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REVIEW SECTION.

I.—THE POETICAL IMAGERY IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION.—No. II.

BY JAMES M. LUDLOW, D.D.

IN our first article we gave abundant evidence that the greater part of the poetical imagery in the Book of Revelation was drawn, from neither the fancy nor the inspired imagination of the writer, but from the Old Testament Scriptures. This gives to the book its most prominent characteristic—viz., that of a rhetorical resumé, as well as a prophetic conclusion, of Sacred writ; and, at the same time, it points to John, the last survivor of the Apostolic College, as its author.

II.

Of the remaining imagery of the book, perhaps the greater part can be associated with, if not traced to, the RABBINICAL LITERATURE.

John, as a devout Jew, and one who, in comparative youth, maintained an acquaintance with the more scholarly and priestly class among his people (John xviii: 15), was undoubtedly familiar with the maxims of the Rabbins, with their comments upon the Old Testament Scriptures, and with the peculiar customs which had grown out from the ritual of worship. For our knowledge of these things we must go to the Talmud and Targums, which, though swollen with many legalistic and fantastic conceits of the later Rabbins, preserve for us the records of the opinions and customs of the pre-Christian age.

In these Jewish books we find many expressions and allusions, so similar to those in the Apocalypse, that we are forced to regard them as more than coincidences. We are not warranted in saying that John was indebted, in every such instance, to the Rabbinical thought. These books were written, in their present form, after John's time, chiefly by the hands of such Rabbins as Judah, Jochanan, Ashè and

SERMONIC SECTION.

OF THE PETITION OF CERTAIN GREEKS.

By LEONARD WOOLSEY BACON, IN THE
WOODLAND CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA.

Now there were certain Greeks among those that went up to worship at the feast: these therefore came to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: Andrew cometh, and Philip, and they tell Jesus. And Jesus answereth them saying, The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified. [With the following verses.]—John xii: 20-33.

THIS being, in some respects, a difficult Scripture to intelligent readers (it presents no difficulty at all to the unintelligent) is presumptively a specially profitable Scripture to as many as shall come to understand it. For it is God's method in the difficulties of sacred Scripture, first, to provoke and stimulate inquiry, and then splendidly to reward it.

The questions that arise on the first reading of this story are several: first, what is the importance of the incident, that it should be mentioned at all? secondly, why there should have been so much hesitation and consultation among the disciples over so simple a matter as this request of "certain Greeks?" thirdly, why it should be that after the request had been related with so much particularity, nothing is distinctly said of what came of it—whether it was granted or not? finally, what was there in this seemingly trifling incident, just mentioned by one evangelist and then dropped, not so much as mentioned by the other three, that should so have agitated the soul of the Son of Man that He should almost be ready to say, "Father, save me from this hour?" What is the connection between the message of Philip and An-

drew to their Master that certain Greek visitors to Jerusalem at the Passover wished to see Him, and the answer that he made—"the hour is come; the Son of Man is to be glorified—but only through death. This grain of wheat, if it be preserved, will be but sterile; it must fall into the ground and die, and then shall it bring forth much fruit?" If we would know these things, we must study deeply into the spirit of the four Gospels, if by any means we may attain to the fellowship of Christ's sufferings.

The message of the Greeks came to the ear of our Lord just at that juncture in His ministry when He began to feel with its heaviest weight the meaning of those words of the prophet Isaiah, which He had been wont to read aloud in the synagogues of Nazareth and Capernaum—the words "despised and rejected of men." There had been days—the earlier days of His Galilean ministry—when all who heard Him seemed ready to bow in homage before the words which He spake with such authority. In the presence of His mighty works of healing, the voice of selfish bigotry itself seemed to be stricken dumb, and the contradiction of sinners to be abashed and put to shame. Here at Jerusalem, amid the pride of learning of the scribes, and the pride of "place and nation" of the priests and rulers, it was different; but even here such crowds followed to gaze upon the man who had raised up Lazarus from the dead, that it was said among His enemies, "behold, the whole world is gone after Him." And yet, for all this, it is evident, even to an unprophetic eye, that He is rejected of His own nation. He has come to His own, and His own receive Him not. For long months the bigoted Pharisee and the skeptical

[Many of the full sermons and condensations published in this REVIEW are printed from the authors' manuscripts; others are specially reported for this publication. Great care is taken to make these reports correct. The condensations are carefully made under our editorial supervision.—ED.]

