

Ezekiel's Temple.

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THE account of this temple, and of the arrangements for worship and for civil life connected with it (chaps. 40-48), is expressly said to be a vision, which Ezekiel was made to see for the purpose of declaring its contents to the house of Israel (40¹⁻⁴). Conceivably it might have been given for the purpose of having this temple constructed: so it had been in the case of Moses (Ex 25⁹⁻⁴⁰). But this is never said, and there is nothing to suggest it. Ezekiel had already had two great visions. His first, with which his book begins, had let this exiled priest see the glory of the God of Israel, accompanied by the cherubim, entirely unconnected with the temple of Solomon at Jerusalem, where hitherto he would have expected to see these heavenly objects. His second vision, in chaps. 8-11, had shown him the glory of God and the ministry of the cherubim actually disconnected from that temple. For it was a vision of the pollution of that temple, and of its consequent desertion by Jehovah; and along with this, of the doom pronounced on the whole people except those who received the mark upon their foreheads. The mysterious person who made this mark may perhaps have been the man with the measuring-line in the latest vision.

The doom pronounced in chap. 9 had been carried into execution. But the prophet, who had ever taken the darkest view of the state and prospects of his people, was now cheered by revelations of a glorious future: the resurrection of Israel; the breath of new spiritual life, as a new heart and a new spirit were given and put within them; the reunion of the long-estranged tribes under a new David, after the last unworthy representative of his line had been carried into exile (chap. 12). The land of Canaan, itself polluted, desecrated, and laid waste, along with its temple (chaps. 6, 7), receives a blessing, and is made ready and suitable for its new inhabitants, in the midst of whom Jehovah dwells. See chaps. 34-37, perhaps especially chap. 37²⁴⁻²⁸. Chaps. 38 and 39 follow these, with emphatic predictions of the everlasting safety of Israel, and of complete victory over their most dangerous enemies.

It is characteristic of Ezekiel that his prophecies

contain extremely little that is hopeful for the heathen nations. Nothing is said of a place for them in this new temple, like the promise in Is 56⁷, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.' And yet we might have expected something to be said of them, considering the liberal treatment accorded to them among the home-born of the children of Israel, with whom the sojourners stand on a level in the matter of possessing the land (chap. 47²²⁻²³).

In this vision of the temple there are minute descriptions of the outer and the inner courts connected with it, but scarcely anything is said of 'the house' itself, as the temple is usually named. I see no simpler explanation of this than to believe that the temple, as seen by Ezekiel, was upon the plans of the tabernacle of Moses and the temple of Solomon,¹ but their essential identity seems taken for granted. Their symbols were the same, indicating their fundamental idea that Jehovah, the redeeming God of Israel, purposed in this temple, by means of its services, to dwell among His people, and to keep up uninterrupted intercourse with them (Ex 29³⁸⁻⁴⁶). On the other hand, in Ezekiel's temple there were important deviations from that one plan which existed for both the tabernacle of Moses and the temple of Solomon. These deviations may all, or certainly nearly all, be traced to one new leading principle, the revelation of which gives a noble peculiarity to Ezekiel's prophecy in this vision. And Ezekiel had not left us to find it out.

First.—This great principle, explaining these deviations, is laid down as plainly as possible in

¹ No notice is taken of certain differences between the tabernacle and the temple, though individual features present a closer affinity to the one or the other. For instance, there are singers (40⁴⁴), who were not found in the tabernacle. There was only one table of shew-bread, not ten as in the temple. The laver of the tabernacle is wholly wanting; we cannot then expect the ten lavers in the temple of Solomon: nor is there anything resembling his brazen sea, though from 2 K 25¹³ we are sure that this sea existed in the temple till the time of Nebuchadnezzar, who carried it away. And there is no mention made of more than the inner and the outer courts; though we know that Solomon made several courts, and that Herod afterwards made these more elaborately.

43¹². 'This is the law of the house: upon the top of the mountain the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy. Behold this is the law of the house.' The most marked feature in the tabernacle of Moses, as afterwards in Solomon's temple, had been its division into two chambers, named the holy place and the most holy; hence the importance of the veil which divided them.¹ The meaning of the rending of the veil (and this would be equally true for practical purposes, in whatever way the veil was removed) is brought out in He 9⁷⁻¹¹ 10¹⁹⁻²⁵. It removed every barrier between God and His sinful but believing worshippers: and the symbol of this was the free access to the holiest of all as much as to the holy place. The Hebrews are taught that the death of Christ has opened the way for us, and has left it standing open (compare Jn 1⁵¹), that we may all draw near with perfect confidence. This was what some men had sighed for ever since they heard how the man had been driven out of the garden of Eden, and the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every way had been placed at the east of it, to keep the way of the tree of life (Gn 3²⁴). In Ezekiel's vision this removal of the old restrictions was made as plain as it then could be, though perhaps in this there was more than he or his first hearers could take in. In truth, this leaving the entrance to the most holy place wide open is the more remarkable, when we contrast with it the arrangement by which the outer east gate of the house was kept shut, because Jehovah had entered by it in his glory (chap. 44¹⁻²). And so also the inner east gate was kept shut except on Sabbaths and new moons, etc. (chap. 46¹⁻²⁻¹²).

