IS THE "SONG OF SONGS" A MYSTICAL POEM?

THIS composition, described as "more celebrated and sublime than all songs" by the Rabbis, and called the "Jubilee Song of the Church" by Christian writers, is also, by the confession of the most competent judges, the most difficult of books to interpret. Of the many attempts made in this direction some are plausible and ingenious, others doubtful or altogether impossible, and a few even grotesque, whilst very few, if any, are quite satisfactory.

The allegorizers of the Synagogue, with the Targum at their head, down to the latest effusions of dreamers in the Ghetto, have seen in it a description of Israel's love for Jehovah, or the "amor intellectualis" of the soul in communion with God. The fathers of the Greek and Latin Church, from Hippolytus and Origen to Jerome and Augustine, regard it as the "Nuptial Song" which celebrates the love of Christ for His Church; some identify the Shulamite with the Blessed Virgin, and the bridegroom with God, or the Logos. Later on St. Francis and St. Bernard of Clairvaux, in his eighty-six discourses, have added their quota of more detailed or systematic interpretation on the same lines. Mediæval mysticism fixed on *Cantica Canticorum* as its favourite book, subjecting it to a minute study with a view to find in it, or find for it, those occult meanings which it most cherished. Thus the nard mentioned in the Song represents the odour of sanctity; myrrh, ascetic virtue; the cypress, reconciliation, etc.

The mystics of the Reformation, or the pre-Reformation

period, in Germany, and those of the counter reformation in Spain find in it a fertile field for their inventive genius. In the delicious mysticism of Catherine of Sienna, as in the later "ambitions epithalamiques" of Madame Guyon, who wrote a commentary on it in a surprisingly short space of time, we see the attraction it exercises on feminine devotees. For these it supplies the language to express their deepest yearnings after ecstatic union with the Divine Bridegroom.

It was left for the rationalistic spirit of the 18th century to deny all spiritual significance to the poem, to explain it, in a purely natural or literal sense, as a dramatic production, or a string of poems, a chaplet of gems of Hebrew lyrics with a moral lesson attached to it. Here it is made to celebrate the beauty of true love and the superiority of monogamic union over the licence of the seraglio.

Of late the dramatic theory has been discarded in favour of the view that Canticles consists of a collection of Hebrew amorets strung together for the purpose of using it at hymeneal feasts to celebrate the praise of matrimony.

We will endeavour briefly to examine these respective views in the present paper, viz., the dramatic, the lyrical, and the allegorical, in order to discover how far the traditional view of a mystical meaning attached to the book may be retained without rejecting the most recent results of critical analysis. This, especially with the light thrown on the subject by the latest studies of Oriental poetry, amatory and mystical, and similar productions in the erotic poetry of modern France, as one of the results of the invasion of Eastern mysticism into European literature.

I. As to the first, the dramatic view, there are objections to it of a general nature, such as the non-existence of the drama among the Hebrews, the absence of *dramatis*

personæ in the text of Canticles, and that lack of dramatic unity, uninterrupted development and dénouement, which we expect in this form of poetry. Hence those desperate and often incongruous attempts of those who maintain the theory to reconstruct this antique "wedding play" out of their own inner consciousness. We may judge of the shifts to which the most ingenious among them have been driven by Rénan's effort. He treats it as a kind of melodramatic operetta of the French style, for which the words of Canticles form the libretto. But under his skilful manipulation the serious spirit of Hebrew poetry evaporates.

The difficulties of thus representing, or misrepresenting, Canticles are not lessened by the fact that there are two opposite views among those who hold this view. Some consider the principal person in the drama to be Solomon, others believe him to be some unknown country swain, who, as Solomon's rival, becomes the successful lover. In the former case the dialogue would mainly consist of a "conjugal prattle" between Solomon and his simple bride. In the latter the action would turn on the trial and triumph of rustic love in overcoming the allurements of royalty. A few salient points will suffice to indicate the standpoint of each, and to show what value may be attached to either, and how far this supports the theory in question.

We will take the "Shepherd theory" to begin with, as the more plausible of the two. Briefly stated, it represents the Shulamite as a village maiden, accidentally or by curiosity coming too near the royal train, attracting the king's notice. She is carried away by the king's order to his harem in Jerusalem. Here she resists all his advances and proves faithful to her lover, until at last the royal suitor, impressed by her constancy, restores her to her home, and generously effects the union of the lovers.

