. He has demanded universal dominion. The natural and the imperial can both be worked into a millennium by a genius like that of Jesus. The formula, If thou be the Son of God, is properly dropped in this last field of debate. He is the Son of man. All the powers of humanity such as Socrates, Euripides, Alexander, and the Cæsars possessed converge in Him. He can make men happy; He can refine human society; He can realize an ideal life on earth. He can introduce a civilization which will make man a comfortable creature, who will know no misery, who will pass the years of his sojourning here in dignity, in peace, in satisfaction. Worship is the wonder which overpowers the soul with the presence of God and the Eternal. To see the God-like only in humanity, to reverence the human faculty, to elicit all its higher notes, to make this world the paradise of human culture—this is the worship of the Time Spirit. The Time Spirit therefore says, "If Thou therefore wilt worship

me, wilt reverence time and man's civil estate, and the worth of human affairs in time—all shall be Thine." The temptation is to acquire a universal empire by a specialized transformation of the human faculty, which will naturalize us in time, save us from the border feuds of two worlds, adapt our constitution to the Time climate, make us pure natives of the Time latitudes. Christ is tempted to be the Redeemer of time, and the Time Spirit concedes this redemption and royalty to Him.

Worship is worthship, the perception of a transcendent worth or majesty, which asks the loyalest and the goldenest that is in us. Time has an immense significance for us. But time only, and man is unfulfilled. As a time creature he is a torso, a trunk that wants both head and limbs; a splendid misery. Our great faculties have one phenomenal deficiency; we are incomplete; we are at our best a half which craves for its own other half; our structure is a hemisphere, and the sphere is got from the Lord our God. This time island of ours, looked upon by the sun and moon, and visited by the greens of spring and reds of autumn, is encompassed by the deeps and horizons of an infinite ocean. It is the ocean which makes an island, and it is the timeless which gives value and reason to time. Man is not to be treated and arranged for as under the supreme rule of time. He is a spirit of eternity, come from the bosom of God, going to God, and he must worship the Lord his God, perceive the transcendent worth of the eternal Father and hymn His adorations. The transitory in time has an inherent splendour, as a fraction of the infinite, as a chip of eternity, as star mist which is being condensed into a world. There is a wonder of greatness in man; the gifts of God to man for this life alone are profuse. No one speaks of the vanity of the world except weary, silly souls, worn out with a misuse of these gifts. But time misplaced and overvalued is Satanism. Make time the ciphers and

God the figure before them, and you have quotations of thousands of stock.

The insidiousness of the temptation lies in the fact that the human splendour has never wanted the religious element. It is always there, and even very loudly there; it is in Hellenism, in Latinism, in Teutonism. Great epochs are made by reinforcements of the spiritual overshadowed by the civil and its civilizations. It is the message of Christ to contribute a freshness to spirituality, to make His life and death an influential memory and an inspiration of religion. The lucidity of the conclusion, the clear and clean incisiveness, that the human splendours need the awful contribution of His death to support and redeem them, are expressed in the robust formula and in the antique phrase, "Get thee behind Me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

In the struggle of a temptation we get sifted and clarified observations of governing truths. In the conquest the truths become illuminations; we get a new clearness to our ideas, a new sound to our words.

1. The truth and untruth in Naturalism is sifted in this third series of surveys and studies. Philosophies are a life before they are systems. We live in time; nature absorbs our activity, the visible bounds our hopes. Naturalism is a life first and then a philosophy, and Christ estimates it at its true worth. Mr. Justice Stephen is a refined secularist, and he has said with perfect candour that this life would be all we needed, if only it would last. A Greek would have put in an addendum, and said, If there was no pain in it. But brevity and pain and evil are the inconclusiveness of secularism, the unnaturalness of naturalism; its confusion. They are facts which turn secularism into a sophism. Henry Hallam is a youth loaded with a brilliant promise, from

whom his contemporaries expected much, and he is dead at the age of twenty-two. The Emperor Frederic is gnawed with cancer in the maturity of his powers, when he is at his best, and he dies, and the destinies of Germany are trusted to a raw youth. Byron is a genius, and he wastes himself and dies in weariness and satiety at the age of thirty-eight. Hallam, Frederic, and Byron are the refutations of the logic of secularism, if logic there could be in its premisses.