Sadducee, who never have agreed on anything before, have been working with one accord to entangle Him in His talk, and embroil Him either with one party or with the other. Scribes and priests and rulers have been dogging Him from one retreat to another as spies upon His words and deeds. They have plotted murder in private. They have tried to provoke the mob to bloody violence in the Temple court. Already they are beginning to draw the heathen governor into their plans, and to tamper with one of the twelve disciples with proposals of treachery. His near friends will not believe it when He tells them; but there is no illusion in His own mind. He knows the set, fanatic purpose of His enemies to take His life. And, notwithstanding many evidences of popular affection, He knows the circumstances that are combining to abet that purpose. How soon the bloody end of that lovely and blameless life shall come, is evidently a question only of a few days. From amidst the incessant cavilings, disputes, intrigues, treasons, conspiracies, with which all this part of the story is filled, two incidents, which come close together in this Gospel of John, stand out in delightful contrast with the rest. The first is that jubilant processional entrance into the city and Temple with the palm-branches and hosannas of the multitude; and the other is this petition of "certain Greeks."

Looking carefully into the language of the story we find some slight but clear and unmistakable indications of what sort of people these Greeks were. The tense of the Greek verb used is significant: they were "among those who were in the habit of coming to the feast"—not chance-comers, passers-by on a journey, but habitual attendants at the Passover feast. And, secondly, they were not mere tourists, or sight-seers, such as doubtless did gather to witness that wonderful pageant, so unlike anything the world beside could show—a whole nation congregated to solemnize the memory of a Divine deliverance; these Greeks were among those who were wont to come up to the feast, not

to gaze but "to worship." These minute but distinct indications mark this group of inquirers after Jesus as representative men. They belonged to a class destined to fulfil a great and important part in the subsequent history of the kingdom of Christ—the class described again and again in the Acts of the Apostles under such titles as "devout Greeks," "devout persons," "they that feared God." The phrases are familiar to all attentive readers of the book of Acts, and you recognize how great was the part which this sort of people fulfilled in the spread of the Gospel to the ends of the earth. They were not converts to the Jews' religion, you understand. They never had received the sacrament of naturalization and adoption into the family of Abraham, nor acknowledged the obligation on them of the ordinances of the Mosaic law. Outwardly they were Gentiles still; but Gentiles who had seen the folly and falsehood of the heathen idolatries, and were seeking for something better. Such unrest and dissatisfaction with the "outworn creeds" of Paganism were felt throughout the Roman world. Some tried to rest in a general disbelief of all religion. Some tried to borrow a religion from Egypt or the East, and under the pressure of this demand the importing of foreign religions grew into a trade. [This was the ready explanation that occurred to some of the Athenian idlers as they listened to Paul and his "new doctrine" from the benches of the Areopagus—that "he seems to be one of those introducers of foreign divinities."] But in the midst of men's waverings and gropings, these "devout Greeks" had found what they were looking for in the Jew's synagogue. For already the Jews were wandering everywhere, and wherever a few families of them sojourned there was the synagogue. Every seventh day they met to read in Moses and the prophets of the hope of Israel, and with them, not only the converts who had entered into the Hebrew citizenship, but neighbors and fellow-workshippers who knew no citizenship but

