

the decision of an instant. Lot obeyed an inclination rather than a principle; we also are under the constant temptation to guide our course by the lower rather than the higher dictates of our nature. It is only in such terrible hours of choice that the true bias of our nature is apt to reveal itself, just as no one suspects the bias in the ball until it is set rolling. And the bias does not count for much when the ball begins to move; it is not until the distance grows that we perceive what the goal will be.—W. J. DAWSON.

HIGH up amid the mountain ranges of the Black Forest, in Germany, you may see a number of tiny streams trickling down over the rough rocks and through the dark woods; small at first—so small that the broken branch of a tree or small fragment of stone, fallen from the overhanging crag, may divert it to the right hand or the left. It seems a little matter indeed which course the stream follows, as it sings its happy way down the mountain side, rippling and sparkling in the summer sunshine; but just that turn decides whether it is to flow with the streams below which unite to form the Danube, or with those which make the Rhine—whether, in fact, it is to pass on and on through the warmer climes to a southern sea, or to empty itself at last into the cold waters of the north.—J. T. SHORE.

PERHAPS I speak to some who are just about to choose for themselves a business or profession. Take care lest you fall into the same pit as Lot. Before you turn your face to Sodom and Gomorrah—to the promising situation in London or Glasgow—learn about something more than the well-watered plain. There may be a good wage and better prospects, but if they are only to be had at the price Lot paid for them, you had better break stones on the roadside. There are professions in life in themselves honourable enough, yet for some so beset with dangers, that they will do well to think not twice only, but twenty times before they embark in them.—G. JACKSON.

THE tempter will never propose that you should go by a single journey from Bethel to Sodom. He will ask you at first only to look upon the well-watered plain, then to choose it, then to go down into it, and he will be quite satisfied for the present if you only pitch your tent *toward* Sodom.—M. NICHOLSON.

ON the moors of Yorkshire there is a stream of water which goes by the name of the 'Ochre Spring.' It rises high up in the hills, and runs on bright and sparkling for a short distance, when it suddenly becomes a dark and muddy yellow. What is the reason of this? It has been passing through a bed of ochre, and so it flows on for miles, useless and unpleasant. The world is full of such beds of ochre. Enter not in the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men.—*Church of England Teachers' Magazine.*

ST. BERNARD, the son of a Knight of Burgundy, having devoted himself to a monastic life, persuaded four brothers, of whom the two elder were, like their father, stout fighting men, to follow his example. Only the youngest remained for a secular life, and he was but a child. As they were finally leaving the paternal castle, one of them said to the boy, 'Nivard, you are now owner of all our property.' 'What?' replied the boy, 'you have heaven and I the earth; that is no fair division.'

#### Sermons for Reference.

- Dawson (W. J.), *The Comrade Christ*, 243.  
 Jackson (G.), *First Things First*, 63.  
 Ker (J.), *Sermons*, i. 70.  
 Mills (B. F.), *God's World*, 171.  
 Newman (J. H.), *Parochial Sermons*, iii. 1.  
 Nicholson (M.), *Communion with Heaven*, 171.  
 Trench (R. C.), *Sermons New and Old*, 258.

## The Temptation of Christ.

BY THE REV. ALFRED E. GARVIE, B.A., B.D., MONTROSE.

### II.

THE conclusion of our first inquiry into the value and the source of the records of the temptation of Jesus may be summed up in Weiss' words: 'This account must have stood in the apostolic source. If we are not to regard such an account as a myth, or a pure fiction, we can trace it back only to a communication made by Jesus Himself, seeing that it treats of events that befell Him in the loneliness of the desert' (*Life of Christ*, i. 339). How are we to interpret this communication? must we take the narratives literally, or may we understand them symbolically? (1) In the

first place, let it be noted that the purpose of Jesus in reporting this personal experience to His disciples must have been didactic. We do not find in the Gospels a trace of the conceit and vanity in Jesus, which leads some men, otherwise great, to make known to the world all they think, feel, do. Whatever He told others about Himself was for their enlightenment. The disciples were beset by certain moral dangers; they were prone to indulge some false hopes; they were sometimes doubtful about the wisdom and the rightness of the plan of work adopted and followed by Jesus. It

was needful that these dangers should be clearly pointed out to them, that they should be led to abandon these hopes, and that they should be brought to understand and sympathize with their Master's method and purpose of action. How could this be done most quickly and surely? By letting them know that their wishes, hopes, plans, were not new to Jesus, had been already pressed on His acceptance, and had been rejected as sinful temptations. But that the lesson might be taught them it was not at all needful that the facts should be stated with prosaic literalness. It is not at all unlikely that had Jesus presented the temptations to which He had been exposed, in the disguised, subtle, and plausible forms in which He Himself had experienced them, the less sensitive consciences and duller moral intuition of His disciples would not have recognized therein any temptation. It was needful for Jesus to bring the temptations down from the high moral level, in which His inner life moved, down to the low moral level, in which He still found His disciples. The necessity of such a translation of His personal experience into modes of thought and feeling and desire, intelligible to, and real for, His disciples being admitted, the question remains, How could this best be done?

(1) Jesus in teaching the multitudes, and even His disciples, found it needful to use figurative language. Not only in His deeds, but in His words also, was 'truth embodied in a tale that it might enter in at lowly doors.' His parables lodged in the memory, quickened the understanding, and cast a spell over the feelings of His hearers. The most powerful as well as the most charming mode of utterance is the poetical. Jesus was a poet as well as a thinker. It was natural, and not only convenient for Him to speak in symbols. There can be no doubt that in didactic utterances, that which is most effective in producing the impression required is always preferable and justifiable. If Jesus had intended to give His disciples materials for a biography, assuredly it would have been right for Him to report the temptations literally. But any such aim was far from His thoughts. He wanted to teach a lesson, and He was right in choosing the mode of utterance that was sure to prove most effective. Reverence for, and loyalty to, Jesus do not require us to accept the narratives of the temptation literally.