It is necessary to this theory that all the expressions of languishing desire for the beloved which fall from the maiden's lips are supposed to be addressed to her absent lover in a dreamlike trance or state of somnambulism, and that what seem to be replies in a dialogue with the king are words addressed to the king's rival. (Rénan even goes so far as to suggest that they suggest a *double entendre*, leaving the king to take it as he pleases for himself or some other.) But for one "wrapt up in a blissful dream," home-sick and love-sick, addressing Solomon absently, or conversing in an unconscious state with her absent lover in the king's presence, the poem has too much reality. The hypothesis of a dream is reduced to an absurdity by one of the most recent Jewish interpreters, who divides Canticles into two unequal parts, the greater part describing the experiences of the Shulamite in dreamland. This, he thinks, saves her character, for no pure maiden would be capable of venting her feelings as she does in a waking state.

According to the rival hypothesis Canticles describes an idyllic love of Solomon for the maid of Shunem quite unique in its character, depth, and intensity; that, in fact, it is the type of a model marriage. Whether composed by Solomon in the earlier part of his life, and in the flush of youthful enthusiasm, or in the later stages of his spiritual development, when, like some modern mystics, such as Madame Krüdener, a mondaine in her youth and a religious devotée in her later life, Canticles would be in the nature of a Hebrew idyl; it could represent the Shulamite as a new Heloïse, to show the superiority of the simplicity of nature over the deceptions of an artificial civilization.

The difficulty here is to imagine Solomon (painted by himself or others) as dallying with a fair lass of the country after the manner of country lads, and actually passing part

of his time with her and her mother in rural seclusion. The picture of an Oriental potentate wooing and winning his bride under such conditions is scarcely conceivable, especially as bridal love is a thing almost unknown in the East. Besides, as Budde has shown, the Song of Songs is the praise of married love in its consummation.

II. This brings us to what appears to be the more consistent view of the poem, as a *carmen nuptiale*, or a collection of pastoral love songs, recited at marriage feasts with or without scenic representations, and corresponding to German *Sing-spiele*. This æsthetic or literal view, now commonly received, is not altogether a novel conception. Theodore of Mopsuestia († 429), S. Castello († 1544), Luis de Léon (1569), and Grotius take this view of a collection of bridal songs. The idea that it consists of a series of "dramatic idyls," recited during the seven days of marriage feasts like similar marriage songs of the Egyptians, is of recent date.

Much light is thrown on the subject by the Syrian custom, discovered and described by Wetstein, and contained in the appendix of Delitzsch's commentary on Canticles. According to this, the bridegroom, though he may be a simple peasant, is, during the marriage feast, represented as a king with crown and diadem (Cant. iii. 7–11). The thrashing table, a common agricultural implement, serves temporarily as the throne, or seat of honour, of bride and bridegroom. The friends of the bridegroom become thus the "valiant men" who accompany Solomon and the bride, his queen. She performs the festal sword dance, and the songs are recited from the thrashing table, all of which happens in Syria about the time of spring, according to ancient custom, *i.e.* after the rainy season, and with this the time of the action in the poem coincides. Canticles is thus turned into a "text-book of a Palestino-Israelitish wedding." This certainly would go far to explain the

sectional character of Canticles. The song of "the little foxes," for example, which *The Speaker's Commentary* calls a fragment of a winedresser's ballad, and other apparently independent bits included without apparent connection with the running text of the little book, would correspond to a series of "pastorettes" of the Troubadours, in which too, as here, the lyrical and dramatic forms merge into one another. But, then, there is the general consensus of mystical interpretations before and since the Christian era, which, whilst it sees in this oldest of love songs the praise of lawful marriage, attributes to it at the same time a deeper and more spiritual meaning—the mystical union between God and His people, or Christ and His Church.

III. This brings us to the third—the allegorical method of interpretation originating with the Jews, and adapted by Origen in his voluminous commentary on Canticles, and persisted in ever since by a host of writers, Jewish and Christian.