Take any view you like of the message of Jesus to our world, this view is uncontested, that He is a Master who has wielded an unquestioned royalty of thought, a Legislator who has given both law and feeling to centuries. Temptation is to Him a supreme season, determining His course. In this illuminated season, with definite articles and the clearest accents, he pronounces judgment upon naturalism. He calls the Time Spirit Satanism, whether it be in the shape of positivism, naturalism, secularism, scepticism, agnosticism. Satanism in the Bible sense means the adversary of man's interests. When Christ says, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve," He has put a mark on these systems.

The Satanism of this temptation is the very best form of naturalism, which utilizes religion and does not eliminate it, which at least places religion on equal terms with law and jurisprudence and conquest and philosophy and home and commerce, and which accepts its guidance in the incipiences of young civilizations. The Beyond is a common theme with Socrates, and he calls it a fair prize and a noble hope.<sup>1</sup> Cicero finds comfort in the life beyond, and says, "There is beyond all doubt some mighty power which watches over the race of man, which does not produce a creature whose doom it is, after having exhausted all other woes, to fall at last into the unending woe of death."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Phædo*, 114.

<sup>2</sup> *Tusculan Disputations*, book i, c. 49.

Lucan, the Roman poet, with a sceptic sigh, says that the Druids of the Celtic and Teutonic nations used to speak of death as an incident in a long career.<sup>1</sup> It is not saying much to affirm that the splendours of antiquity are saturated with religion. In its best days, antiquity never dreamt of a divorce between religion and civilization.

In His resolution, Christ removes religion from the patronage of the Time Spirit, and from its subordination to worldly interests, and subservience to civilization, such as Satan has expressed in the Job literature. There Satanism appears in its nakedness, and disputes the quality of human nature, and argues that religion is only the selfish assistant to secularity. "Doth Job serve God for naught?" Job is a prosperous business man, a philosopher, a magistrate, and he is a religious man, but his religion has its value only for what it fetches in the market and for the table. Christ insists upon the paramount relations of man to God, the subordination of the natural to the supernatural, eternity as primary to time, the mortal as a fragment of the immortal; man the child of God; earth a boggy waste without heaven. The birth in the flesh is splendid, but it is fulfilled by a birth of the spirit in the flesh. The law of sex is the law of human splendour; man as man is only one sex, and the fertilization of man is by the Spirit of God. "Ye must be born from above." "I am the Vine, ye are the branches." "Without Me ye can do nothing."

Sin is not vice, or the denial of God, or the alienation from God. These are the consequences of sin; it is not the sinner that says there is no God, but the fool, according to the old Hebrew distinction. Sin is essentially the worship of the Time Spirit, the making of our plans and the building up of ourselves from the time base, the limiting of our interests to time. Sin is the suspicion that there is nothing more in us than the molecular contents. Sin

<sup>1</sup> *Pharsalia* i. 457.

is doubt or denial of the Hereafter. In this last temptation Christ meets the essence of sin, the sin of happiness.

It is also remarkable that in this spectacle of human civilization, the gaze of Christ is fastened on the divineness in man, and not on his depravity. He sees something more than sin in human nature; he does not look at sin at all; he looks at the better and ideal side; and when sin appears He instantly rebukes it, as Satan. The examination He institutes is of the splendour of human nature, and finds the divineness which is nourished by the worship of the Lord our God. This is the more remarkable that He stood amid the wreck of religions and the depravities of civilization. If ever humanity looked a failure, it was in Christ's day. Hebraism was a rotten thing; Hellenism had become a talking, gossiping thing, furnishing lampoons for Roman wits; Latinism was in a sickly despair, soothing itself by suicide; Teutonism was a promising animalism. Yet what Christ sees is the deathless greatness of human nature, underlying dying civilizations and decaying religions. He is the Idealist of human nature as Himself the ideal Man, and sees man in Himself. The religious world has a lesson to learn from the landscape which Christ saw on this mountain. It is not of the kingdoms of the world that He says, "Get thee behind Me, Satan," but of the usurpations of the Time Spirit. We have put human depravity into prominence in our creeds; we have done well; it is a prominence in fact. But the work of this prominence is done. Sin is too conspicuous; there is no danger of its being obscured in a world which it ravages and blights. Evil is an awe of which every family has its experience. As long as there are mothers in this world evil will be an awe. As long as the crucifixion stands in human history, sin will be a seriousness. The note which Christ strikes in this temptation is the divineness which has been stamped upon us by the Hand that made us, by the Image which is on us from

the inspirations of the Almighty, which is the note of devotion in the eighth psalm, which without another we hear: "Thou hast made him a little less than Divine."<sup>1</sup> When we have shown the higher, the finer, diviner side of human nature with as much persistence and eloquence as we have done the other, men will realize the turpitude of sin and the condemnation of secularism, with a new seriousness. The Eternal Spirit will then be desired for conservation and evolution.

