

THE PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW

No. 12—October, 1892.

I.

ON THE ESCHATOLOGY OF OUR SYMBOLS.

ONE cannot well appreciate at its full value the Eschatology of the Confession and Catechisms of Westminster, unless he is familiar in some degree with the teaching of the Protestant creeds in general, and also with the prevalent theology of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in this department. It is clear that the Westminster divines inherited a definite scheme of doctrine on the topics embraced in this department, to some extent from the Church antecedent to the Reformation, but still more decisively from the professed faith of the various Churches which bore the Protestant name. The Augsburg Confession, for example, teaches (Art. xvii) that in the consummation of the world (*am jüngsten Tag*) Christ shall appear to judge, and shall raise up all the dead, and shall give unto the godly and elect eternal life and everlasting joys; but ungodly men and the devils shall He condemn unto endless torments (*sine fine crucientur*). It also enters a solemn protest against those who imagine that there shall be an end of such torments, and formally condemns those who scatter abroad Jewish notions (*Judaicas opiniones*) to the effect that before the resurrection of the dead, the godly or the saints shall, for a time, occupy the kingdom of this world—shall set up and enjoy an earthly kingdom—the wicked being everywhere suppressed or exterminated (*alle Gottlosen vertilgen werden*). With these comprehensive declarations it may safely be said that all of the subsequent creeds of the sixteenth century, British as well as Continental, so far as they contained eschatological matter, were in substantial agreement.

VII.

HISTORICAL AND CRITICAL NOTES.

URIM AND THUMMIM.

THERE is a sphinx-like stolidity about the aspect of this subject, enshrouded in a mystery which centuries of continuous scrutiny and conjecture have failed to solve. Men of the foremost rank of scholarship have made it an object of searching investigation. Its very mystery has proved its attraction, and from time immemorial it has been a bone of contention. I do not hope, nor do I attempt, to solve the mystery. My single and undivided aim is to put the *status* of the question fairly before the reader, and to give a somewhat detailed idea of what has been said concerning it.

The words *Urim* and *Thummim* occur *seven* times in the Old Testament. In Ex. xxviii a description is found of the gorgeous apparel of the Jewish high priest. Well might the Lord say of it: "Thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron, thy brother, for *glory* and *beauty*." These garments were to consist of six pieces—a breastplate, an ephod, a robe, a coat of chequer-work, a mitre and a girdle. The breastplate was to be a thing of wondrous beauty. It is called a "breastplate of judgment." The materials of its construction were to be gold and blue and purple and scarlet and fine-twined linen. Four rows of precious stones, engraven with the names of the children of Israel, were to be set in its frontpiece. Rings of gold and "wreathen chains" of gold, with blue lace, were to keep it in place on the chest of the high priest. And, at the close of its exhaustive description, we read: "And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment, upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually. And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the *Urim* and the *Thummim*; and they shall be upon Aaron's heart, when he goeth in before the Lord: and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the Lord continually." (Ex. xxviii. 29, 30).

In Lev. viii. 8 we are told that Moses "put the breastplate upon him; also he put *in* the breastplate the *Urim* and the *Thummim*."

When Joshua is charged to be the successor of Moses, the Lord expressly stipulates that "He shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of *Urim* before the Lord" (Num. xxvii. 21).

Dying, parting from his beloved people, Moses does not forget this wondrous gift of the priesthood, for we read: "And of Levi he said, Let thy *Thummim* and thy *Urim* be with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah" (Deut. xxxiii. 8).

When Saul—frenzied, hopeless, like a hunted beast finally brought to bay—faces his doom at Gilboa, we read the following touching words: "And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by *Urim*, nor by prophets" (1 Sam. xxviii. 6).

Twice afterwards the words are mentioned in the sacred Scriptures, viz., on occasion of the dispute arising among the returned exiles as to the priestly claims of some parties, mentioned by name, who are told, according to both Ezra (ii. 63) and Nehemiah (vii. 65), "To wait till there stood up a priest with *Urim and Thummim*." It is worthy of note that, according to the text, Nehemiah simply borrows from the record previously made by Ezra (Neh. vii. 5).

Now, *what* are these mysterious names or objects? Are they to stand for a *mere figure* or a *reality*? *What? how? why?* All these questions simultaneously rush upon the mind of the thoughtful Bible student. In order that I may be somewhat logical in my statements, (1) *Let me refer to some explanations as they have passed under my review*; (2) *Let me endeavor briefly to trace the possible origin and the history of the Oracle in Israel*; (3) *Permit me to gather from the sacred Scriptures themselves the rays of light they seem to cast on the subject, with some deductions which such light allows us to make*.

