

bution was generally received, as we know from Æschylus,—

*Δρασάντι παθεῖν
τριγέρων μῦθος τάδε φωνεῖ,²*

as well as from the descriptions, in Homer or elsewhere, of the details of the future punishment. At the same time, the death of which the Apostle here speaks is not simply the loss of mortal life, but death everlasting.

CONNOP THIRLWALL.

ON THE CONTEST FOR THE BODY OF MOSES.

JUDE, *verse 9.*

THAT to us this contest between the Archangel and the Devil is exceedingly obscure is certain; although it was apparently not unfamiliar to the countrymen and contemporaries of Jude the brother of James. In considering this obscure passage we may take one of two lines.

We may, in the first place, treat it as a mere reference to a Jewish fable; and we may say that its origin must be found in some pious imagination of the Persian era, when Jewish thought became saturated with the angelology and demonology of the far East. This is, perhaps, more or less vaguely, the opinion of most educated laymen. I will simply say here, that it seems to me inconsistent with any solid belief in the Inspiration of Scripture, and creates, therefore, much more serious difficulties than it removes. We may, in the second place, accept as

² Æsch. *Χοηφόροι*, 305, 6.

a fact the occurrence alluded to, and endeavour to give some explanation of it which shall bring it into harmony with other parts of Revelation. I propose in this paper to examine briefly the ordinary explanation of this obscure reference, and then to place it in what seems to me its true connection. For the ordinary treatment of the subject I cannot do better than quote the words of the Bishop of Lincoln, in his great Commentary :

“The Archangel Michael, although contending even with a fallen angel, the leader of fallen angels, the Devil, and disputing with him concerning the body of Moses, which God had buried and concealed, *in order, as is probable, that it might not become an object of worship to the Israelites*; and which, it seems, the Devil desired to possess, in order that God’s purpose in this might be frustrated, and that the mortal remains of this faithful servant of God *might be made to be an occasion of creature-worship to the Israelites*,—as the brazen serpent was made to be—and as the relics of holy men have been made in later times ;—yet even against him,” &c.

Now I venture to say that this supposition is altogether gratuitous ; and I say so on the following grounds :—

Firstly, there is not a hint in Scripture that such was God’s purpose, or such the devil’s design ; it simply says that God buried him, and that none ever knew the place of his sepulture. Had we nothing else to guide us, we should most reasonably infer that God’s purpose was to shew special honour to his faithful servant, and to save him from the humiliation of having his sepulchre built by those whose fathers had tried and troubled and tempted him so sorely. Secondly, what is more important, there seems no reason to suspect the Jews of that day of any tendency to honour Moses overmuch :

they never had done so while he lived, most certainly; and they had in Joshua a leader much more to their mind (and to their need too) than Moses could have been. The real danger seems to have been lest the memory of Moses, and of all which he did and taught, should fade away entirely from the hearts of that fickle-minded race. Thirdly, what is most important, it is plain that to attribute any tendency to *this* kind of creature-worship to the Jews is an anachronism. There is no instance in the Old Testament of any such thing. They were under an almost irresistible fascination, which led them to worship the powers of Nature in any and every shape; even the smooth stones of the mountain torrent cast a dangerous spell over their minds. (Isa. lvii. 6.) But the cultus of dead men's bones and limbs, which forms so curious and, to us, repulsive a part of Romanism, was obviously quite foreign to their tone of mind. It is, indeed, however corrupt and mischievous, essentially Christian; and owes all its strength to a perverted sense of the intense sacredness of those bodies which have been in some eminent degree the shrines and habitations of the Holy Ghost. There was naturally no such feeling among the Jews, for whom a human corpse was associated only with wailing and sorrow of heart and legal defilement. The Levitical legislation, stamping the corpse of the highest and the noblest with the common reproach of uncleanness, added to the want of any *lively* hope of the life to come, left no standing-room for any such veneration as even we accord to the bodies of the faithful. Had there been any such tendency as the Commentators assume, the Jews

might have indulged it; they had the body, for instance, of Elisha, who must have seemed to the popular mind hardly less than Moses, and whose bones actually did work a miracle; but there is no hint that they ever paid it any honour. Indeed, this case seems decisive: for it is impossible to suppose that God would have encouraged an existing tendency to this form of creature-worship by permitting the touch of the prophet's bones to raise a dead man to life.

