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I.

THE FRENCH SYNODS OF THE DESERT.

THE Reformed Church of France found itself in a deplorable condition after the recall of the Edict of Nantes by Louis the Fourteenth, a little over two centuries ago. The majestic tree which was the product of the growth of about one hundred and seventy-five years was felled to the ground in an instant. By a single dash of the pen every privilege granted by the law of Henry the Fourth was forfeited. The Protestants not only lost what their ancestors had won as the reward of almost unexampled patience under adversity and heroic courage in the midst of wars, persecutions, and massacres, but were robbed of those inalienable rights which are the heritage of all mankind. The exercise of the Reformed worship was proscribed. Ministers and pastors, without exception, were ordered to leave the kingdom within fifteen days from the date of the publication of the law. Protestant schools were closed. On the other hand, it was expressly commanded that any Protestants that might have expatriated themselves should return to France, and it was forbidden that any Protestant, man or woman, should leave the realm. Thus, while the teachers of religion were expelled, the laity were compelled to remain in France, but were deprived of every means of instruction and of every opportunity of worshipping God according to the dictates of their conscience. There was nothing said in the revocatory edict of constraining the Protestants to embrace Roman Catholicism. On the contrary, the very last paragraph contained an assurance that, until such time as God might be pleased to enlighten their minds, they would be permitted to dwell in the kingdom, pursue their trades,

VII.—CRITICAL NOTE. 7

THE NEW THEORY OF THE APOCALYPSE.

THE Apocalypse of John has been from the earliest times the most doubtful writing in the New Testament. Pious bishops, theologians, and reformers have either denied its canonicity or expressed grave doubts whether it ought to be included in the canon of the New Testament. Harnack and Von Gebhardt agree with Vischer in eliminating it from the canon, and in assigning it a place alongside of extra-canonical early Christian writings in the Library of which they are editors.*

Indeed, they were compelled to this course by the new theory of the Apocalypse proposed by Vischer, which they have adopted. For if the Apocalypse of John be indeed a Jewish apocalypse, like the apocalypses of Enoch, of Baruch, of Ezra, of Moses, and the Sibylline oracles, re-edited and enlarged by a Christian author, it certainly has no place in the canon.

This hypothesis was first proposed by Vischer, while a student in the theological class of Professor Harnack. It was at once adopted by Harnack; and so soon as it was made public it gained the consent of Schürer, Dillmann, and many other of the best critics of Europe. Some of our readers will ascribe this to the German fondness for novelties. But those who understand German scholarship, and recognize its thorough, scientific spirit, its ardent pursuit of truth for its own sake, and its freedom from the fetters of traditional prejudice, will rather conclude that there must be some strong reasons for the new theory, and will give it serious examination.

The Apocalypse has been the theme of numberless works which are scattered through the Christian centuries, but these have been either commentaries or expositions of its visions in the light of Christian History. After all, the general opinion among scholars has been that its key has not yet been found. If Vischer has found the key, he is entitled to the thanks of the Christian world, even if we must remove it from the canon.

Recent studies of the Apocalypse have placed it in an entirely new position in its relation to the other books of the New Testament. It is so different in style and doctrine from the other Johannine writings, that the old view that it was written by the apostle very near the same time with the Gospel and Epistles is untenable. The only way to save the Johannine authorship is to put it at a considerable period earlier than the Gospel, in order to leave time for the doctrine of the Apocalypse to grow into the theology of the Epistles and the Gospel.

* *TEXTE UND UNTERSUCHUNGEN ZUR GESCHICHTE DER ALTCHRISTLICHEN LITERATUR.* Von OSCAR VON GEBHARDT und ADOLF HARNACK. II. Band, Heft 3. *DIE OFFENBARUNG JOHANNIS.* Eine jüdische Apokalypse in christlicher Bearbeitung. Von EBERHARD VISCHER, mit einem Nachwort von Adolf Harnack. Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1886. See also *DIE OFFENBARUNG JOHANNIS KEINE URSPRÜNGLICH JÜDISCHE APOKALYPSE.* Eine Streitschrift gegen Herren Harnack und Vischer. Von DANIEL VÖLTER, Tübingen: J. J. Heckenhauer, 1886.

There are more features of resemblance with the Gospel of Matthew and the Epistles of Peter and James than with Paul or John ; and yet there are so many Pauline elements that Vischer thinks that the Christian author who worked it over belonged to that school. And then there are certain elements that resemble the Gospel and the Epistles of John which justify, to some extent at least, the theory of the Johannine authorship. But, after all of these relations to other writings of the New Testament have been conceded, any one who has studied the pseudepigraphical literature of the Jews will find more features of resemblance with these extra-canonical apocalypses than with any or with all of the writings of the New Testament.