No doubt some of these attempts to find a hidden meaning are far-fetched and improbable, such as, *e.g.*, that which refers the two rows of teeth of the heroine to the priests and Levites; or another which refers it to the disciples sent out two and two in their mission by Christ; or that which explains the steps in her dance to refer to "the feet of them that bring good tidings"; or the silver legs to the thirty pieces of silver paid for the betrayal of Jesus. Of a similar character is the suggestion of St. Cyril that the palanquin of Solomon is a type of the cross; or the explanation of a modern Roman Catholic commentator, which sees in the two breasts of the bride an allusion to the two great commandments; whilst others explain it as meaning the Old and New Testaments. Of the same nature are the fanciful discoveries of some who see in the etymology of תורים = circlet (chap. i. 9, 11) a connection with תורה = law, "the chain of many links" which bind

those who are under the law; or those who see in the nuptial crown a type of the crown of thorns; in the "spiced mountains" our "heavenly home"; in the dew (chap. v. 2) a reference to the early morning dew of the resurrection day.

Other explanations there are of a more plausible character, such as the reference of the "frankincense," in chapter iv. 6, to the offering of the magi; of chapter v. 9-vi. 3, taken together with Ezekiel i. 26-28, Daniel vii. 9, Revelation i. 3-20, to Christ's risen humanity; and the blackness of the Shulamite to the dark sin of idolatry. The same applies to the ingenuity of those who trace a connection between the well mentioned in chapter iv. 15 to St. John's Gospel (chap. vii. 38), or those who identify the Garden with the Church, and the maid of Shunem with personified wisdom.

In these respects the Song of Songs shares, with poetry generally, the peculiar distinction of suggesting mysterious meanings, so that even of secular poetry a recent critic remarks:

> Mystery is one of the greatest poets with whom I am acquainted. It is he who, with his silent and shadowy hands, opens to us the gates of the Infinite.[1]

The double meaning of certain Oriental love songs, one natural, the other mythical, tends to confirm this view. In the poetry of Hafiz, who is called "the tongue of the Unseen" because of the alleged mysticism contained in his writings, there are such passages bearing a striking resemblance to Canticles: "Thy breast is ivory's gleam" suggests the comparison of the neck to ivory in the Song of Songs. The wine and roses of the former recall Canticles (chap. i. 4, ii. 4, 5); whilst Hafiz himself tells us, "By 'bowl' I imagine the eternal wine; by wine I signify the

[1] Jules Claretie, in an article on Shakespeare and Molière in *Fortnightly Review*.

trance divine"; and a Jewish rabbi of the 12th century speaks of the three passages in Canticles where wine is mentioned as referring to these three: God, the law, and the people of Israel.

At the same time, it should be mentioned that "the full bewilderment of wine" and the "delirium of love," as described in the Persian poet, are considerably toned down in the Song of Songs, as, indeed, the spring songs contained in Canticles are superior to two in the Ghazels of the Divan, though one of these is accepted without doubt as a mystical effusion. Again, when Hafiz speaks of the "consuming torments of love," he prays to his heavenly Guide: "Help me in this sacred journey, for to the wilderness of love no end is visible." When he says, "He whose soul by love is quickened, never can to death be hurled," we are reminded of love stronger than death in Canticles.

It may be objected that the mysticism of Hafiz, the contemporary of Dante, may be more fitly compared with that of Suso and his contemporaries than with that of the Hebrew poem under consideration. M. Rénan, in fact, reminds us that all eastern erotics, with their mystical meanings, do not date back beyond the 10th or 12th century of our era. The reply to this would be that the earlier Persian poetry, now lost to us, probably bore the same characteristics as its later developments which we do know, and that mysticism is one of the most remarkable features of Oriental literature, whence it found its way into Europe, and has been traced even in the poems of Theocritus. Even modern French erotic lyrics try to give vent to the "mysterious chant of the Infinite." Mysticism is the romance of religion; therefore romantic story in poetic form readily becomes the outer vehicle of our inward experience wrought in high-strung spiritual natures, both in the East and the West, in ancient and modern literature. This has been generalized by Goethe in the closing words

of the most mystical of modern poems, the second part of the *Faust*, where the *chorus mysticus* sings:

"All things transitory
But as symbols are sent;
Earth's insufficiency
Here grows to event.
The Indescribable,
Here it is done;
The eternal womanly
Leadeth us on."