The case of the brazen serpent, adduced as a parallel, exactly points the contrast. Serpent-worship was a common form of idolatry then and after, and had, no doubt, a great attraction for the morbid and, so to speak, prurient development of religious instinct so pronounced in the Jews of Hezekiah's day; but, as I have said, the cultus of dead bodies had no place whatever, either among surrounding tribes or among the Israelites. If, therefore, we conclude that this alleged reason for the mysterious burial of Moses, and for the contest concerning it, is inconsistent with the facts of Jewish history and the tone of Jewish thought, can we say that the Scripture suggests any other reason? I think we can.

If we turn to the account given by St. Luke of the Transfiguration (ix. 29-33), we read that "there talked with him *two men*, which were Moses and Elias, who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease," &c. Now, had it been the disembodied spirit of Moses which was brought thither, it would not have been called a "man;" it could not have spoken in the hearing of the Apostles, nor have been recognized by them as Moses. Indeed, the

narrative leaves no manner of doubt that Moses and Elijah were both there in the flesh, as their Lord Himself was; and only this gave any point to the wild proposal of St. Peter to build three tabernacles, one for each of them.

I wish to press this point, because it seems often to be shirked. I repeat, therefore, that the narrative is conclusive as to the fact of Moses and Elijah being there in the full reality of their human nature, even as Christ was. True, they were "in glory;" but so was He: their transfiguration, like his, was no denial of, but rather a distinct affirmation of, the reality of their bodily presence. And, so far as Elijah is concerned, this is exactly what we should have expected; for he was translated in the body, and it were hard to believe that *after* that translation he should have endured the pangs and nakedness of dissolution. Surely he, like Enoch, anticipated the happy fate of those of whom St. Paul says, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." Elijah, therefore, did but come from his secret abode, where, not "unclothed" but "clothed upon," he awaits the harvest of which he himself was a wondrous anticipation, ripened and garnered long before the time.

But how shall we explain that, not Elijah and Enoch, but Elijah and Moses, stood on the Mount of Transfiguration in human form and spake with human lips? For Moses died, and was buried. Yes; but it does not follow that he "saw corruption." For God Himself buried him, and the Archangel Michael watched over his body. Shall we not find *here* the secret of that mysterious strife? *here*, the

reason for that apparently aimless and unconnected allusion in the Epistle? There wanted a link between the two episodes, so far removed in time, so closely connected in meaning; between the sepulture in the Land of Moab, over against Beth-peor, and the re-appearance on the snow-clad peak of Hermon beneath the glittering stars.

Here is the link. He who is most holy, and will not pass over iniquity even in the best, had said that his servant should die and should not pass over with the people into the land of promise. And he died. But He that is most merciful, and rewardeth them that serve Him above all that they can ask or think—He suffered not his servant's body to see corruption; He set his angel guards to keep it from the powers of evil: and when the time came, and that greater Prophet whose advent Moses had foretold, then He gave him back his body, and in that body glorified He set him at last upon the sacred soil and bade him speak with Jesus of that more wondrous Exodus which was to be accomplished at Jerusalem. What could be more in keeping with the revealed ways of God?

But what part should Satan seek to play in this? Clearly this—that as death is the wages of sin, even in a saint, and as corruption is the very completion and complement of death, so has Satan an interest in the corruption of our mortal frames. He has, as it were, a lien upon them, by reason of sin; he lays his finger upon them, and they are loathsome, and decay. I do not deny, of course, that corruption, as a process of Nature, is both inevitable and beneficial; but, at the same time,

I maintain that it is ordained as part of the penalty of sin, and that Scripture teaches us to connect it with the agency of the Evil One.

Here, then, is the matter of dispute, the subject of contention, between Michael and the Devil. Fain would Satan see the mournful work of death completed upon the fallen hero of Israel, the almost faultless servant of God; but Michael knew that God had provided some better thing, some special reward even in this world, for that faithful servant: therefore he said, "The Lord rebuke thee."

RAYNER WINTERBOTHAM.

*AN ANCIENT SOLUTION OF A MODERN
PROBLEM.*

ST. MATTHEW XII. 15-21.

AMONG the unsolved problems of the New Testament few, if any, recur more frequently to our thoughts than this: Why did the Lord Jesus habitually forbid those whom He had healed to blazon abroad the miracles of power and grace which He had wrought upon them? There are, no doubt, other problems far more important than this; but, there are few which come back upon us so often. On page after page of the Gospel narratives we read that He straightly charged those whom He had healed to hold their peace, to tell no man, on no account to make Him known.

Many solutions of the problem have been proposed, which are good so far as they go; but, lacking authority, they also lack conclusiveness. Still, we listen to them with respect if they sound reasonable.