It is only in recent years that these apocalypses have been studied by critics, and it is not unnatural, under the circumstances, that those scholars, who have done the most in this department of work, should recognize those features of resemblance between the Apocalypse of John and the other apocalypses, and ask the question whether this Apocalypse has not shared the fortune of all the other apocalypses, and whether this does not explain the difficulties that have enveloped it. Harnack tells us that when he first read the Apocalypse in the light of Vischer's theory the scales fell from his eyes, and difficulties that had appeared insoluble were at once resolved.

This, then, is the strength of the new theory. It seems most natural that the one apocalypse that has found its way into the New Testament should have had the same fortunes as the one apocalypse that was admitted to the canon of the Old Testament and the many Jewish and Christian apocalypses that were current in the early Christian Church, two of which are cited in the Epistle of Jude, one of which is quoted by Papias as giving the teaching of Jesus, and others of which are used by the Fathers on a par with the Old Testament prophets. It is highly important that the Apocalypse of John should be studied in these historical relations. The new theory forces us to make the comparison. The question must be considered whether the Apocalypse of John differs from those other apocalypses to a sufficient extent to justify their exclusion from the canon while it assumes a unique place therein. The theory of Vischer is certainly favored by the history of these other apocalypses, and it was to be expected that specialists who had devoted their attention to these would approve the new theory. There are other arguments that re-enforce this presumption. These must be overcome by stronger arguments, or the theory of Vischer will win the day. We propose to test the theory by the principles of the Higher Criticism, without regard to the views that have thus far prevailed in the Church. Christians have nothing to fear from the truth, and exact methods ought to be their delight.

(1) If the Apocalypse is to be divided between two authors, these ought to show *differences of language*. This line of argument is avoided by Vischer, on the ground that the original Jewish Apocalypse was written in Hebrew, and that it was translated by the same hand that re-edited it and enlarged it, and that therefore the words and phrases are the same. The only arguments for a Hebrew original are the number of the beast, which may be explained from Hebrew letters, and the occurrence of Hebrew words with their Greek equivalents in two instances. We cannot accept this avoidance of this line of argument as justifiable. If the greater part of the Apocalypse be a translation from the Hebrew and the lesser part an original Greek composition, criticism ought to be able to present sufficient evidence for it in differences in words and phrases. A translator will, so far as possible, reproduce the words and phrases of the original, and these will differ from his own favorite words and expressions. A translation will also lack the ease and grace of an original. Vischer was bound to justify his theory at this point and show the linguistic differences between the

translation from the Hebrew and the Greek writing. In that he proposes the theory of translation as an explanation of the lack of linguistic differences, he admits his inability to furnish the evidence required at this point. The theory of a translation from the Hebrew seems to us to demand greater linguistic differences than two Greek originals. Indeed, the words and phrases of the two parts of the Apocalypse, as proposed by Vischer, are in remarkable agreement. It will suffice to mention the rewards of the faithful in the Epistles to the seven churches, assigned by Vischer to the Christian author, which recur in identical words and phrases in the rewards of the blessed in chapters xx.-xxii. in the parts assigned by Vischer to the Jewish author. This line of evidence of the Higher Criticism counts against the new theory.

(2) The new theory was bound to show differences in *style and methods of composition* between the two authors. This line of argument Vischer also avoids. He attributes the Epistles to the seven churches to the Christian author and the other groups of sevens to the Jewish author. If we compare these groups we find that the method is the same. The groups are parallel. The first group of seven does not present the appearance of a copy of the others. It is the freshest, the most original and powerful of the groups. It is, indeed, the basis for the explanation of the others. Its teachings pervade the Apocalypse more than the teachings of any other groups. The other groups have their parallels in the Jewish apocalypses. The first group is unique. This originality of the first group and its correspondence in method with the other groups strongly favor the view that the same author has made it the first and the basis of his groups of sevens. Another striking characteristic of the style of the Apocalypse is the frequent recurrence of little hymns. We have observed that half of these hymns go with the supposed Jewish part and half with the supposed Christian part, the latter being much the finer and stronger. This is a very singular result of the analysis of Vischer, and it counts strongly against his theory. There is no such difference of style and method between the two parts as the new theory demands.