What he means is this, that not only every poem, but every event viewed in its poetic aspect, contains a conscious or subconscious hint of a mystical idea underlying it. And the principle has been actually applied to Canticles by a German writer in a pamphlet lately published, in which he says that the Hebrew poet "has created here a precious though earthen vessel to hold a heavenly treasure, which it was reserved for the distant future to bring out in its full effulgence, as an afterglow to enhance its constantly increasing value."

No doubt the same principle lies at the root of the symbolical school of France and Belgium. Poets like Schuré, in his collection of poems under the title "La vie mystique," suggesting the mystical meanings of love, matrimony, and paternity; Maeterlinck, endeavouring to produce the "gémissement frileusement mystique" in his dramas and prose works, seeing everywhere mystical symbols in ordinary relations, not to mention others reproducing the "devout bacchanalia" of Hafiz and Sadi, show that there must be some trait in human nature which everywhere produces the same forms of mystical poetry. There is even a curious family likeness between the "spiritual voluptuousness" of the purely æsthetic school, portraying in language soft, languid, and over refined the erotic passion with poetic sensibility, and the expressions

of mystical emotions of John of the Cross, and Gerson, as when the latter exclaims, by way of reminiscence from Canticles, on his death-bed:

"Fortis est ut mors dilectio."

But it is not necessary to point out the vast difference between the naked or veiled realism of the former and the spiritual idealism of the latter, both in tone and tendency. In the same way the Song of Solomon surpasses all the love songs of the East known to us, both in its literary purity and ethical elevation. It, too, sets its seal on human nature in its normal state as well as in its abnormal moments of spiritual ecstatics. Here, too, we have the playful, genial ease and grace, the light and airy touch of the lyrical poet versed in human passion. But below the rippling stream of these Hebrew melodies runs a deep current of a deeper religious sentiment and mystic fervour, both more real and intense.

This view does not exclude the ethical interpretation now in favour. No doubt the Song of Songs shows forth the superiority of pure and genuine love over animal passion; it sings the praises of simple innocence victoriously resisting the seductions of royal flattery and regal splendour. The commendation of the virtuous woman and the glorification of monogamic faithfulness, the triumph of lawful over illicit love are its main burden. But, as in other portions of the Old and New Testament (with Jer. ii. 2, iii. 20; Ezek. xvi.; Hosea xi. 4, 7; compare Eph. v. 32; 1 John xiii. 1; Rev. xix. 7, xxi. 2; 2 Cor. xi. 2), these may be taken as typical of the faithful devotion of the Church to her Lord, and the love of Christ for His Church.

It is not necessary to sacrifice the mystical interpretation to the moral or *vice versâ*. Even the morality plays of a later age contained at bottom a spiritual meaning. It is quite in keeping with the nature of human love, as elevated

by Christianity, to prefigure the "disinterested love" of the saints or the spiritual love of a St. Teresa, a Fénélon, a Madame Guyon, and others. The author of *The Rose of Sharon* was, therefore, guided by a fine artistic instinct in using this "most obscure book" as the foundation of his dramatic oratorio by dwelling, as he does in the prologue, on its spiritual significance, and in the epilogue pointing out its moral significance.

> For the flame of love is as fire, even the fire of God.
> Many waters cannot quench it, neither can floods drown it.
> Yes, love is strong as death, and unconquerable as the grave.

The sentiment here expressed is true alike of the highest forms of human affection culminating in a consecrated union, and the noblest aspirations of the soul in its diviner yearnings after complete union with the ever blest.

M. KAUFMANN.

RECENT CRITICISM OF THE EPISTLES TO THE THESSALONIANS.

OF late years the study of the Epistles to the Thessalonians has made considerable progress; several important works have appeared, mainly in Germany, bearing on their criticism and interpretation. Of chief importance amongst these are the New Testament *Einleitungen* of H. J. Holtzmann (3rd ed.), of A. Jülicher (in the *Grundriss der theologischen Wissenschaften*), and especially of Theodor Zahn (2nd ed., 1900); the essay of F. Spitta on the Second Epistle in vol. i. of his dissertations *Zur Geschichte und Litteratur des Urchristenthums*; and the able and exhaustive commentary of W. Bornemann on the two Epistles, replacing the work of Lünemann in the 5th and 6th editions of Meyer's *Kritisch-exegetisches Commentar*, along with P. W. Schmiedel's slighter but valuable exposition in the new *Hand-*