2. In the problem of this temptation we see the contribution which Christ makes to vivify the worship of the Lord our God, and thus to the evolution of a new humanity and to the course of European history. All the centuries down to our day are involved in the studies of this temptation. The splendours of humanity are before Christ. How is He to win them, to save them, to give humanity a new career?—this is the problem. A new conception of God coming from His personality, a new sense of sin and seriousness coming from His death, a new hope coming from His resurrection, will excite a new worship of the Lord our God. A plan is entrusted to Him, that His death and resurrection are to be the reinforcements of all the lost ideals. The Time Spirit has usurped the kingdom of man. The deviation suggested is to stimulate a human civilization, which will revive the glories of Plato and of the Cæsars, and develop Teutonic childhood on the civil lines. He elects the plan of His death and resurrection, in the words, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God."

The Roman is a lawgiver and a messenger of justice to the nations, the founder and master of an empire. He has lost faith in law; human nature has been too much for him; he condones greed, licentiousness, public scandals. He has abused his strength; Roman solidity is gone; the Roman instincts are perverted. Emperors are infamous;

<sup>1</sup> Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Psalms*; Ps. viii., vol. i. (T. & T. Clark.)

senators are criminals. There is despondency in the Roman heart. The Roman ideal is lost. Rome is diseased to death. In this despair the Personality of Jesus appears, the figure of a perfect Goodness. The death of Christ announced the inexorable justice of God; the resurrection the freshness of renovation. A redeeming force was seen. Christian ideas of duty and of purity came with new sanctions, and these gradually won their way and appropriated the empire. The empire was dissolved, but society remained, renovated and reinforced. Augustine, himself lifted from the dunghill, represents the restoration.

The Greek was a thinker, an idealist, the artist. He is now clever, quick, sparkling, like the Irish of our day. His philosophy is a witticism; his literature a talk; his art a trade; doomed to national decomposition by the plialities of his character, to be overrun and absorbed by more vigorous races. The Greek ideal is lost. Into this enfeeblement there is announced the seriousness of the Cross; the solemnity of Æschylus and Euripides and of the tragedies is revived. The First-born of the creation, the Archetype of ideas, has come and died and risen again, and this freshens Plato's idealism, relating it not to the mere beautiful, to the curve of the mountain line and the purple of the heather, but to the mountain schists and granites, to the eternal and the Divine. The Greek world was saved and renovated, and Athanasius and Chrysostom are the representatives of the new Greek world.

The Teutonic races are a crowd of wild, undrilled clans, endowed with fine instincts, germinant, but with an uncertain future. English homes and parliaments and colonies are in them; Nelsons and Von Moltkes; steam and electricity. But the early youthfulness could easily have taken another direction; that primitive rudeness had not found the heritage of modern Britain or Germany. It had wasted itself in rapine. Christianity found Greece and

Rome in sorrow, reeling with misfortunes, fainting with blow and shock, and it comforted them by the hope in Christ and the sympathy of a heavenly Father. Christianity found the Teutonic races in the flush of conquest, proud of strength, exchanging the chase for a higher mode of living, exchanging their woods and marshes for built cities and ploughed lands. Christianity comes to subdue their pride, presents to them the Divine Ideal of humility and sacrifice and service, gives them the message of the Cross. It changes their ideas, and they who had otherwise been content with a fugitive and perishing civilization were won to higher and finer things.

The Time Spirit was killing the Roman world with despair and the Greek world with frivolity; and the Teutonic world had been left to a luxuriant savageness, which had dissolved it. Christ sees an exhausted Hellenism, a despairing Latinism, and a contingent Teutonism. He saves them, renovates them, reinforces all the finer elements in them, by elements which can come only from the love, the sacrifice, the seriousness which His death will inspire. The kingdoms of the world and the glory of them are conquered by Him, by the worship of the Lord His God, by accepting from God the laws and methods of His procedure.