(3) Vischer does not present any differences in *historical situation* to justify two different authors. We could hardly expect that the Jewish author and the Christian editor and elaborator should be so near in time, that such differences would not appear, especially in such a rapidly changing period as the last half of the first Christian century. Harnack evidently saw this gap in the argument, and tries to stop it. In his brief "Nachwort" he separates xvii. 11 from xvii. 9, 10. The latter he ascribes to the Jewish author who knew of but seven emperors, and who must have written in the year 68, just before the destruction of Jerusalem. The former he ascribes to the Christian author who knew of eight emperors, and was obliged therefore to add this verse in explanation. He must have written in the reign of Domitian. Thus Harnack fixes the time of the composition of the two sections with remarkable precision. It seems to us that he might have given his pupil this hint, and set him the task of inquiring whether the two writings show any other traces of this difference of date. The world could have waited a few months until Vischer had completed this line of investigation. If Harnack and Vischer can prove this difference in date of the parts, the theory will be accepted. But even Harnack can hardly expect that his ingenious analysis and explanation of xvii. 9-11 should be accepted without confirmatory arguments. Many critics have studied the Apocalypse, and they differ greatly as to its date. The older view made it date after the destruction of Jerusalem. But most modern critics think that it was written prior to the destruction of the city. If part of it were written before and part after, this ought to be disclosed in more places than one, for the destruction of Jerusalem was to Jew and to Christian an event of immense importance. We have re-read the Apoca-

lyse in the light of this new theory and in view of Harnack's opinion as to difference of date, and we have not been able to discern such a difference of historical situation. Furthermore, the difference of date assigned by Harnack is too short to explain the fascination of the Christian author with this supposed Jewish apocalypse and his work in re-editing it, explaining it, and enlarging it. The historical argument counts against the new theory, and Harnack's attempt to overcome it only shows how greatly Vischer has sinned in neglecting this field of inquiry.

(4) We have already intimated that there are many lines of connection between the Apocalypse and other writings, canonical and extra-canonical. These lines need a thorough investigation, as Harnack states in his "Nachwort." This would have been a profitable task for his pupil. His new theory required that he should undertake it, for it presents evidence that has a great deal to do with the validity of the theory. Thus the dependence of the Apocalypse upon the Gospels of Matthew and Luke is clear, not only in the matter common to them, but in the matter peculiar to each of them. This is especially the case in regard to the eschatological discourse of Jesus, which is to our mind the key to the Apocalypse. This dependence is found not only in the so-called Jewish parts, but also in the Christian parts. It is true that much of the common material in the Jewish parts may be regarded as the common property of all the apocalypses, as they are all alike based upon Old Testament prophecy. But even here a careful comparison shows a much closer resemblance to the discourse of Jesus than to the Jewish apocalypses. We are well aware that Vischer follows some recent critics in the opinion that even the discourse of Jesus is the elaboration of an earlier Jewish apocalypse. But the evidence for this is extremely slender, and it can hardly be assumed with propriety in discussing the Apocalypse of John. The Apocalypse of John and the discourse of Jesus agree in their pure and genuine development of Old Testament prophecy, and they contain none of those conceits and extravagances that are so characteristic of the extra-canonical apocalypses. The dependence of the Christian parts of the Apocalypse upon the discourses of Jesus in the Synoptists is no less striking than in the Christian parts, and this common dependence betrays a common original. How could the supposed Jewish author be so dependent upon the words of Jesus? It is impossible to maintain the theory from this point of view without the theory that all the parts of the discourse of Jesus upon which the Jewish section of the Apocalypse depends also belonged to a Jewish apocalypse. The relations to the Jewish apocalypses in the so-called Jewish part are certainly very numerous, but these do not indicate an earlier stage of composition than the Christian part. If there is any argument here it rather reverses the chronological order, for there are many features of resemblance with the apocalypses of Ezra and Baruch which belong to the second Christian century. The argument from citation and use of other writings counts against the new theory, so far as any evidence has yet been presented on this subject.

(5) There remains but a single line of argument in favor of the new hypothesis—namely, the argument from *difference of doctrine*. We admit that this is ever the strongest line of evidence. But it must be very strong indeed to overcome the arguments derived from the other lines of evidence. Here is the line of battle for the new theory. It will stand or fall here. Vischer separates the Christian parts from the Jewish parts with little difficulty. With two or three exceptions, we must admit that provided the theory be the true one, the Christian parts are just where we should expect to find them. We also admit that Vischer and Völter have both of them by their Higher Criticism rendered great help to the Lower Criticism, and have indicated a number of passages where the text should be amended by the removal of certain words or expres-

sions that have crept into the text in the process of transmission. But these are side issues, and do not determine the correctness of the theory. Vischer admits that the Christian author has been very conservative in dealing with the Jewish original. He found it suited to his purpose, and has given us almost all of it. As Harnack says, a Christian who allowed vii. 1-8 and xi., xii. of the original to stand, would not be likely to have stricken out much of it. He appropriated the whole of it, and if there was anything in it inconsistent with the Christian doctrine of the first and the second advents, he certainly did not see it.

