

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

and policy. Error cannot prevail against the truth as it is in Jesus. "Our little systems have their day"; but the fellowship of souls which rests upon the foundation of the Apostles has within it the power of an indissoluble life.

Such are the three guarantees of the permanence of Christian doctrine and the Christian life, as they were conceived by St. John and are asserted by him here at his last hour, when the tempests of persecution and sceptical error were on all sides let loose against the Church. They are the witness of the Spirit in the soul, the word on the lips of the Apostles transmitted by their pen, and the living Christ, the pledged executor of His own promise of eternal life.

GEORGE G. FINDLAY.

MR. CHARLES' APOCALYPSE OF BARUCH.

It is curious that just at the very time when traditionalists were congratulating themselves over the conversion of Harnack to critical orthodoxy (and certainly they have a right to such congratulation, for the preface to his new work on the *Chronology of the Early Christian Literature* is the biggest stroke of luck, from a controversial point of view, that has ever fallen in their way) there should have appeared in England a piece of critical investigation of which one could say with perfect confidence that it was "made in Germany"; for there is nothing except the title page to the contrary, and it displays all the methods of modern criticism, which for all practical purposes is Teutonic criticism, to the best advantage. So much so that we should not wonder if the book did not furnish a good field for a trial of strength between those who hold that there is always a presumption that a book is a unit and has an author, and those who hold that ancient books are very rarely single compositions, and that they hardly ever belong

to the authors whose names they bear or to the times in which those authors lived.

Mr. Charles' new work, *The Apocalypse of Baruch*, which he is the first to edit from the Syriac in a form accessible to English readers, is the best example that English literature has ever had of the modern analysis of ancient books; and those to whom such criticism is still obscure cannot do better than study the way in which the artist unravels the tangled skein of authorship in the most beautiful of all the Apocalypses that have come down to us. The study can be made with great freedom from prejudice, for the Apocalypse in question is not a canonical book, and it can be handled with greater freedom than the Apocalypse in the New Testament, and without any conservative anxiety as to the results of the investigation—unless such anxiety should be provoked by the reflection that the disintegration of Baruch may have an inductive action upon Apocalyptic literature generally, not excluding the New Testament.

Now of Oriental and semi-Oriental books we may say what one would say of Oriental cities, that they are usually examples of rebuilding, and that it is very seldom that the stones are from one quarry or hewn at one period. The same instinct which takes the pillars of one temple to adorn another, and makes the walls of a house unprofitably gay with votive tablets from public buildings that have fallen into ruin, appears in literature in the adaptation of works which have become unpopular, or obsolescent, to the needs of a later day than that of their first authors, and to political and religious ends which are often the direct opposites of what was intended at their first publication. Probably the Apocalyptic literature furnishes a better proof of this adaptation than any other kind of books. For, of necessity, most Apocalypses are short-lived; they are not, and unless they are eschatologically inspired can-

not be, eternal in the heavens; their subject matter is the agony of an hour, it may be of the birth-pangs of the Messiah, or it may be of some lesser and more local dolours; but inasmuch as the story of the Apocalypse is the pain of one member only in the body of suffering humanity, and the solution of the anguish is predicted as the welfare of that particular member, we can hardly expect that a permanent place in literature can be found for the average Apocalypse. Who would expect the world to be permanently interested in the sorrows of Barcocheba, or to consider the siege of Bether as more than a *mauvais quart d'heure* in universal history. If Apocalypses did not betray themselves by indulging in false prophecies, they would be betrayed by their own exaggerations of the relative proportions of a political and religious situation. The only thing that saved them from oblivion is that they had the courage, the magnificent courage, to deal with the fortunes of the Kingdom of God; and if modern criticism is right in its outlook, even this preservative has been but partially operative. Many have perished for one that survives.

We admit that it is difficult to appreciate or reconstruct a lost literature. Ask the majority of traditional critics whether there was any literary activity in Palestine in the hundred and fifty years preceding the birth of our Lord, and they will probably reply in a manner which shows that they believe that literature in that period was as dead as prophecy. To say that our Lord had a library, by which we only mean that other books were accessible to Him besides those which formed the accepted Jewish Canon, sounds fantastic and preposterous, especially to the person who suspects that such books might be held to have coloured the thought or affected the style of the Master. It is only slowly that it has dawned upon the students of theology that the period immediately before the Advent was one of intense literary activity. We are always ready to

label an unknown region as Sahara, until exploration forces the contrary upon us.