commentar zum Neuen Testament. Beside the above may be mentioned, from an earlier but recent date, P. W. Schmidt's *Der 1 Thessalonicher-brief neu erklärt, nebst Excurs über den zweiten gleichnamigen Brief*; A. Klöpper's *Der zweite Brief an d. Thessalonicher* in the *Theologischen Studien aus Ostpreussen* (Heft 8, 1889); F. Bahnsen, in the *Jahrbuch für protestantische Theologie*, 1880, pp. 681 ff.; Westrik's *De echtheid van den tweeden brief aan de Thess.* (Utrecht, 1879); and J. C. K. von Hofmann's commentary, in his *Die heilige Schrift des Neuen Testaments*, part i. (2nd ed., 1869). The brief exposition of Bishop Lightfoot, published in his posthumous *Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul* (1895), pp. 1–136, is of the highest value for the detailed interpretation of the two Epistles. It contains, however, no *Introduction*, and does not discuss the question of authenticity. This is tacitly assumed throughout.

The discussion represented by the above works has gone, substantially, in the direction of re-vindicating and rehabilitating the documents in their Pauline character. The doubts made current by F. C. Baur respecting the authenticity of 1 Thessalonians appear to have been finally removed. This writing, along with Philippians, is now counted by all, except a few Dutch scholars of the most obstinate scepticism, amongst "the undisputed Epistles" of St. Paul. At the same time the opposition raised to the Pauline authorship of 2 Thessalonians has been much reduced and modified. The judgment of A. Harnack, expressed in the Preface to his *Chronologie der altchristlichen Litteratur* (1897), indicates the changed attitude and temper now prevailing in the Higher Criticism of the New Testament: "There was a time in which it was thought necessary to regard the most ancient Christian literature, including the New Testament, as a tissue of deceptions and falsifications. That time is past. For science it was an

episode in which it has learnt much, and after which it has much to forget." Harnack finds only one canonical book that, in his judgment, is strictly pseudonymous—viz., 2 Peter; and only the Pastoral Epistles of Paul considerably marked by interpolations. Holtzmann, the most eminent of Baur's successors, admits in regard of 2 Thessalonians (*Einleitung*, p. 216) that "the question is no longer as to whether the Epistle should be pushed down into the post-apostolic age, but whether, on the other hand, it does not actually reach back to the lifetime of the Apostle, in which case it is consequently genuine, and must have been written soon after 1 Thessalonians, about the year 54." Jülicher, a pupil of the same school, concludes his examination by saying (*Einleitung*, p. 44), "If one is content to make fair and reasonable claims on a Pauline Epistle, no occasion will be found to ascribe 2 Thessalonians to an author less original or of less powerful mind than Paul himself."

The nearer this Epistle is brought to St. Paul's lifetime, the more improbable, and needless, becomes the theory of spurious authorship. The language of II. ii. 2 and iii. 17 raises a strong presumption against personation. Professing in his first word to be "Paul," and claiming in ii. 15 the First Epistle for his own, the writer solemnly guards his readers against this very danger; to father the letter on some well-meaning disciple writing as though he were Paul, in the Apostle's vein and by way of supplement to his teaching, is to contradict the explicit testimony of the document. The Epistle is no innocent pseudepigraph. It proceeds either from Paul himself, or from some one who wishes to be taken for him, and who attempts to cover his deception by denouncing it. Were it conceivable that a composition of this nature, spurious throughout or in its principal passages, could have found currency in the second century, that it should have been palmed upon the Thessalonian Church within ten years of the Apostle's death—for this is what we

are asked to believe, on the assumption of inauthenticity—is a thing incredible in no ordinary degree. The presence and influence of this Epistle in post-apostolic times are better attested even than in the case of 1 Thessalonians; it is used by Polycarp (*ad Philipp.*, xi. 4), and by Justin Martyr (*Dial.*, chaps. xxxii., cx.),—viz., in chap. ii. 3 ff., the peculiar and most contested part of the Epistle, and in chap. iii. 15. In view of the two verses above referred to, these writers can hardly have employed the letter in the manner and connexion in which they do, without ascribing it to the author whose name it bears. Hilgenfeld, Pfleiderer, and Bahnsen remain alone in reading chap. ii. 1–12 as a polemic against Gnosticism (with the Episcopate for "the restrainer"), belonging to the epoch of Trajan.