1. *Opinions concerning the URIM AND THUMMIM.*—The derivation is comparatively easy. *Urim*—Heb. אֹרִים—is either the plural or dual of אֹר, "light," from אָרַר, "to be or become light," "to shine." The plural is also used for the "region of light, the East, the Orient" (Isa. xxiv. 15). It stands here metaphorically for "revelation, revelations." תְּמִים, plural or dual of תָּם—"wholeness, entireness"—is derived from תָּמַם, "to complete, to finish, to have an end, to cease." The LXX. has translated the two words by ἀγλασῖς and ἀλήθεια, "revelation and truth." Luther by "*Licht und Recht*." The English and Dutch translations have left them untranslated, and for a very wise and good reason; for many are of the opinion that the two words are simply *transliterations* from *archaic words*, which, as names of things well known from time immemorial, have come down to the Hebrews and even to other nations of antiquity.

The opinions concerning these mysterious *Urim* and *Thummim* may be at once reduced to *two distinct classifications*. All agree that they stand for a divine oracle. But *one* class of scholars holds that the *Urim* and *Thummim* were *identical* with the precious stones of the breastplate or even with the latter itself. The others maintain, with equal confidence, that they are entirely *separate* from it and that

they represent *something tangible*. The first find the Urim and Thummim on the breastplate; the second, *in* it. The first cling to the translation of the Hebrew preposition, לְ , used in Ex. xxviii. 30, by ἐπί, "on," as used by the LXX.; the others would have it translated by εἰς, "in, into," as was done by the later versions.

Now let me rapidly sketch the opinions of some scholars belonging to the first class: (a) The very cornerstone of their views is the express statement of the great priestly historian of the Jews, *Flavius Josephus*, who maintains * that the Urim and Thummim are *identical* with the twelve precious stones on the breastplate. Their oracular power, he claims, consisted in the peculiar glitter which they emitted when Jehovah was consulted by the high priest. And yet, strange to say, he contradicts himself; for he distinguishes between the שֹׁפָר , which he calls τὸ λογέτον, "the breastplate of judgment," and the precious stones. *Lundius*,† following the teachings of his equally celebrated instructor, *Braunius*, adopts this view of Josephus. Two conditions limit the efficacy of the oracle: (1) The high priest must be in *full dress*; (2) he must face the ark of the covenant. The divine answer comes then by an audible voice, by spiritual illumination, or by a peculiar aspect of the breastplate. *Horne* ‡ advocates a somewhat different view. He believes the Urim and Thummim to have been *two names* written on the breastplate and emblematical of divine illumination. *Scott* § holds that the two words simply indicate the use to which the ephod was to be appropriated and for which it was principally intended. *Jamieson* || believes the Urim and Thummim to have been indicative of the judicial capacity of the high priest. He, as the Lord's greatest representative, is the final arbiter in matters of judgment. *Smith's Bible Dictionary* simply explains them as indicating the reply given by the word of God to the high priest, dressed in full pontificalia. A similar view is offered by *Geikie*.¶ *Keil*** separates the שֹׁפָר , or "shield of justice," from the ephod, but he finds no authority in the sacred Scriptures absolutely to hold that the Urim and Thummim were something tangible and separable from the breastplate. And finally *Henry*,†† the greatest of all practical commentators, displays his practical genius by thus paraphrasing the text (Ex. xxviii. 30): "Aaron shall be endued with the power of knowing and making known the mind of God in all difficult and doubtful cases, relating either to the civil or ecclesiastical state of the nation." Undoubtedly the *practical gist* of the entire matter, but hardly what we are after.

(b) Now let me introduce some of the second class of scholars. Here you meet with a fertile abundance of opinions, fairly bewildering, and in many cases the imagination seems to be running riot.

* *Antiq.*, iii, 8, 9.

† *Godsdiensten der oude Joden*, Vol. i, lib. iii, 6.

‡ *Introduction*, ii, p. 255.

§ *Comm. on Ex. xxviii. 30.*

|| *Comm.*, *ibid.*

¶ *Hours with the Bible*, ii, p. 171.