that of Rome—men who, seeking thoughtfully from one school of philosophy to another the answer to the questions, What is happiness? What is virtue? What is the highest good?—had found, at last, in Moses and David, teachers greater than Plato or Aristotle. The synagogue meetings used to be full of these outsiders. The Jews had a name for them, calling them, not converts, for they were not such—calling them “proselytes of the gate,” as if hinting that they did not get beyond the threshold.* Such an one was the devout centurion Cornelius at Cesarea; another such was the good centurion at Capernaum, who built the marble synagogue because he loved the Jewish people. They were very apt to be centurions or soldiers. Such were the “honorable women which were Greeks,” whom Paul more than once found among his eager listeners in the synagogue. They were very apt to be women, revolted by the wickedness of heathen religions. Such were the multitudes at Antioch in Pisidia, who listened gladly to the Gospel, when the Jews blasphemed and contradicted, until Paul and Barnabas waxed bold and said to the Jews, “seeing ye put from you the Word of God, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.” Wherever the Apostles went, it was the “devout Greeks” that were the open door by which the Gospel entered upon its triumphs in the Roman world. Neither was the preparation of the heathen mind for the Gospel limited to these half-proselytes. Through the heathen literature of this period, the scholar is startled every now and then to come upon thoughts that seem strangely Christian as we read—thoughts of a holier God, of a higher morality, of a larger humanity—they are the thoughts of men who are straining their eyes to find the light, and who

already begin to get some glimpse of that true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

And alongside of this preparedness to receive the Gospel, which is discovered in the heathen mind of that age, is that marveious providential preparation to dispense it, which is the admiration of all intelligent history. How often we say to each other, over the morning paper, “we live in a wonderful age!” The men of Paul’s time and of Jesus’ time lived in an age just so wonderful. Then, as now, the world had been brought into one place. The multitude of wrangling principalities, whose perpetual warfare had kept the earth in turmoil, had blocked the paths of commerce, and had disturbed the retreats of philosophy and the sanctuaries of religion, have been suppressed and supplanted by a universal empire, which may plunder and oppress, but will suffer none beside to do it; the track of whose conquests is the pioneering of great highways of peaceful trade; and whose title of *Roman citizen* is a panoply and safeguard to its wearer to the ends of the earth. And with the universal empire has grown up the universal language of literature, and thought, and commerce—the Greek. On this incomparable language it seemed as if the providence of God had conferred a sort of Pentecostal gift, that by means of it men of the most widely different lands and religions might hear and know His wonderful works.

It is evident—more evident to us than it was to the men of that generation—that the world was ripe for some great change. The nations, an-hungered, were seated by fifties, and there was a hush as of expectation that one should break and bring to them the bread of life.

Bearing these great facts in mind, we turn back to the story of the request of certain Greeks for audience of the great Teacher, and we find that in its method it seems marked with a sense of the grave importance of it. They would not venture to come with it directly to

* Dr. Edersheim (*Jesus the Messiah*, vol. ii. p. 390, note) gives a reason, which is hardly conclusive, for reckoning the Greeks, who sought to see Jesus, as “proselytes of righteousness.” This view might be admitted without substantially weakening the argument of this discourse.

the Lord. They took careful counsel. They sought the only one of the disciples whose Greek name, Philip, seems to mark him as the right man for their message. And it is not without deliberation and consultation with his fellow-townsmen, Andrew, that he ventures, coming with Andrew, to communicate to his Master that petition of certain Greeks, which, being announced to the Lord, seems to agitate Him with so deep a revulsion of feeling.

The Greeks were calling for Him. And why not go? Why should the Master hesitate? It seems to have been a thought not wholly foreign to the mind of the Lord or the mind of His enemies. In this same Gospel of John, there is a striking passage which receives light from this in the twelfth chapter, and reflects it back again. Said He to them that would lay hold on Him: "Ye shall seek me and shall not find me, and where I am ye cannot come." The Jews, therefore, said among themselves, "Whither will this man go that we shall not find him? will he go unto the Dispersion among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks? What is this word that he hath said?"—John vii: 34-36, R. V.