The theory prevalent amongst those who still contest St. Paul's authorship is that 2 Thessalonians dates from the juncture between the assassination of the Emperor Nero in June 68 A.D. and the fall of Jerusalem in August 70, and is contemporary with and closely parallel to Revelation xiii., xvii., and that by "the man of lawlessness" is intended the dead Nero, who was then and for long afterwards supposed by many to be still living concealed in the East, the fear of his return to power adding a further element of horror to the wild confusion of the times. A prophecy based upon a false rumour like this, and itself speedily falsified by the event, would surely have been discredited from the beginning. The original readers cannot have suspected the legendary *Nero redivivus* in "the adversary" of 2 Thessalonians ii. 3 ff. The fact is that no real trace of the Nero legend is discoverable in 2 Thessalonians (see B. Weiss's *Apocalyptische Studien, ad rem*); this groundless speculation of Kern and Baur should be dismissed from criticism. The distinctive traits of the character and career of Nero, while they have left their mark on the Apocalypse of St. John, are wanting here. 2 Thessalonians

belongs to *pre-Neronian* Apocalyptic, and falls therefore within the lifetime of St. Paul. The true historical position is that of Spitta (*Urchristenthum*, I. p. 125; similarly von Hofmann, Klöpper, Zahn)—viz., that in "the lawless one" of chap. ii. the image of Antiochus Epiphanes as idealized in the Book of Daniel, and of Caius Caligula as known to St. Paul, have been "smelted together," and that the Emperor Caius represented to the mind of the writer the furthest development which "the mystery of lawlessness," in its continuous "working," had attained up to his own time.

Spitta's hypothesis proceeds upon the datum just stated. He conceives the real author of 2 Thessalonians to have been *St. Timothy*, writing by St. Paul's side at Corinth under the Apostle's suggestion and on his account, but writing out of his own mind and as the member of the missionary band who had been most recently present and teaching in Thessalonica. Spitta thus seeks to account both for the singular *resemblance* of the Second Epistle to the First, and its singular *differences*. (1) Under the former head it is observed that, outside of ii. 2–12, there are but nine verses in 2 Thessalonians which do not reflect the language and ideas of 1 Thessalonians. In its whole conception as well as in vocabulary and phrasing, apart from the peculiar eschatological passages, the later Epistle is an echo of the earlier; the spontaneity and freshness that one expects to find in the Apostle's work are wanting here; indeed, it is said that Paul, had he wished to do so, could not have repeated himself thus closely without reading his former letter for the purpose. Such imitation, it is argued, would be very natural in Timothy, with Paul's First Epistle before him as a model, when writing to the same Church shortly afterwards on his master's behalf and in their joint name. Amid this sameness of expression, we miss the warm gush and lively play of feeling—the *Paulinum pectus*

that glows in the First Epistle, and which vindicates it so strongly for its author. The tone is more cool and official throughout. There is a measured and almost laboured turn of speech (comp. II. i. 3–7, ii. 13 f., with I. 2–5, iii. 9 f.; II. i. 10–12, with I. ii. 19 f., iii. 11 ff.; II. iii. 7 ff., with I. ii. 7 ff.), which betrays the absence of the master mind, and the larger part played by the secretary—presumably Timothy—in the composition of this letter.

Bornemann fairly accounts for the contrast thus described by pointing out the fact that by the date of the Second Epistle Paul was immersed in Corinthian affairs, and his heart was no longer away at Thessalonica as when he first wrote; moreover, the intense and critical experience out of which the First Epistle sprang had stamped itself deeply on the soul of the Apostle, so that in taking up the pen again and writing, after a short interval, to a Church whose condition gave no new turn to his reflexions, the former train of thought and expression recurred to him, more or less unconsciously, and the Second Epistle naturally became a supplement and largely a rehearsal of the First. To this explanation may be added the two considerations: first, that the very occasion of this supplement—the continuance of the morbid excitement about the Parousia, and of the disorder lightly touched upon in I. iv. 10 ff. and severely censured in II. iii. 6–16—involved a certain surprise and disappointment, which inevitably chilled the writer's cordiality and made the emphasis of affection and the *empressement* of the First Epistle impossible in this. Galatians and 1 Corinthians exhibit fluctuations of feeling, within the same Epistle, not unlike that which distinguishes 2nd from 1st Thessalonians. Further, and in the second place, the visions rising before the Apostle's mind in chaps. i. 5–10, ii. 2–12, were of such a nature as to throw the writer into the mood of solemn contemplation rather than of familiar intercourse.