** *Archæology*, sec. 35, 100

†† *Comm. in Ex. xxviii. 30.*

Some of them are ingenious, some amusingly naïve. As the opinion of Josephus underlies those of the first class, so here that of another great Jew, also belonging to the priestly order, viz., *Philo Judæus*, the celebrated Alexandrian philosopher and a contemporary of Josephus. *Philo** maintains that the *Urim* and *Thummim* were two small images inserted between the folds of the breastplate, symbolically representing "revelation and truth." The *Jewish Rabbis*† generally incline to the belief that they were two stones inscribed with the "*tetragrammaton*," the great name of Jahve. These were inserted in the breastplate, and when the oracle was consulted, they illuminated the letters on the precious stones of the ephod and thus gave the divine answer. *Spencer*‡ identifies the *Urim* with the *Teraphim*, and the *Thummim* with something in the Egyptian pontifical dress, and makes them small images in the pouch of the breastplate. *Clericus*§ makes them a necklace of diamonds and pearls such as the Egyptian high priest wore. *Züllig*|| has a very striking explanation. He derives from אורִים and תְּמִים the notion that they were a *handful of small dice*, some rough, some polished, inscribed with the name of Jehovah, to be shaken and thrown out when occasion demanded. *Jahn*¶ holds that the *Urim* and *Thummim* were sacred lots, three in number, one inscribed כֵּן ("yes"), another לֹא ("no"), the third blank. According to him, their use did not survive David's time, an opinion which appears to me preposterous, as I will explain hereafter. *Michaëlis*** also believes that they were sacred lots, for judicial purposes, used (1) to direct attention, (2) to point out guilty parties. It may be well to quote his exact words. He says: "But was this sacred lot used likewise in criminal trials? Yes. Only, however, to discover the guilty, not to convict them; for in the only two instances of its use in such cases which occur in the whole Bible, viz., in Josh. vii. 14-18 and in 1 Sam. xiv. 37-45, we find the confessions of the two delinquents, Achan and Jonathan, annexed. It appears, also, to have been used only in the case of an oath being transgressed which the whole people had taken, or the leader of the host in their name; but not in the case of other crimes; for an unknown murder, for example, was not to be discovered by recourse to the sacred lot." *The German Edition of Lange* †† puts the matter in a novel light. It reads thus: "Und thue in das Brustschild den Rechtspruch; die Lichter und die Entscheidungen, dass sie," etc. According to this translation, the *Urim* and *Thummim* are a simple "*motto of justice*" inscribed on papyrus, or metal, or precious stone, and put in the breastplate. *Monsieur Lenormant* †† explains the *Urim* and *Thummim* by allusion to the *Assyrian tablets*, where flashes of light

* Tome ii, p. 152, Ed. Mangay.

† *De legibus Heb.*, rit. iii, diss. 7.

‡ *Erk. der Apocal. Exc. 2, Dl. I*, p. 408, v, 5.

** *Comm. on the Laws of Moses*, art. 304.

†† *J. P. Lange, Bibelwerk in Ex.* xxviii. 30.

† Cf. Buxtorf, *l. c.*, p. 276 sq.

§ Cf. Keil, § 35.

¶ *Biblical Archaeology*, sec. 370.

†† *La Divination*, p. 83.

from a royal or priestly ring have an oracular meaning. He attacks the validity of the explanation of Josephus and finds additional proof for the statement that "a gem or gems emitting flashes of light in the breastplate constitute the *Urim and Thummim oracle*," in the fact that the *Urim*, "lights," are oftener mentioned than the *Thummim*. And, finally, I must mention two more curious conjectures. The first is that mentioned by *Lundius*, which supposes that the name of *Jehovah*, capable of twelve distinct modes of spelling, as given by him, was thus engraved on the *inside* of the twelve precious stones of the breastplate, which bore the several names of the tribes of Israel. *These stones, flashing out light when the high priest was consulted in the name of Jehovah, constituted the oracle.** This explanation is evidently a combination of the two main theories given above. The other curiosity, in fact the *chef d'œuvre* of all, is the so-called "Christian conjecture" of *Johannes Benedict Carpzovius* † (Leipzig, 1732). It is strongly characteristic of the tendencies of his day. According to this "Christian conjecture" the *Urim and Thummim* were two little tablets of precious stone or metal which were put in the breastplate or "choschen." The one tablet contained the *Evangelical doctrine of the triune God and the God-man, Jesus Christ*. The other contained a *brief summary of the doctrine of salvation and of the saints*: "Ut ita non legis modo tabulas, in arca foederis reconditas; sed et tabellas Evangelicas, pectorali pontificis inclusas, ad manus et in promptu haberet Ecclesia Vet. Test."

As to the *MODE OF CONSULTING* the oracle, some hold that the reply was made by the voice of an angel, or even miraculously by the little images or objects themselves. Others refer to the *Spiritual illumination* of the high priest. Others to a reply seen in the appearance of the stones on the breastplate, but only by the eyes of the high priest. Others to a *miraculous protuberance and illumination* of the *letters* on these stones, whereby the answer became apparent to all. The *Rabbis*, especially *Aben-Ezra*, to the glittering or darkening of the diamond in the breastplate. And finally, last but not least in ingenuity, the theory is advanced that the question was written on a *slip of papyrus, which was inserted in the pouch of the breastplate, and on the reverse side of which the answer was miraculously inscribed.* ‡ Thus much must hitherto have become apparent—that the subject is somewhat involved in mystery. Additional views concerning the oracle may be obtained from *Braunius* (*De Vest. Sacer. Heb.*, ii, 20), from *Buxtorf* (*Hist. Ur. et Th.*), from *Jennings* (*Jew. Antiq.*, i, 233), from *Schroeder* (*Diss. de Ur. et Th.*, 1744), from *Saalschütz* (in *Illgen's Hist. Theol. Abhandlungen*, iii), from *Winer* (*R. W.*, ii, 643), and other numerous sources.