And now what nobler possibility had ever presented itself to one who felt that he had brought a great light into the world? Thus far his light had seemed to be hidden under a bushel. That little patch of historic soil at the junction of three continents, itself so secluded from them all by desert, and mountain, and ocean—that narrow beat from Galilee to Jewry and from Jewry back to Galilee again—had been the sole scene of all His life and teaching. It does not appear that he ever once set foot upon the shore of the Great Sea; although the broad vistas of it must ever and anon have opened up before Him, as from hill-top to hill-top He trod the weary distance to and from Jerusalem. Only once, exhausted with the burden that he bore, of our infirmities and sicknesses, he ventured over the rocky boundary of heathen Tyre; but then it was only to rest, not to

labor. "He was not sent," He said, "but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But now the prospect that seems to open itself before Him is as when from out the secluded little Galilean vale of Nazareth one climbs the slightly eminence of Tabor, and before him spreads not only the land of Israel, the distant cliffs of Judah, the teeming valley of Jordan, and the goodly mountains of Lebanon, but also "the great and wide sea"—the highway of the nations, the avenue of the world's commerce, the central scene of universal history and empire! This petition of the Greeks to Christ—how like it was to that voice which came a few years later to Paul as he slept beside the ruins of old Troy—a far distant voice, heard faintly across the surging of the Hellespont, as of one clad in the garb of Macedonia, saying, in the language of another continent, "Come over into Macedonia and help us!" O heavenly vision, to which he was not disobedient! but following it, told the story of his Gospel until "his lines had gone out into all the earth and his words to the ends of the world." What if it had been not Paul, but Jesus, who, being despised and rejected of His own, had said to the seed of Jacob, "Seeing ye put from you the word of God and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, I turn to the Gentiles!" Suppose it had been Jesus, not Paul, who, following these seekers of His light back to their Gentile homes had taught the longing nations of life and immortality! Suppose it had been He, who, speaking as never man spake, had stood in the busy streets of Corinth, had climbed the marble steep of the Areopagus, and taught the Stoic and the Epicurean with such authority as He had used upon the Galilean Mount!—who had proclaimed amid the proud towers of Rome "to swift destruction doomed," the coming of the kingdom that is not of this world—the kingdom that cannot be moved!—who had sped Him like some auspicious star, through paths of light and "trailing clouds of glory," until the world had be-

held and owned His glory—"the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth!" We long to lay upon the brow of the despised and rejected Master whom we serve, this chaplet of success and triumph; and as we read the victorious career of Peter and of Paul, we grudge that the servant should be above his Lord.

And now we turn back from the contemplation of this splendid possibility, and look to see what is that alternative which stands awaiting Him at Jerusalem—the priestly plot, the heathen judgment-seat, the victor's thong and scourge, the cruel gibbet and the open sepulchre beside it, and we cry like Peter, with his great love and little faith, "Be it far from thee Lord; this shall not be unto thee."

But where, then, would have been the Gospel? This successful and triumphant Messiah, that turns a defiant front on failure, that will not accept defeat, but tears his victory out of the very jaws of hostile fate, that demands success for His great mission from the Father, and with retorted scorn upon those who have despised His message, turns to new lands and races, resolved that the world shall hear Him whether it will or no—what sort of Gospel could such an one as this have bequeathed to the world? One more of those Gospels with which the world was plentifully supplied already—a Gospel of heroism and triumph, stimulating heroic natures to strenuous endeavor, and to every sacrifice—but one. The world is full of Gospels for heroes. You can read them by dozens in "Plutarch's Lives." History goes on adding to them in every generation—the story of the Luthers, the Fredericks, the Napoleons. But whither could we have turned to find a Gospel for the great multitude of us who have found out, by some sad experiences of ourselves, that we are not heroes at all, but very human men and women?—a Gospel for the unsuccessful and the disappointed, for the tempted and the sinful; for those who have got past the heroic point of saying of deadly sickness, "I will not give up to

it," and have owned, at last, that they are sick and in need of healing; for those who have got so far beyond the fine elation of self-reliance and "self-help," that in default of some help from outside, they are settling down into something like despair—where could we have found a Gospel for such as these, who make up so large a part of human kind?—a Gospel to stand by us in failure and tribulation, and be our support and comfort in sorrow and heartbreak—our victory in death.