We make these remarks in the interests of Mr. Charles' new book, for we confess to have been startled at the number of authors that he has brought to light; they are not single spies, but Apocalyptic battalions of Pharisees, Sadducees, and Zealots. They are like the "never-ending line" of Wordsworth's daffodils, only they are not a jocund company, and they do not fill our hearts with permanent or recurrent rapture. They multiply like Banquo's offspring when seen in the witches' glasses as if they would stretch till the crack of doom, and orthodox criticism knows that they will push us from our stools. It is almost as bad as Pentateuch criticism to be told that it took at least eight people to write the *Apocalypse of Baruch*; and that is not the worst of it, as will be seen as we proceed.

Of the books which may properly be called Apocalyptic, the most important, outside of the Canon, are Enoch, the fourth book of Ezra, and Baruch. Under the latter title we do not include the Old Testament Apocrypha which bear the name of the friend of Jeremiah, but that group of books which includes the *Apocalypse of Baruch*, the *Rest of the Words of Baruch*, and one or two other similar books of which traces are extant. A very slight acquaintance with these works suffices to establish the priority in a general sense of the book of Enoch which is clearly also anterior to most of the New Testament books, upon which it has left distinct traces. The other books mentioned have been the subjects of keen critical contention. There is much common matter and common method in *Fourth Ezra* and in the *Apocalypse of Baruch*; as for the tract called the *Rest of the Words of Baruch*, it is certainly based upon the Greek form (unhappily lost) of the *Apocalypse of Baruch*; and as Mr. Charles accepts my proof that the *Rest of the Words* was written in the year 136 A.D. or thereabouts, it will be seen

that the older parts of the Baruch and Ezra literature go back to at least as far as the time of production of the New Testament itself. They belong to the environment if not to the antecedents of the New Testament; they reproduce for us the literary and intellectual air which was breathed by apostolic and subapostolic men, though perhaps the atmosphere is sometimes surcharged with sulphur.

Now it has been a grave question whether of the two, the *Apocalypse of Baruch* and the *Fourth Book of Ezra* is the earlier, and whether one of them is indebted to the other.

Many leading critics have held that Baruch was a later form of Ezra, with important theological modifications; amongst these are such weighty names as those of Ewald, Renan, Drummond, Hilgenfeld, and Dillmann. But over against these stands a strong opposition, of which the chief is perhaps Schürer, who maintains the very opposite theory, viz., that Baruch is the earlier work.

Mr. Charles, in England, and Kabisch, in Germany, say that both of the contesting schools have brought forward valid arguments, but that they are vitiated by the assumption that each of the books is by a single hand. So far from this being the case, Mr. Charles affirms there are in the extant *Apocalypse of Baruch* the remains of three Messianic Apocalypses, of one primitive Apocalypse of Baruch, of two subsequent Apocalyptists, of some passages by a Sadducean hand, and of a final editor—eight authors, if we have counted rightly. But then we have to consider that *Fourth Ezra* is also composite, and it consists (following Kabisch's analysis as a working hypothesis) of a Salathiel-Apocalypse, an Ezra-Apocalypse, an Eagle-Vision, a Son-of-Man Vision, an Ezra-Fragment, all brought together by an editor belonging to the Zealot party—six more Apocalyptists, making fourteen in all, in place of the two about whom the critics have been hitherto bandying words confusedly. How in-

teresting these books will be when printed in the Polychrome edition of the New Testament! And this is not all; for, when we dig into the text itself, fresh Apocalyptic matter turns up ("and often when I go to plough, the ploughshare turns them out"). For example, in the commentary on chap. xxix. 4 we have a note on the passage that "Behemoth shall be revealed from his place, and Leviathan will ascend from the sea, those two great monsters which I created on the fifth day of creation. And I kept them until that time, and then they will be for food for all that are left." The parallel to this in Fourth Ezra vi. 49-52 is, "And then thou hast preserved two animals: the name of the one thou hast called Behemoth, and the name of the second thou hast called Leviathan, and thou hast separated them one from the other, for the seventh part where the water was could not contain them. And thou gavest Behemoth one part which was dried up on the third day, that he might dwell in it, where are a thousand mountains; but to Leviathan thou gavest the seventh part, which is the moist part, and thou hast preserved them that they may be for food for whom thou wilt and when thou wilt." Mr. Charles argues ingeniously that neither of these passages suffices exactly to explain the other, and with characteristic boldness says that they are both using the text of a lost hexaëmeron or story of the six days of Creation. And if this be true, and there is much to be said for it, the number of authors with whom we have to deal is *fifteen*, and more may probably be found.