2. I pass on now briefly to trace the possible origin and history of

* *Lundius*, *Godsdiensten der oude Joden*, Vol. i, lib. iii, 6.

† *Herzog*, *Real Encyclopädie*, orig. ed., art. "Urim and Thummim."

‡ Cf. *Lundius*, as cited above.

the oracle in Israel. It is a fact well known to every student of Biblical antiquities that there are *many points of contact* between the Mosaic ritual, which we believe (until criticism disproves it on more satisfactory grounds than those hitherto advanced by the reconstructionists) to have been given to Israel by the Lord through Moses, and that of the older and wonderfully suggestive Egyptian religion. Moses was educated, as a son of the king's daughter, in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. His teachers were the Egyptian priests, the proud and only guardians of the intellectual pursuits in the land of the Nile. Many a trace of this culture reveals itself to the close student in the laws he gave and in the worship he instituted in Israel. It is in vain to rebel against patent facts. The Holy Spirit was pleased, as I reverently take it, to make some of these Egyptian ideas the vehicles of new thought and to embody in them the pregnant principles and types of a better day to come. Older scholars used to claim that the *Egyptians borrowed from the Jews* at the time of Solomon and of the close contact between the two nations during his reign. But the revelations of the monuments and ancient papyrus rolls, the wonderful progress of Egyptology, have hopelessly broken down this theory. But the fact of the similarity remains, nay has been accentuated, at unexpected points. Now, one of two things must be true. The similarity must be *accidental*, or Moses *borrowed* from the ritual he so well knew, under the *guidance and with the sanction* of Jehovah. A third possibility might remain, viz., that both had grown up from archaic forms of worship underlying both the Egyptian and the Jewish religion. There is something to be said in favor of this explanation, as will appear below. It is, however, unnecessary to dwell on this point at length, inasmuch as the Egyptian religion is by far the more ancient of the two. The first of the two conjectures given above is not well possible, hence I hold to the latter.

Now, there are two facts which here confront us—first, the *Urim* and *Thummim*, on their introduction into the ritual, are represented as *well known* to Israel.* They are apparently clearly distinguished from the breastplate and from the four rows of gems on it, unless we can imagine that the *choschen* should be so called before the precious stones, the *essential part of it*, were put in place. A like distinction is made in the account of Aaron's consecration † and also by Josephus.‡ The *Samaritan text* makes a similar distinction, but informs us, at the same time, that the Urim and Thummim were *made* on that occasion. The Hebrew text gives no inkling of such a thing. The impression given is that of a reference to a *well-known thing*. But, secondly, the fact remains that the Egyptians had something startlingly like the Jewish oracle. And they had it in common with other nations. *Dr. A. Clarke* § traces a similarity between the Urim and Thummim and a similar something among the Chinese. The Romans

* Ex. xxviii. 30.

† *Antiq.*, viii, 3, 8.

‡ Lev. viii. 8.

§ Comm. in Ex. xxviii. 30.

certainly were not without it.* The *maxima* of the vestal virgins, we are told, sitting in judgment, wore a breast ornament, the touch of which settled the matter adjudicated finally and forever. The Chaldeans possibly had a similar oracle.† But the parallel among the Egyptians is infinitely closer. It runs in two directions: (1) The *arch-judge*, in Egypt always a "priest venerable for age, learning and probity," wore, according to the statements of *Ælian* and *Diodorus Siculus*, suspended around his neck by a gold chain, a *curiously engraved sapphire stone*. Whenever a matter was under consideration, and the final decision came, he touched the victor in the contest with this stone. *Sir G. Wilkinson* finds here an illustration of such passages as Isa. vi. 7, Jer. i. 9, Est. v. 2, etc. The translation of the name given to this stone by the Greeks was ἀλήθεια, "truth." And it is at least worthy of remark that the LXX. has translated *Thummim* by this very word, ἀλήθεια. Moreover, the derivation of *Thummim* from מִתְּנָה, "to end, to settle," seems to point unquestionably to some *judicial capacity* of the high priest. And, as we know, the Lord through him was the final arbiter of all serious disputes or questions in Israel.

(2) But there is a line to be followed still more surprising. *Sir G. Wilkinson* ‡ gives us the startling information that the Egyptian high priest wore, as an *antepectoral*, an image of the goddess who was worshiped under a dual character, representing both "truth and justice." The Egyptian, or rather Coptic, name of this goddess was *Thmeï* or *Thme* (Gr. θεμεις). Now "Thummim," according to some, is indeed derived from the Egyptian word *Thme* in its dual form. The goddess *Thme* is represented on the old monuments as a *dual image* somewhat representing the kneeling cherubim. Still another authority represents the Egyptian antepectoral as a breastplate containing two analogous figures, representing *Rê*, "the sun" or "light," and *Thmê*, "truth." Is not the direct derivation from an Egyptian source—not only of the thing itself but even of the very names *Urim* and *Thummim* from *Rê* and *Thmê*—more than plausible? I have certainly not said too much when I called the information on the subject afforded by Egyptology startling. Take for granted, with Spencer, that the images in the Israelitish ritual were miniature imitations of the kneeling cherubim, as we find those on the *Egyptian shrine* to accord with those on the *ark in Israel*, and considerable light is shed on the subject, and the *Urim* and *Thummim* in the Mosaic ritual are easily accounted for.