No, no! It cannot be. This golden grain of wheat must fall into the ground and die, else it cannot bring forth fruit. The agony of soul must be endured. The supreme surrender must be made. With life just entered on, with great beginnings made, with the world opening to him, with the hope of near achievements within reach, this young man Jesus must prepare Himself to die. "For this cause came he to this hour." It is the law of the kingdom of heaven to which He bows Himself, thus leading many sons to glory. If ye will bear fruit, ye, too, must make the like surrender—must die to your personal plans, hopes, ambitions; die to your selfish loves and hates; die—O last struggle of the best and worthiest souls!—die to your longings and purposes of useful service in God's kingdom, so far as these are your purposes and not God's—that so God may glorify His name in you—yea, and glorify it again.

How hard it was for the disciples to see the purpose of this waste! How hard it is for some to-day! So great a teacher and example as He was! These two or three years of public life; these few pages of recorded sayings; how they have blessed the sinful world! How rich the world would have been if that fair and lovely young life could have been lengthened out, illuminating all the vicissitudes of human joy and sorrow with its blessed light, till it had filled the round of three-score years and ten!—if the recorded sayings of those holy lips could have been increased to volumes; if the hand which

wrote no syllable but those unknown words upon the ground, soon to be effaced by trampling feet, could itself have given us gospels and epistles out of the fulness of His own heart! O the calamity to the world that shall cut off this divine life from among men! We may well believe such searchings of heart to have mingled with the whispers that ran through the little circle when Philip telleth Andrew, and Andrew and Philip come and tell Jesus that the Greeks desire to see Him.

It was the judgment of human hearts. But how different the estimate which men put upon the value of Christ's life and work, and the estimate which He put on them Himself! He turned away from Greece with all her schools; from civilization with all its forces; from the West, then, as now, having the world's future in itself—turned away from these stretching out their hands to receive Him; and gave Himself instead into the hands of treacherous Judas and jealous Caiaphas, and vacillating, truckling Pilate, saying to the Greeks that would speak with him: "No, not yet; it is not teaching that can save the world; but I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."

It is not thus that the world estimates the fruitfulness of a life. It glorifies success. It loves to witness a career of strenuous resolution, a will bent on success, lashing all untoward circumstances, like fractious steeds, into obedience to its purpose; and when the purpose is worthy and beneficent, they say, "There is a fruitful life; that life accomplished something!" "Success is a duty," they say; "nothing succeeds like success." And that highest virtue of the gospel, triumphing over the last and noblest of temptations—the virtue that is willing for God's sake and righteousness' sake to fail and die—the virtue that can stand by and see a good and holy cause go down, and can go down with it, rather than lift one unrighteous finger to save it—this is what the world calls failure, and folly, and waste; and herein, sometimes, the Church seems no wiser than the world.

So men spake with one another on that Sunday which was the first of all Lord's days, when the great feast was over, and, like the melting of the snows on Hermon, the streams of home-returning pilgrims poured down the slopes of Zion and Moriah. "We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel. Think what He might have accomplished with a little prudence, a little tact, a little concession to prejudice, a little reservation of unwelcome truths, a little conciliation of people in high places! He might have led the whole nation—people and priesthood. He might have won the very Gentiles to Him. But He wouldn't. He wouldn't concede. He wouldn't compromise. He wouldn't so much as humor the time and the situation—and you see the result."

And only a few weeks later, so good men spoke to each other when Stephen died. How they had loved Stephen—so full of faith he was, so full of the Holy Ghost! What hopes of great things for the Church had centred upon Stephen! What an irreparable loss was his untimely death! Thus good men "bare Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him."