This death is His difficulty; there is an unknown arduousness in it. Though there is a resurrection in it, the task of it is an unendurable strenuousness. His temptation comes from the difficulty of it. A few days before the crucifixion, some Greeks wished to see Him, and a spasm of this arduousness took Him as He stood in the presence of the Greek world. He told them, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." The mention of His death disturbed all His faculties, and He wished to be saved this pain of a death, which was to be even the augmentation of Him. Then He calmed down and said: "Now is the

crisis (*κρίσις* not *κρίμα*) of the world : now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." All this with the Greek world before Him, as if the landscape of the temptation mountain was again before Him, as if the Cross had been seen in the foreground of the mountain landscape. That His death will cast out the Time principdom was the gospel to the Greek world. It was in this Roman and Greek world, when the Roman ideal had become a phrase and the Greek ideal an hypothesis, that Paul offered Christ crucified to the Roman as the power of dominion, and to the Greek as the idealism of philosophy.

"The strange story of a crucified God" has annexed the manifoldness of the ancient world powers, and has created out of them the complexity of the Christian kingdom, which is not fulfilled as yet, which is in its mid career.

A ferment in nature is the entrance of a living organism into a substance, which breaks it up, and rearranges its component parts. Digestion is performed by a fermentive organism, the dough is changed into bread by a fermentive organism ; the sugar of grape-juice is broken up into alcohol and carbonic acid gas, making wine, by a fermentive organism. Yeast makes the ferment by which bread and wine are got, and yeast is a plant. Its presence upsets one chemical equilibrium and produces another. And in the new combination, all the elements which are in the old are accounted for. This has been the singular function of the death of Christ. It has abstracted the elements of righteousness and holiness, and ideas of theocracy, from the Old Testament, and rearranged them in Christianity. Every essential element has been accounted for. A rearrangement of the religion of Moses and the philosophy of Plato and the government of the Cæsars has been obtained for an imperial sanctity. And thus a new species of society, a new order of humanity, a new history. Paul perceived this

ferment, and saw its reconstructions, and withstood with undaunted front any tampering with it. In his epoch-making Epistle to the Galatians, he resents the revival of Hebrew ritualisms, and concludes his argument: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." In his epistle to the Greek world, he says, "Christ crucified, the power of God and the wisdom of God." The crucifixion of Jesus has rearranged all the permanent elements in the old world, and started a new career for humanity. The vision of this fact is in the debates of this temptation.

The presence of Christ was the fulfilment of Hebraism, and also of Hellenism and Latinism. It makes the dispensation of the fulness of times. Christianity appropriated all the permanent elements of the old world, and constructed a new humanity. Jews were the earliest annexations, the Roman world next, and the finer spirits passed into the new society, as youth into manhood. Christ perceives the power of appropriation, and says: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God by temporising, procrastinating, unavailing methods. Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God. Prophets and priests will live again in Me, philosophers and senators will be fulfilled in Me. All the moral forces of Hebraism will be vivified by My death; all the permanent elements of Hellenism will be accounted for by My death; and nothing but death will conserve the human attainments, and extricate the essence from the exhausted and putrid form. 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God.'"

The lost Roman ideal of duty is recovered; the lost Greek ideal of proportion is conserved; the uncertain Teutonic endowments do not remain any longer uncertain.

The prince of this world, the Time Spirit, is judged, and can never be mistaken again, and a new standard of judgment or government is given to men of the infinite of God and the invisible of the Spirit. The classical ideals are transformed, and a new correlation of moral forces is found.

In the polemic of the Bread Problem and the Hebrew Problem, and what may be called the Greek Problem, the syllabus of duty has been taken out of the fog in which all originality is more or less wrapt. This syllabus is now an epic and a drama and a lyric all combined into one, making the literature a unique composition. We read the title-page of many books; we read the contents of a few; we master probably one or two. One masterful reading of the book of being is by temptation; the ideas lying in the chapters are understood, the passion slumbering in the sentences is waked up; syntax is put into the cloud of ideas and passions. Christ is living the life of humanity in these temptations, appropriating the centuries that are past, and projecting the centuries that are to be, and it is centuries that are pictured in the short cantos of this poem. He is communicating a gift of Himself to humanity which was always there, for He is the First-born of every creature, but which is to become expressive with a new expressiveness. The temptations show a striking situation.