Now let me outline, in a few remarks, the history of the oracle in Israel. I shall have occasion, in a few moments, to trace the peculiar analogy between the *Urim* and *Thummim* and the older and equally mysterious *Teraphim*. Passing this point for the present, I remark that from the time of the institution of the oracle in Israel, in the

* Lipsius, *De Vestal et Vestal*; *Syntagma Ant. ap. Plant.*, 1603, cap. ult.

† Ez. xxi. 21.

‡ *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians*, ii, 27.

wilderess of Sinai, to the time of David, and, possibly, into the early years of Solomon, *all direct contact* between Jehovah and his people appears to have been *through this channel*. That is to say, in all cases of perplexity, Israel sought and found the divine guidance by means of this purely *Theocratic institution*. As I shall have occasion to explain more fully, I take the Urim and Thummim to have been *a step* in the gradual development of the plan of *divine communication*. After David's time, their use seems to have been quite generally ignored or forgotten. It is even possible that the *original oracle* was lost during the troubled times of his later years, or in the high-priestly contest between Zadok and Abiathar. For even if Geikie,* and other authorities of equal merit, claim that the *Urim* and *Thummim* were lost "at the Captivity, as a matter of fact," I beg leave to point to the conduct of Josiah, whose Theocratic zeal was at least equal to that of David, and who, nevertheless, makes no use of the oracle, but sends Hilkiah, the priest, to the prophetess Hulda. I can only say that it is possible to suppose either that the use of the Urim and Thummim was forgotten or considered antiquated in the king's estimation, or that, in his view, the prophetic oracle had now superseded the older institution as a more satisfactory mode of divine communication. I simply adduce this fact in order to show that *non-mentioning* the oracle, after the Captivity, as an actual occurrence, does not necessarily prove its utter suspension. For, indeed, both Ezra and Nehemiah *do* mention the use of the Urim and Thummim, the latter quoting from the record previously made by the former. It was, as I have mentioned, on occasion of a disputed genealogical claim to the priesthood by the children of Habaiah and Hakkoz and Barzillai. The Tirshatha, or governor, forbids them to eat from the most holy things "till there stood up a priest with the Urim and Thummim." † Nehemiah does not mention whether the claim was thus settled. In the Apocrypha, 1 Esd. v. 40, I find almost literally the same account. Commentators have generally explained the text as pointing to *a priest to come*. But there is nothing in the text, as far as I can see, to countenance such an exegesis. The words, עַד עָמַד כִּהֵן לְאוּרִים וּלְתַמִּים, may simply mean that they should wait till the priest with the oracle had inquired of Jehovah. It is a pity that Ezra, if such were the fact, has not mentioned it. And it is at least worthy of remark—a thing which seems to have escaped the attention of commentators—that, according to Nehemiah, ‡ Meremoth, the son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz, built the wall of Jerusalem, *along with the priests*, about 445 B.C., whilst the dispute mentioned dates back as far as 458 B.C. It would thus appear as if the claim of the children of Hakkoz was settled in their favor. It is therefore by no means plain that the oracle was truly lost. Whatever was left un-restored at the return, the pontifical dress of the high priest was not.

It is true a different claim is made by the Talmud. Five things are

* *Hours with the Bible*, vi, p. 250.

† Ezra ii. 63.

‡ Neh. iii. 4, 21.