This revolutionary change in the arrangements of the temple, as we might be led to regard it, was not made so that anything was lost: it was made so as to be pure gain. The most holy place continued to be as holy as it had ever been; it was simply that the same highest degree of holiness was conferred upon the holy place also. It was wholly an advance. In agreement with this, the Revised Version probably gives the correct translation of the last words in chap. 45³: speaking of the priests' portion of the land, 'in it shall be the sanctuary, which is most holy,' compare v. 4, 'an holy place

for the sanctuary.' Perhaps this also furnishes the explanation of 'the inner temple' (41¹⁵), as distinguished from the great outside space of the courts, though these, too, were in a lower degree holy, with 'the porches of the court,' and in v. 16, 'the thresholds.' The most holy place did not indeed cease to exist; for it is measured, as well as the holy place (chap. 41¹⁻⁴). But the restriction of Lv 16² was at an end. Every priest at any time might go within the veil, or rather, where the veil had been: for Ezekiel's temple had no veil. If the veil had been replaced by two doors, as in Solomon's temple, either these doors also had been taken away, or else they stood wide open, like the gates of the New Jerusalem in Rev 21²⁵. What in the Authorized Version is translated 'the door' (chap. 41³), in the Revised is more accurately 'the entrance,' that is, the doorway.² In fact, the tendency in the vision is to make a sanctuary of everything inside the great boundary wall, 'to make a separation between that which was holy,' or, the sanctuary, 'and that which was common' (42²⁰). What is said in 42¹⁴, 'When the priests enter in, then shall they not go out of the holy place into the outer court,' naturally suggests that the inner court was reckoned to be part of the holy place. It was in the inner court that the altar of burnt offering stood; and the altar was the most important article in the furniture of the tabernacle or temple, without which it would have been no temple at all. In the arrangements for worship in the house of God everything else existed for the sake of the altar, since this was the meeting-place for sinning man with God. And thus the returned exiles felt that they were able to restore the essentials of their worship as soon as they had built the altar, even although the foundation of the house had not yet been laid (Ezr 3¹⁻⁷). And at the dedication of Solomon's temple, his altar, large though it was, was found to be too small, and he hallowed the middle of the court that was before Jehovah, making the whole of it to be practically the altar (1 K 8⁶⁴). Ezekiel gives a more detailed account of the altar than of anything else in his temple (chap. 43¹³⁻¹⁷); and he makes the size of it very large. Its height, as well as its other dimensions, made it conspicuous,

¹ This new Mount Sinai (Ps 68¹⁷) was to have its whole top sanctified within its bounds or limits. Perhaps compare 45¹, where it is said of the 'holy portion of the land,' 'it shall be holy in all the border thereof round about.'

² The A. V. in chap. 44¹³, 'They shall not come near to any of My holy things in the most holy place,' is better in the Revised, 'to any of My holy things, unto the things that are most holy'; compare chap. 42¹³

probably the most conspicuous of all the objects that met the eyes of the worshippers in the court. On this account it needed to be furnished with steps; whereas steps had been strictly forbidden in the construction of the altar of the tabernacle

(Ex 20²⁶). And Ezekiel's altar is adorned by two mystical names, Harel and Ariel, on the explanation of which it is not necessary to enter at present.

(To be continued.)

Giving: A Study in Oriental Manners.

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IN the East the custom of giving gifts affects all the relationships of life, domestic, social, commercial, political, and religious. The references to gifts and giving in the Bible suggest an appreciation of their suitability and influence very similar to that which prevails at the present day in Syria. The importance of the subject is indicated by the fact that a *sacrifice* is a gift presented to God: *grace* (*gratia*, *χάρις*) gets its meaning from the kindness that prompts a gift and the gratitude excited by its reception, and in Oriental usage it is often the courteous equivalent of *wages*. As gift-giving is so frequently alluded to in the Bible, and occurs in such important relationships, it is well to ascertain its exact Oriental value, by what means this value has become established, and what service, for good or evil, gift-giving renders in the ordinary affairs of life.

A study of the origin and innermost significance of this custom reveals a deep distinction between Western and Oriental life. The former is rich in civil equality, the authority of statute, and the impartial administration of law. The poor as well as the rich have rights, liberties, and independence. Any menace to civil liberty at the present day is rather from the feudalism of labour than from that of birth and station. It is unnecessary to proclaim that the labourer is worthy of his hire (Lk 10⁷). The East, on the other hand, abhors civil equality, frets under written statute, and retreats easily from pledges and promises. Ethical ideals flash in poetry, and do parade in proverbs, but practical life brushes aside things so disembodied and abstract. Duty, without some one to see it done, is a dead letter. An absent master usually means household disorder and neglected service (Mt 24⁴⁵⁻⁵¹, Mk 13³⁴⁻³⁷).

The East is ruled by personality not protocol;

presidents not precedents. Public justice defined and administered by statute seems to dislocate and sterilize social life. The rich and powerful cannot benefit by their superior position as they would like to do, and the poor lose what they can get by cringing and flattery, and are thrown upon their own resources. The East resents political economy as a Western provincialism. Thus in all the relationships of life affected by rank and office, wealth and employment, Oriental society cleaves into two sections the protecting and protected, those who command and those who obey, and too often those who patronize and those who beg. 'He who eats the Sultan's bread must strike with his sword.'

It is difficult in lands of law-defended liberty, democratic representation, and freedom of the press to realize how much is awaiting where these are absent, and how great an importance comes to be attached to the means and resources by which, when right cannot be legally enforced, promises may nevertheless obtain fulfilment, the indifferent be made interested, the alienated reconciled, and the powerful and rich become considerate and gracious. It is in this connexion that the giving and receiving of gifts plays such a prominent part. The Oriental, while weak in the sense of justice, indifferent to civil liberty, and unscrupulous in the evasion of statute law, can always be appealed to, more or less effectively, on the score of personal dignity, family honour, public sentiment, and the fear of God. He is influenced by feelings rather than facts, personal comfort and advantage rather than conscientious conviction, by considerations of friendship and religion rather than legal definitions and the sense of justice. If Bunyan had dreamt his dream in the East, Mr. Worldly-Wiseman would have been the pilgrim.