3. The character of the temptation literature emerges into a clearer light from this exposition. As we might expect, Shemitic literature will show qualities unlike anything we are familiar with. Poetry always works with history, and the poet is a more correct as well as a more graphic historian. We have here the subjective condition of our Lord covering forty days, put into a rhythmic form. The poetry unites the epic, the dramatic, and the lyric inspirations, and the product is an arabesque, an Arabian combination. It is epic, as we have a Hero, purified by temptation, who extricates Himself in passion and pathos

from an entangling position, who finds a clarified atmosphere of duty and service, whose being is heightened every way by the struggle. It is dramatic, as the fortunes of men and classes of men and representatives of men and classes are involved in the plot; in which Peter and John and Judas and Pilate, the Pharisee and Sadducee, Roman, Greek, and Teuton are persons in the drama. It is lyric, because Christ in a fire of emotion and flush of discovery is expressing Himself and in the end fulfils Himself in a completeness of submission and sympathy. As a literary composition, narrating prolonged mental movements, in which excursions were made into fields of possibilities around Him, which did not belong to the programme of duty, there is nothing, I venture to say, like it in the range of our literature.

The knighthood of the human idea, the sacredness of human action are best shown to us by the poet, not by the historian. Poetry is a creation; history, by its inevitable foreshortenings and colourings, is more or less of a manufactured article. Wordsworth calls poetry "the breath and inner spirit of all knowledge"; and Froude has said, "Great men—and all MEN properly so called, whatever is genuine or natural in them—lie beyond prose, and can only be represented by the poet."<sup>1</sup> The thought and passion on which these temptations repose could not be fused into a literary unity except by the poetic faculty. No man understands facts except as he understands the impulses which gave them birth. Facts are moulds into which the fire of being goes. The historian gives us the mould, and it has its value; the poet is the poet by the passion in which he feels the fire and reproduces it. The cadence of poetic words is from the music in our being. History in the end must be a poem, and not an uncadenced chronicle. Christ is His own Poet-historian here.

<sup>1</sup> *Short Studies on Great Subjects*, vol. i., p. 507.

4. The validity of the exegesis which regards the temptation literature as a Shemitic poem has been already discussed. The insufficiency of the temptations, taken literally, as the prose of the actual, will be evident from the expositions given, and may be briefly summed up.

The force of the first temptation, if addressed to the hunger of Christ, lies in the suspicion that Christ would not deny Himself the use of His supernatural power for this particular purpose of supplying Himself with food, and that this power is not lawful. A law of economy must rule the use of miracles. On this special occasion this law becomes arbitrary, in that the devil is immediately allowed a luxury of supernatural power. He takes Christ or commands Christ to lift Himself in mid air, to perform an aërial journey into Jerusalem. Christ is denied a modest miracle for a necessary purpose; the devil is allowed a colossal extravagance of a miracle. There is no proportion here.

The improbabilities of the prose thicken on the Temple roof. Where is the evil in Christ going down from the Temple tower supported by angels? He must come down somehow. If He cannot use His own divinity, angel or devil must be employed. Does the point of the temptation consist in the employment of angel help? Do the words, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God," mean that there is danger in angelic help? How then is He to come down? He can suffer hunger and wait till He gets food naturally; but He cannot come down from the Temple roof in any conceivable natural way. And here again a decent miracle is refused, and immediately an immoderate indulgence in it is allowed, an enormity in miracle, a long aërial flight to the Lebanon or Moab mountains; and this too for an impossible object.

For it has been already shown that the first condition of a literal reading of the third temptation is impossible.

Neither the range of the eye nor the curvature of the earth's surface will allow Christ to see the cities and empires of the world from any mountain.

The Devil of deviations and the Satanism of time leave Him, and angels of the Divine Plan, and the Holy Programme, and the Eternal Melodies come and minister unto Him, hymn themselves in Him.

W. W. PEYTON.

### SAMSON.<sup>1</sup>

THE story of Samson confronts us with a most difficult theme. How comes this reckless, sinning man to be reckoned among the heroes of God? In assigning him such a place, I confess that sacred history raises difficulties which I am unable completely to solve. On the one hand, I see clearly that, in estimating the career of a man like Samson, we are apt to be influenced by unreasonable scruples. We have no right to judge him by the standards of the Christian conscience, or to settle beforehand what use God may make of a man like him in His government of the world. But, on the other hand, there is much in Samson's history which we find hard to reconcile with the character of a great and good man, and with the presence and controlling power of the Spirit of God in his life.

I shall run over the outstanding events in Samson's career, so that we may be in a position to estimate its ethical and spiritual significance, and to see if there is not good reason for endorsing the verdict of Scripture, and assigning him a place among the heroes of the Old Testament. A godly mother receives a Divine warning that a child is to be born who is destined in God's purpose to play a great part in the history of His chosen people. She

<sup>1</sup> A lecture.