When Spitta comes to the original part of 2 Thessalonians —chaps. ii. 1–12 (the signs premonitory of the Day of the Lord) and iii. 6–15 (the excommunication of idlers)—his theory fails. He sees in ii. 5 a reminder of *St. Timothy's* teaching at Thessalonica, supposing that St. Paul's younger helper had views respecting the Last Things more definite in some respects, and more Jewish in colouring, than those of his leader, who spoke of the coming of "the day" as altogether indeterminate. He thinks that Timothy had adopted some *Jewish* Apocalypse of Caligula's time (he was conversant with "sacred writings," 2 Timothy iii. 15, and 2 Thessalonians, though quotations are wanting in it, is steeped in Old Testament language beyond any other Pauline Epistle), to which he gave a Christian turn, shaping it into his prophecy respecting "the mystery of iniquity," which lies outside of Paul's doctrine and is nowhere else hinted at in the Epistles. But considering the chasm which lay between the Pauline mission and Judaism, it is highly improbable that either Timothy should have borrowed, or Paul endorsed, a non-Christian Apocalypse; if the conception of *vv.* 3–5 goes back, as in all likelihood it does, to the epoch of Caligula, there is no reason why it should not have originated in the Apostle's own mind, since by the year 40 he was already a Christian, or amongst the ranks of the "prophets and teachers" numerous at Jerusalem and Antioch in the fifth Christian decade. Caligula's outrage on the Temple was a sign of the times that could hardly fail to stir the prophetic spirit of the Church, while it roused the passionate anger of the whole Jewish world. The expressions of 2 Thessalonians ii. 5–7 suggest that "the man of lawlessness" was no new figure to Christian imagination; his image, based on the Antiochus-Caligula model, had probably become a familiar object in other Christian circles before the Apostles preached in Thessalonica. It is true that this representation never appears

again in the Epistles. But this does not prove that St. Paul at no time held the doctrine it embodies, nor even that he ceased to hold it at a later time. The circumstances calling for its inculcation at Thessalonica were such as did not recur. In later Epistles the Parousia recedes to a more distant future, and a glorious intervening prospect for the world opens out in Romans xi.; but there is nothing in this subsequent enlargement of view to forbid the expectation of such a finale to human history, and such a consummate revelation of Satanic power preceding the coming of the Lord, as this Epistle predicts. Our Lord's recorded prophecies of the Last Judgment cannot well be understood without the anticipation of a closing deadly struggle of this nature.

Being the last of the three whose names stand in the Address of 1 and 2 Thessalonians alike, had he written II. ii. 5 *propria persona* St. Timothy would have been bound to mark the distinction—by inserting "I Timotheus, indeed," or the like (comp. I. ii. 18)—the more so because this letter purports, even more explicitly than the First, to come from St. Paul himself (iii. 17). The entire passage, ii. 1–12, is marked by a loftiness of imagination, an assurance and dignity of manner, and a concise vigour of style, that we cannot well associate with what we know of the position and qualities of Timothy. Whatever might be said of other parts of the letter, this its unique and distinctive deliverance comes from no second-rate or second-hand composer of the Pauline school, but from the apostolic fountain-head. The other original paragraph of the Epistle, chap. iii. 6–15, speaks with the peculiar authority and decision characteristic of Paul's attitude to his Churches in disciplinary matters. If authority is more conspicuous here than tenderness, the persistence of the offence necessitates this altered tone. The readers could never have presumed that a charge so solemn and peremptory proceeded from

the third and least important of the three missionaries ostensibly writing to them, that "we" throughout the passage meant in reality Timothy alone, and that Paul, who immediately afterwards signs the letter with his own hand, had allowed his assistant to give orders that did not really proceed from himself. The additional reason alleged in *v.* 9 for the Apostle's "working with" his "own hands" is different from that of 1 Thessalonians ii. 9 (repeated here in *v.* 8), but is quite consistent therewith and pertinent to the occasion, while it is well supported by the parallels found in 1 Corinthians iv. 17, xi. 1; Philippians iii. 17; Acts xx. 34 f.