mentioned by the *Mishna Sota** as lost at the Captivity, or rather as not found in the second Temple, viz. : (1) The ark, (2) the Sheehinah, (3) the holy spirit of prophecy, (4) the heavenly fire, (5) the Urim and Thummim. It is true that we are told, by the same authority, that, "as soon as the first prophets died, the Urim and Thummim ceased." It is true that the *Gemara* † informs us that "since the destruction of the temple the divine decision by the ephod ceased to reply." But the stubborn fact remains that Josephus, the greatest historian of his race, deliberately maintains ‡ that "this breastplate and this Sardonyx left off shining two hundred years before I composed this book." If this be correct, it puts the last appearance of the *Urim* and *Thummim* about the time of John Hyrcanus, or nearly three centuries after the date of Ezra and Nehemiah. In apparent corroboration of the statement of Josephus, we have the authority of the Apocrypha: § "Simon and his followers put the polluted altar aside, till a prophet or priest should come to answer what they should do with it." And a Jewish tradition, as quoted by Drusius, mentions that Alexander the Great had asked Jaddus, the high priest, to inquire of the Lord by *Urim* and *Thummim* whether he would conquer the Persians. The reply of Jaddus cuts a very small figure. It is perfectly intelligible from a Jewish standpoint. The fact remains that Alexander, undoubtedly by Jewish advice, asked the question. After the date mentioned by Josephus not a trace of the oracle is found. The rabbis say that its place was taken by the *Bath-Köl*—"the daughter of the voice"—or the echo of the voice of Jehovah. They declare that this coexisted with the *Urim* and *Thummim* and the oracle of prophecy, and gradually supplanted them. Its usual revelations came by means of *natural sounds*, as the thunder or the storm wind. A little countenance is given to the tradition by such texts as Job xxxviii. 1: "The Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind" (Dutch, thunder-storm); 1 Kgs. xix. 11-13; the experience of Elijah on Mount Horeb, in that memorable and mysterious occurrence, where the divine revelation came to him by storm, earthquake, fire, and finally and chiefly by a still, small voice. The rabbis call this distinctively the *Bath-Köl*. And even Christian commentators have availed themselves of this theory of the *Bath-Köl* replacing the ancient *Urim* and *Thummim* oracle, to explain such occurrences as the *heavenly voice* at Christ's baptism; || the voice at the transfiguration; ¶ the heavenly voice, in answer to Christian prayer; ** the sound from heaven, as of a rushing wind; †† the voice at Saul's conversion; ††† and even the mysterious lightnings and thunderings and voices, proceeding from the throne of God in heaven, §§ and the thunderclap in heaven on occasion of the opening of the first seal of the book of mystery by the Lamb. |||

* 2 Cap. ix, sec. 12.

§ 1 Macc. iv. 46.

** John xii. 28.

§§ Rev. iv. 5.

† Cap. ix, sec. 11.

|| Matt. iii. 17.

†† Acts ii. 2.

||| Rev. vi. 1.

‡ *Antiq.*, iii, 8, 9.

¶ Luke xi. 35.

†† Acts ix. 4.

I am not prepared to pass an opinion in this connection on these mysterious occurrences, but mention them to give food for thought. Mr. Whiston, the learned translator and annotator of the works of Josephus, mentions* as final traces of the disappearing *Urim* and *Thummim* oracle, the celebrated dream of Jaddus, the high priest; † the prophecy of Caiaphas, concerning the death of Christ; ‡ and finally the remarkable dream of Josephus himself, regarding the accession of Vespasian. §

3. Now let me finally glance at the subject in the light the Scriptures themselves throw upon it. I begin by saying again that, in Ex. xxviii. 30, a clear distinction is made between the *Urim* and *Thummim* and the precious stones on the breastplate. A candid examination of the text seems to demand such a conclusion, as also the fact that the *Urim* and *Thummim* were *tangible objects*. Lev. viii. 8 affords the same light. So much then appears quite certain. As they are not described, all inquiry as to their *form* or *material* is, of necessity, *mere conjecture*. The LXX. calls them “*ἀήλωσις*, and *ἀλήθεια* ;” the Vulgate, “*Doctrina et veritas*.”

Neglect to use them, in early Theocratic times in Israel appears to have been culpable. Joshua is specially commanded to ask the Lord for counsel through Eleazar the priest, after the *manner of Urim*.|| On occasion of the deceit practiced on Israel by the Gibeonites, it is made a matter of guilt to them “that they asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord” (Jer. ix. 14). I take it for granted that to “*inquire of the Lord*” throughout the purely Theocratic period, is identical with making the appointed use of the *Urim* and *Thummim* oracle.

From all the texts bearing on the subject, I am convinced that the two words indicate *two distinct phases* of the oracle. The *Urim*—“lights, revelations”—were for guidance, instruction, information, desired from Jehovah. The *Thummim*—“perfections, truths”—were for the settlement and final adjudication of criminal cases. It is really Jehovah who exercises the *prophetic-royal* office among his people. The high priest, being his highest representative, yet neither king nor prophet, exercised this power through the medium of a *divine oracle*.

As to the *modus operandi*, only two distinct theories it appears to me are worthy of consideration. First, that of the *sacred lot* advocated by *Michaelis* and *Jahn*. Second, that of the *spiritual illumination* of the high priest, dressed in full pontificalia, as advanced by a host of scholars and commentators. Each of these two views has considerable Scriptural countenance. The first, that of the *lot*, has several distinct passages which favor it. I need but mention the case

* *Antiq.*, iii, 8, 9, note.

† *Antiq.*, xi, 8, 4, 5.

‡ John xi. 47.