(2) But, in the next place, it is to be noted that

the narratives taken literally involve many assumptions, difficult to admit even for those who most heartily believe in the possibility of miracles. Some may find it easy to believe that the devil (the question of the personality of the evil principle need not here be raised) can take to himself a bodily form when and where he will; but such an assumption will seem incredible to those who think that a credulous superstition is a more real and present danger to Christian faith than a sceptical rationalism. Again, it is incredible that the devil could miraculously remove Jesus from the wilderness, first to the pinnacle of the temple, then to the top of a high mountain; that omnipotence belongs to God alone is surely a fundamental principle of ethical monotheism. Still less credible is the assumption that God put forth His power to set Jesus on the pinnacle of the temple, and then on the top of the mountain, and so afforded the tempter his opportunity, for God is not the servant of the devil. Again, where is the mountain from which all the world can be seen in a moment of time? Miracles making void the limitations of time and space are not possible for the devil. If we cannot take these details literally, the safe course is to recognize that the whole narrative is symbolical, for the attempt to combine historical with figurative elements can only lead to confusion, to arbitrary selection, and artificial explanation.

(3) Thirdly, an objection against regarding the narrative as symbolic needs to be met. It is often assumed that the reality of the temptation depends on the literalness of the narratives. So far is this from being the case that the literal interpretation of the narrative makes the temptation a theatrical display instead of a genuine moral experience. A personal devil present in visible form has not the seductive power which a mental suggestion which is not at once recognized as satanic has. Turning stones into bread, casting oneself down from the pinnacle of a temple, and bowing down to Satan, however great the prize offered; are too apparent and too impudent proposals of evil to be dangerous to a sensitive moral nature. The mere quotation of a passage of Scripture is a method of disposing of a temptation which can be effective only where there is no serious moral conflict. As has already been said, Jesus translated His experience for the benefit of His disciples into forms intelligible and real to them. Theirs were moral natures, coarse-fibred, half-finished, not yet sensitive

nor mature. His was a moral insight so keen, a moral integrity so strong, a moral passion so intense, that the temptations must have come to Him in forms far more disguised than the literal explanation of the narrative offers; and His conflict with evil must have been much more varied and strenuous than the simple repetition of texts of Scripture. We do not honour Jesus by assuming that He was capable of being tempted by any of the three forms of temptation taken literally; assuredly the disciples might have been, and for that reason Jesus reported His personal experience in this symbolic form.

Again, it has been said that the suggestions of evil must have come to Jesus from without: they could not come to Him as sinless from within; and accordingly it is assumed there must have

been an external personal tempter. This is an example of a psychology too simple for truth. 'The without' and 'the within' of a man's moral personality are not convertible with outside or inside his body. There are contents in every man's memory, instincts and impulses in his heart, and influences over his will which are not of his own making, over which he has not complete control, and for which he cannot be held personally responsible. Jesus did not live in moral isolation, with a moral vacuum in His spirit. Sinless He was, but not on that account incapable of being tempted from within, for in Him as in other men there were thoughts, feelings, wishes, not of His own making, not yet proved sinful, the raw material out of which in due season temptations might be made.

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## The International Critical Commentary on 'Samuel.'

BY THE REV. J. A. SELBIE, M.A., MARVCULTER.

'THE International Critical Commentary' series has long ago gained for itself the highest reputation. Not only from England and America but from the Continent has abundant testimony been borne to the exact scholarship and scientific methods it exhibits, as well as to its practical use for all who desire to learn the true meaning of Scripture. In the department of the Old Testament the work before us has been preceded by Driver's *Deuteronomy* and Moore's *Judges*. Both these commentaries had to deal with books of no ordinary difficulty, and both by universal confession have executed their task with brilliant success. It was no light undertaking for Professor H. P. Smith to produce a work that must, as a matter of course, challenge comparison with them. He evidently felt this, for in his Preface he remarks: 'In preparing the present number of the series I have constantly had occasion to admire the work of these predecessors, and I shall be gratified if the present volume shall be found worthy of a place by the side of theirs.'

<sup>1</sup> *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Samuel.* By Henry Preserved Smith, Professor of Biblical History and Interpretation in Amherst College. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1899. Price. 12s.

Hitherto we have had no scientific English commentary on *Samuel*. Much has been done for the text (which disputes with Ezekiel the claim to be the most corrupt in the O.T.) by Thenius, Wellhausen, Klostermann, Budde, and Driver. The latter scholar, indeed, gives us in his *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Samuel* much that is of exegetical value as well, and to some of us the work just named has almost supplied the place of a commentary. It is unfortunate, considering the importance of the Books of Samuel as sources for the history of Israel, that the text should often be so uncertain and that the analysis into sources should present such difficulties. In dealing with these perplexing problems Professor Smith appears to us to exhibit the very ideal of the critical spirit. He handles thorny questions with caution but without timidity.

In his Introduction our author treats summarily but sufficiently (1) *the Title*: pointing out how what was originally one book came to be divided into two, and noting by the way the infelicity of the title *Samuel*, seeing that the prophet just named ceases to be prominent after the middle of the first book; (2) *the Contents*: which deal with a period comprising probably about 100 years,