But just here we must express our agreement with Völter in the opinion that Vischer could not with propriety ignore the Introduction and Conclusion of the Apocalypse as he has done. He assigns chapters i.—iii. to the Christian author, without committing himself on the question, whether the introduction to the Jewish original is not in part contained in chapter i. But this is important to know. What shall we do with i. 7? It gives the *text* of the entire Apocalypse, the theme that pervades the whole. It is derived from the words of Jesus in Matthew. This would seem to force us to assign it to the Christian part, were it not for the view of Vischer that a Jewish apocalypse is embraced in the words of Jesus. If it belong to the Jewish author, how are we to explain the correspondence with it in the parts assigned to the Christian author? It presents such a great difficulty in the way of the new theory, that it was unpardonable to neglect it.

Furthermore, the title of the Apocalypse ought to have been explained. How could the Christian author embrace a Jewish apocalypse and his own additions to it under the title Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἣν ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ ὁ θεὸς δεῖξαι τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ? It was also necessary to consider xxii. 18, 19. Vischer assigns xxii. 6-21 in general to the Christian author, but leaves out of consideration the objections that spring therefrom against his theory. Verses 18, 19 pronounce a curse upon any one who adds to the book or takes from it. If this belonged to the Jewish original, the Christian editor would hardly have retained this curse upon him for everything that he had done. If they belong to the Christian author, what sort of a conscience must he have had to pronounce a curse upon any one else who should do with his work precisely what he himself had done with the work of another?

When now we compare the Jewish and Christian parts as analyzed by Vischer, is there any such difference as to prove difference of authorship? Vischer claims that two entirely different views run along side by side in the Apocalypse, the one essentially the same that we find in the Jewish apocalypses, the other entirely Christian. And Harnack says that there are two pictures of the Messiah, the one the Messiah of victory and judgment, whose birth is expected, the other the Lamb who has already appeared and redeemed the nations by his blood. Is there any such contrast as this? We think not. We agree with Völter, that after all the admittedly Christian elements have been removed, there remains nothing that a Jewish Christian could not have written. There is no inconsistency whatever between the two conceptions, any more than there is between Jewish and Christian in the compound Jewish Christian. We freely admit all that is common between the Apocalypse of John and the Jewish apocalypses. The common material is much greater than any one has as yet supposed. We are not surprised that the early Christians esteemed many of the latter as inspired writings. There is so much of genuine prophecy in them. It is true that they are pseudonyms, but this does not in the least detract from their value. Those pious enthusiasts who devoted themselves to the study of prophecy without the aid of inspiration, yet followed the lines drawn by the Old Testament prophets, and thus were able to reach many of the same conclusions that we find in the inspired prophecy of the New Testament. We should not be surprised at this.

But granting all that can be fairly demanded in this regard, we find a simplicity, a power, and a grandeur in the Apocalypse of John which exalts it above the extra-canonical pseudepigraphs and ranges it with the Old Testament prophets, with the discourses of Jesus and the Epistles of Peter and Paul. Even the Jewish part as left by Vischer and Harnack transcends the apocalypses with which they compare it so far that one would be surprised not to find the Christian points, the Christian climax, the Christian consummation. It agrees so far with the eschatology of Jesus, Peter, and Paul, that we expect it to agree still more, and it is precisely this that we find in the Christian parts that have been excluded. The Apocalypse is the work of a Jew who had become a Christian, of a man who had been saturated with Old Testament Prophecy, who knew the pseudepigraphic apocalypses of his countrymen, and who yet had the higher guidance of the word of Jesus and the inspiration of God. The Apocalypse of John is thus the climax of the prophecy of the Old and New Testaments.