§ *Wars*, iii, 8, 9.

|| Num. xxvii. 21; cf. Num. xxxi. 6; Josh. xxiv. 12; Jer. i. 1, xi. 15, xiv. 3-8, xxii. 10, 13, 15, xxiii. 2, 6; 2 Sam. ii. 12, v. 3, 19, xxi. 1, etc.

of Achan's sin,* where this mode of pointing out the guilty party seems to lie on the very surface of the sacred record. Undoubtedly Joshua here availed himself of the *Thummim* decision. Another instance is that given in the terrible Benjamite war,† where the question, put to the Lord, "Who shall go up first?" is answered directly by "Juda." Again the memorable occasion of Jonathan's sin, of tasting the wild honey, is very much to the point.‡ Saul asks counsel of God, but gets no reply. A *sin* has been committed. The Lord is to point out the sinner. Saul prays (vs. 41) for "a perfect lot." Lots are cast, Jonathan is taken, etc. I think we may take for granted that Saul followed the usual mode of consulting Jehovah. If so, this text appears to be very suggestive, at least on the *Thummim* side of the oracle. A similar case is, when David asks the Lord whether or not he shall follow the maurauding Amalakites, who destroyed *Ziklag*.§ All similar simple instances, where a plain *Yes* or *No* is demanded, are easiest settled by the lot theory. But there are others, where it is hopelessly insufficient. Take the occasion of Saul's election to the royal dignity;|| where, on inquiry, the Lord not only reveals the presence of the newly elected king on the field, but also imparts the information "that he has hidden among the stuff." Or that, where after Saul's death, David inquires of God, first, whether he shall go to Judæa; secondly, "whither." And where the reply comes back, "to Hebron."¶ The first reply might have come, as above indicated. It is, however, hardly supposable that all the cities and places of the land of Israel should have passed in review before the final reply came. Or take the case where David asks for the reason of the cruel famine which had befallen the country,** and when "Saul and his bloody house" are indicated as the cause. Or again, but especially, that during the Philistine wars,†† where David's first inquiry, as to his meeting the enemy, is simply answered by a permission to do so; and his obedience gives him a decided victory. But where the second inquiry, of a like nature, draws forth the following reply: "Go not up after them, turn away from them and come upon them over against the mulberry trees, and it shall be, when thou shalt hear a sound of going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt go out to battle; for God is gone forth before thee to smite the host of the Philistines." Now we may rest assured that in all these cases the *Urim* and *Thummim* oracle was consulted; and as the *lot theory* fits none of them, or at least but partly, but on the other hand the *spiritual illumination theory* fits *equally well* in both classes of examples adduced, I am strongly inclined to the conviction that in the latter we have the *most satisfactory solution of the problem*. The high priest, dressed in full pontificalia, or at least with the ephod and breastplate, standing before Jehovah, wherever he might be, in times of peace

* Josh. vii. 13-21.

§ 1 Sam. xxx. 8.

** 2 Sam. xxi. 1.

† Josh. xx. 18.

|| 1 Sam. x. 22.

†† 1 Chron. xiv. 14.

‡ 1 Sam. xiv. 19.

¶ 2 Sam. ii. 1.

or war, whenever he was consulted in the name of the Lord, became *spiritually illumined, inspired, clairvoyant* if you will, and *told the mind of Jehovah.*

But I have said before that I take the *Urim* and *Thummim* simply to be one of several steps in the development of the *mode of intercourse* between God and His people. As has been said, Moses refers to the oracle as something well known by the Jews. Dropping the Egyptian derivation theory for a moment out of sight, it appears to me that *Spencer* has struck a clew which is worth following, when he identifies the *Urim* and *Thummim* with the older but equally mysterious *Teraphim*. It is evidently preposterous to find in the uncanny descriptions of later Jewish traditions of so-called *teraphim*, the thing, tallying with the archaic oracle, apparently so well known to the patriarchs. I have tried to follow *Spencer's* clew in the sacred text, and am surprised to find that it has some plausibility and is worthy of closer and more painstaking scrutiny. Of *Rebecca* we read* that "she went to inquire of the Lord." Where? To whom? An old curiosity of an authority, mentioned by *Lundius*, says, "to *Melchizedek*." Fine conjecture indeed, but rather hazy! But I find a possible explanation in the *teraphim* theory. *Rebecca* came from *Bethuel's* house; *Laban*, some fifty or more years later, possessed *teraphim* and appears to have consulted them. *Rachel* stole them, as with *Jacob* she returned to *Canaan*. And *Laban* calls them "*his Gods*;" showing that what originally had undoubtedly been a divine though archaic oracle, had *already degenerated into* the abuse of idolatrous practices. And that even *Rachel* so considered the *teraphim* is evident from chap. xxxv. 2, where *Jacob* purges his house from them and "buries them under the oak by *Shechem*." In this idolatrous sense, yet as a divine oracle, they seem to have been used among the *Chaldeans* ages later, for *Nebuchadnezzar* is represented as consulting, among other divinations, also the *teraphim*.†

But even in *Israel*, during the periods of *Theocratic decline*, especially in the dark days of the *Judges*, the *teraphim* seem to have reasserted their influence. And, in some inexplicable way, their use was tolerated by *Jehovah*. We read both of *Gideon* and *Micah*‡ that they possessed an *ephod* (here undoubtedly a graven image). But the latter also had "a house of gods" and "teraphim," and when he by good fortune obtained a *Levite*, this priest asked counsel of *God* for the *Danites*, who were prospecting for a new country, and obtained an answer. How? By the use of *teraphim*? It is not impossible that there may be a close connection between the idolatrous tendencies of *Israel* and the perverted use of this primitive mode of divine communication. One thing is certain, that the *teraphim* survived the return of the exiles, for *Zachariah* tells the people "that the *teraphim* have spoken vanity, and that the diviners have seen a lie."§ And perhaps

* Gen. xxv. 23.