And no long time afterwards, when the ranks that had been thinned by persecution began to be filled up, they led forward to the baptismal water a young man, a convert of the aged apostle John, on whom, for the great hope they had of him, they named a new name, Polycarp, which is by interpretation *much fruit*. In his happy and useful old age, the fierceness of the heathen persecution bore him unresisting to the amphitheatre and to the stake. And when the flames divided on either side, and refused to consume the martyr's life, the executioner came with a spear and quenched the embers with the old Christian's heart-blood. Thus, said they, will we cut down this fruitful tree, that it bear no more fruit.

The history of the advancement of Christ's Kingdom is a long record of sore disappointments. You may go to the old burying-ground of Northampton,

Massachusetts, and look upon the early grave of David Brainerd, side by side with that of the fair Jerusha Edwards, whom he loved but did not live to wed. What hopes, what expectations for Christ's cause went down into the grave with the wasted form of that young missionary, of whose work nothing now remained but the dear memory, and a few score of swarthy Indian converts! But that majestic old Puritan saint, Jonathan Edwards, who had hoped to call him his son, gathered up the memorials of his life in a little book. And the little book took wings and flew beyond the sea, and alighted on the table of a Cambridge student—Henry Martyn. Poor Martyn! Why would he throw himself away, with all his scholarship, his genius, his opportunities! Such a wasted life it seemed! What had he accomplished when he turned homeward from "India's coral strand," broken in health, and dragged himself northward as far as that dreary khan at Tocat by the Black Sea, where he crouched under the piled-up saddles, to cool his burning fever against the earth, and there died alone, among unbelievers, no Christian hand to tend his agony, no Christian voice to speak in his ear the promises of the Master whom, as it seemed to men, he had so vainly served. To what purpose was this waste?

But out of that early grave of Brainerd, and that lonely grave of Martyn, far away by the plashing of the Euxine Sea, has sprung the noble army of modern missionaries!

And the blood of such as Polycarp, sinking into the sands of many a fierce arena, was the seed of the Church that has sprung up in many a land to wave like Lebanon, and bear its healing fruits.

And from that most sad spot, hard by the city gates, from which men bore away the mangled form of Stephen to his burial, there went pricked in the heart the young man who had kept the executioners' clothes, who by-and-by should take up Stephen's message as from his bleeding lips, and bear it afar among the Gentiles.

And from that sealed and guarded tomb by Golgotha came forth the Lord of glory, King of kings and Lord of lords, declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection of the dead.

THE FIREMAN'S CALLING.*

BY REV. SAMUEL W. DUFFIELD [PRESBYTERIAN], BLOOMFIELD, N. J.

Quenched the violence of fire.—Heb. xi: 34.

It must not be supposed that modern civilization is entitled to all the credit for devising means of extinguishing fire and saving life and property. So far is this from being true that we find a regular force-pump in operation for this purpose at Alexandria, Egypt, two centuries before the Christian era. Its inventor was one Ctesibius, whose pupil, Hero of Alexandria, has left us a work on Hydraulics, in which he represents his master's double-cylinder pump, with certain additions and improvements of his own. Nor is there any doubt that such fire-engines—which the Romans called *siphones*—were employed by various ancient towns and cities for their protection. The younger Pliny wrote to the Emperor Trajan that the town of Nicomedia, in Bithynia, would not have burned up, as it did, if the inhabitants had not been so indifferent about the matter, and especially if they had not neglected to provide themselves with suitable fire apparatus.

But it was in the city of Rome itself that the greatest fires, and the greatest skill in fire equipment, were exhibited. Ulpian, a law writer in the latter half of the second century after Christ, speaks of householders being required to have small hand-engines in their houses. In the sale of a dwelling with its furniture and effects, he mentions these *siphones*—which must be taken here to mean portable force-pumps. He also names other things which would be required for this use, and which were therefore regarded as belonging to the property.

No doubt the immense fire at Rome, kindled by order of the reckless and

* Preached at the request of Essex H. & L. Co.