The citadel of the new theory is its exposition of chapters xi., xii. Chapter xi. gives an account of the testimony of the two witnesses, their death, resurrection, and ascension. Vischer claims that the common Jewish opinion expected Moses and Elias as precursors of the advent of the Messiah, and that the Christians did not have any such expectation with regard to the second advent. Elias had already appeared—John the Baptist. This argument is plausible, and yet not altogether convincing. It is true that we find this expectation in the Jewish apocalypses. But it is more explicit in those of the second Christian century than in the earlier ones, and is based more upon Persian theology than on the Old Testament Prophets. It is true that these witnesses have striking resemblances to Moses and Elias, and yet they are expressly identified with the lampstand and olive-trees of Zechariah, which are in closer connection with the high-priest Joshua and the prince Zerubbabel. These witnesses are, indeed, symbolic figures, comprehending many biblical features, and they are not presented as precursors of the advent at all. Vischer's exposition of the passage is altogether false. Besides, he insists upon a literal application of the city to the old Jerusalem, and is obliged to erase "*τῆς μεγάλης ἣτις καλεῖται πνευματικὸς Σόδομα καὶ Ἄιγυπτος ὅπου καὶ ὁ κύριος αὐτῶν ἱστεινῶθη,*" which gives the Christian editor's view of the city, and brings out the symbolism in its heaping of epithets. He is also obliged to erase the beautiful hymn in verses 17, 18. Those who decline Vischer's interpretation of the chapter will hardly agree with him in regarding it as the work of a Jew who was looking forward to the first advent of the Messiah.

The real core of the problem, however, is in chapter xii., in the birth of the Messiah of Mother Israel. Vischer and Harnack insist that the scope of the Apocalypse limits it to *future* events, that a Christian author could not therefore go back to the birth of Christ, that he could not ignore his life, his death, and his resurrection, and limit himself to his birth and ascension, and represent the latter as immediately following the former; that chapter xii. is dependent upon chapter xi., and that, therefore, the birth of the Messiah is announced by the seventh and last trumpet. These arguments are extremely plausible, and taken together they appear to be strong, but they rest upon certain presumptions that are altogether false.

(a) This document, according to the theory, passed through the hands of a Christian editor; how could *he* have left the life, death, and resurrection of Christ unmentioned? He would have supplemented the Jewish original here, as well as in other passages, if he had thought it necessary or important. If the Christian editor did not find it difficult to omit these things, why should an original Christian author have found difficulty?

(b) The scope of the Apocalypse is confined to the future, but that did not prevent the author from seeking a basis in the past when it was necessary to

explain the future. It seems to us that the Christian author was compelled to refer to the birth of the Messiah, in order to explain his ascension, and to refer to the ascension, in order to explain the conflict in heaven upon which the expulsion of the serpent from heaven and his persecution of the Church on earth depended. But he does not dwell upon the birth and the interval to the ascension, for this very reason, that it was sufficiently well known to his readers, and had nothing to do with his present purpose. It was sufficient to give the birth and the ascension of the Messiah which included all the rest. It is not the method of the Christian author in the supposed Christian parts to do more than make very brief allusions here and there to the death of the Messiah. We find just such a reference in verse 11, but this is stricken out by the authors of the new theory. According to this theory, the Christian editor ought to have written more, or else less. To our mind the reference to the birth of the Messiah corresponds with the reference to the death of the Messiah, and is just what we should expect of a Christian author of the entire chapter.

(c) The scope of the Apocalypse is to make the first advent merely incidental to the second. The suffering Messiah is referred to only incidentally throughout the Apocalypse. The reigning and judging Messiah fills the author's mind. The Epistles to the seven churches do not lay any less stress upon the Messiah of Judgment than the other groups. They do not contain any more references to the historical Messiah than the other sections. Taking the chapters as they stand, the historical Messiah is less prominent in the Epistles of the seven churches, which are supposed to be Christian, than in the second group, that is supposed to be Jewish. The only way to overcome this conspicuous fact is to strike out all references to the Lamb in the second group as editorial additions. But the Lamb does not appear in the Epistles to the seven churches at all. He first appears in the group of the seals, and if he is eliminated there who is to take his place? This forces to another conjecture, that the ἀπρίον is a mistake for the Hebrew אררי, which seems to us to be merely slipping out of a difficulty.

There is no such difference between the two figures of the Messiah as the new theory claims. The differences do not appear where we ought to find them, and these differences where they do appear are nothing more than the common New Testament distinction between the suffering Messiah of the first advent, and the victorious and judging Messiah of the second advent. The Jewish apocalypses have the second, but Christian apocalypses have both.

The new theory does not bear serious examination. The principles of the Higher Criticism are against it. It is a premature birth. If the authors had retained it longer for critical examination, they might possibly have strengthened it. It is probable that they would have abandoned it. It will call to a fresh study of the Apocalypse in its historical relations, and will therefore be of service to Christian scholarship. But in its present form it certainly does little credit to the critical judgment of Harnack, and impairs his reputation for scientific criticism.

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