‡ Jud. viii. 27, xvii. 5.

† Ezek. xxi. 21.

§ Zach. x. 2.

the most suggestive passage in this connection is Hosea iii. 4, where we read: "For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king and without a prince and without a sacrifice and without an image (?) and without an *ephod* and without *teraphim*." The connection *between the ephod and the teraphim* points strongly to the identity of the latter, in the mind of the prophet, with the *Urim* and *Thummim*. From all these things I am inclined to adopt the view of Spencer and to consider the *teraphim oracle* as a thing well known to the ancients and one which, in the form of *Urim* and *Thummim*, is rescued from the masses and committed by Jehovah to the care and keeping of the high priest. Or better yet, to use the thought of Mr. Mede:* "The *Urim* and *Thummim* were things well known to the patriarchs as divinely appointed means of inquiring of the Lord, suited to an infantine state of religion; the originals were preserved, or at least their real use, among the Abrahamidæ, and they were simply recognized at the reformation under Moses; the resemblances to them, among the Egyptians, were but imitations of this primeval mode of divine communication, as were the heathen auspices of similar means, originally connected with the sacrifice of animals."

As to the last conclusion of Mr. Mede, I am somewhat doubtful. I would rather consider the Egyptian oracle as an intermediate step, recognized by the Jews and readily inserted into the ritual by Moses, on account of its familiar history. But side by side with the *Urim* oracle, that of the *teraphim*, now an abomination, continued to exist. As I have said, it reasserted itself in every period of *decline of Theocratic zeal* in Israel. I cannot but believe that the dark passage—1 Sam. xxviii. 6—where Saul seeks a divine answer, but receives it "neither by dreams nor by *Urim*, nor by the prophets" refers to a perversion of all of these. Abiathar had both the *ephod* and the *breastplate*,† and in vain does Lundius try to explain the difficulty by saying that Saul sent to David. The text gives us no hint of such a course. The *Urim* here must stand for *Teraphim*. As Saul lost the former, he turned again to the latter, I take it for granted. Michal, his daughter, at least was possessed of them. Prof. U. Nöldeke, of Strasburg, "the little giant," in a recent review of a work of Baethgen, upholding the theory of traces of Polytheism among ancient Israel, quotes this passage, 1 Sam. xix. 13, accusing David of having possessed a household god, in the shape of a human being. The imputation is utterly groundless. There is here an evident parallel between Rachel and Michal, both of them possessed of the idols *of their parents*.

As I have said before, I take the *Urim* and *Thummim* to be a *step* in the gradual unfolding and development of the plan of divine communication. There are many gradations in this plan, and they overlap each other at almost every point, and yet there is evidence of

* Cf. Kitto's *Cycl. of Bibl. Lit.*, art. "Urim and Thummim."

† 1 Sam. xxx. 7.

decided progress. The Teraphim continued to exist in Israel, side by side with the now divinely authorized *Urim* and *Thummim* oracle. But prophecy overlapped the latter. It was a higher form of divine communication, inasmuch as it came directly to the mind and spirit of the recipient, entirely removed, in almost every instance from anything tangible or visible. In the instance of Moses, the institutor of the *Urim* oracle in its divinely authorized form, an *exception was made*. Others received the divine guidance through this newly appointed channel; *to him the Lord spoke "face to face."* Overlapping prophecy, according to the traditions of the Jews and some New Testament traces, the *Bath-Köl* arises. For it does appear to me that the hints given above in this connection are too suggestive to permit the matter to be laid coolly aside as a purely meaningless Rabbinic invention. The *Bath-Köl* overlaps the appearance of the God-man, Jesus Christ, who speaks to us openly of the things of God. He, in His turn, gives place to the *Holy Spirit*, and in Him we have the last and fullest channel of divine communication; till even He at last shall give place to the *open vision* of God. "Beloved," says John, "now are we the sons of God and it does not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, *for we shall see Him as He is.*"* Paul speaks of the dispensation of the Spirit, as, a "seeing through a glass darkly;" of that beatific vision of eternal things to come "as a seeing face to face," and "a knowing even as we are known."† Lord hasten the day!

HOLLAND, MICH.

HENRY E. DOSKER.

* 1 John iii. 2.

† 1 Cor. xiii. 12.