The contradiction between I. v. 2–10 and II. ii. 1–12, so often urged in evidence of dual authorship, disappears on closer examination. The First Epistle represents the Parousia as *near and sudden*, the Second as *more distant and known by premonitory signs*. But the second passage is expressly written to correct an erroneous inference which the writer conceives may have been drawn from the first, and to which, if unguardedly read, the words of 1 Thessalonians certainly lend themselves. The premonitory sign, viz., that of "the adversary's" coming, shows that the end, though it may be near, is *not immediate*. Moreover, as stated in I. v. 3 ff., it is the unbelievers, "in darkness" and "sleeping," whom "the day" will "overtake as a thief" (or "as thieves") with its "sudden destruction"; those "of the day," who are "awake" and "sober," may surely expect to have such warning and foresight as the Second Epistle helps to furnish. It is true, as Bornemann says, that if a candidate at some theological examination were to bring forward in his essay on "The Last Things" such statements as are found in these two passages, set in bald juxtaposition and without explanation, his work would be judged defective and contradictory. But St. Paul writes under conditions widely removed from these: he glances now

at one side now at another, as practical need requires, of a body of truth already orally communicated in its main outlines, with many details present to the minds of the readers and completing the sense of what is thus conveyed by writing, which he has no occasion to restate in full and recapitulate. Only when a *speedy* return of the Lord had been expected, could the thought be entertained that His day had actually arrived (II. ii. 2). The mistake that is reproved in the Second Epistle bears witness to the startling announcement made in the First Epistle, for this is its natural and almost inevitable exaggeration. No *date* is supplied in II. ii. for the advent of Antichrist; and the "times and seasons" remain equally uncertain in 2 and 1 Thessalonians. The contrast here noticeable in the two letters of Paul is found in contiguous sentences from our Lord's own predictions: Matthew xxiv. 33 gives a *preparatory sign*, while *v.* 36 declares the wholly *uncertain date* of the consummation.

The theories of *interpolation* have found but little acceptance. They account for the striking difference between 2 Thessalonians ii. 2–12 (to which i. 5–12 might be added) and 1 Thessalonians, and the equally striking parallelism which the Second Epistle in its other parts present to the First, by attributing to the two sections a different origin. P. W. Schmidt, in the work above referred to (see also the *Short Protestant Commentary*, by Schmidt and others, vol. II.: Eng. transl.), distinguishes a genuine Epistle of Paul consisting of chaps. i. 1–4, ii. 12*a*, ii. 13–iii. 18, treating the rest as an interpolation made about the year 69 by some half-Judaistic Christian akin to the author of Revelation xiii., wishing to allay excitement respecting the Parousia, who worked up the idea of the *Nero redivivus* into an apocalypse, and employed an old and perhaps neglected letter of the Apostle as a vehicle for this prophecy of his own. Dr. S. Davidson (*Introduction to the Study*

of the New Testament,[2] vol. I. pp. 336–348) adopted a similar view. But this compromise, while open to most of the objections that have been brought against the hypothesis of personation, raises others peculiar to itself. It ascribes to Paul an Epistle from which the pith and point have been extracted—little more than a shell without the kernel—weak and disconnected in its earlier part, and a Second to the Thessalonians following hard upon the First yet wanting in reference to the Parousia so conspicuous in the previous letter. Schmiedel prefers to regard the whole as spurious. If a partition must be made upon these lines, one would rather adopt A. Hausrath's view (in his *History of the Times of the Apostles*, translated, *ad rem*), that 2 Thessalonians ii. 1–12 is a genuine Pauline fragment, which some later Paulinist has furnished with an epistolary framework in order to give it circulation amongst his master's works.

Such conjectures are, however, unnecessary, and altogether speculative. The text and tradition of the Epistle afford no ground for believing that it ever existed in any form than that we know. Where the Apostle has the same things to say and the same feelings to express which found utterance in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, he writes in the same strain, but in a manner more ordinary and subdued as the flood of emotion that dictated the First Epistle has subsided and his mind has become engrossed with other interests. Where new ideas and altered needs on the part of his readers require it, as in i. 5–12, ii. 2–12, and iii. 6–15, he strikes out in new directions with the vehemence and originality characteristic of his genius.

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