Now are we tending towards an absurdity, and arriving at the place where the chorus is entitled to interject "risum teneatis amici?" By no means; for we turn up some things which look like verifications. For example, the reader will notice in the preceding extract from iv. Ezra that there is a knowledge of Hebrew involved; the writer has assigned to Behemoth a place where there are a

thousand mountains: this is due to the expression of the Psalmist, "the cattle (*behemoth*) upon a thousand hills." Yet it comes in quite incidentally; it is not borrowed from Baruch, and there is no air of research about it. How are we to explain this Hebrew allusion? Mr. Charles would reply, Baruch and Ezra were both written in Hebrew. The suggestion had been made before, but not so as to deserve much attention. It is startling to be told that two leading Apocalypses, of which one, Baruch, is extant in Syriac, and the other in versions derived from a lost Greek text, go back behind their Greek texts into Hebrew originals! But the verisimilitude increases as we read a little further in Baruch. If Baruch was originally Hebrew, the lost hexaëmeron, which told of Behemoth and Leviathan, was Hebrew also. But in Baruch there follows immediately the story of the Vine with the Ten Thousand Clusters and the Wheat with the Ten Thousand Ears, which Papias put, in a slightly different form, into the mouth of our Lord. Mr. Charles does not refer this story to his lost hexaëmeron, though I do not see why not, but to a lost Apocalypse (add one in that case to our number of lost books). Now the interesting point is that I had demonstrated in the EXPOSITOR for 1895, pp. 448, 449, that this story must have been primitively *in Hebrew*, for it presupposes either a various reading or a variant interpretation in the blessing of Isaac (Gen. xxvii. 28), where by reading רב as רבי we turn "plenty of corn and wine" into "10,000 of corn and wine," which is explained as what will happen in the days of the Messianic felicity. Mr. Charles endorses my explanation, and points out that the legend already exists in a simple form in the book of Enoch x. 19 ("all the seed which is sown will bear *ten thousand*"). So here we are back on Hebrew ground, and Mr. Charles has certainly found confirmation for his theory that Baruch and iv. Ezra are independent and that they are primitively Hebrew.

But it is time to turn sceptic, and see what can be adduced against Mr. Charles' disintegrations. The main difficulty to me seems still to lie in the explanation that he requires us to find of the similarity in structure of the two Apocalypses and their internal nexus. So striking is this similarity that it was held by Ewald (and Mr. Charles points out that Ryle inclines to the same view) that the two Apocalypses are by the same hand. But this view adds the difficulties which are involved in the internal inconsistency of each Apocalypse with itself to those which are involved in their inconsistency with one another, and removes no part of the problem from the region of dispute except the single question of priority. We may admit so much to Mr. Charles, and yet revert to the singular literary parallelisms between the two books, and ask whether they can be satisfactorily explained by a theory of common sources.

We will take a single example by way of illustration. I have pointed out in my edition of the *Rest of the Words of Baruch* that there is an Apocalyptic prominence given in this branch of literature to Hebron and the Oak of Abraham. This oak was held to be oracular, a parallel to the burning bush of Moses (as is sometimes stated in plain words, but is always implied). Here God talks with man in vision or by angelic visitation, and the place is so holy that no buildings are allowed in the precincts. It is as much an oracle as Delphi or Dodona. Consequently, we must read these Apocalypses under the oak at Mamre, if we are to understand them rightly:

Turn to *Apoc. Baruch*, c. vi., and we find that Baruch leaves the people, and goes forth and stands by the oak. According to the context, this oak should be in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem. Fritzsche compared this oak with the oak at Hebron, but, according to Mr. Charles, this is an erroneous reference. We think Fritzsche is right, and that Baruch has misunderstood what he is working on; for in

c. lxxvii. 18 we again find Baruch sitting under the shadow of the branches of an oak; further, in c. lv. 1, we find the words, "I sat there under *the* tree (so, not as translated by Charles, 'under the shadow of a tree') that I might rest under the shadow of the branches." The tree is obviously again the oak, and in each case the question has to be asked, "What oak?" In c. 47 Baruch says, "I go to Hebron, for thither the Mighty One hath sent me." If the book were from a single author, we should say that it was obvious that the writer had prepared the scene for Baruch's visions under the oak at Hebron, and the only misunderstanding was one in geography; he did not know how far it was from Jerusalem to Hebron. In other words, he was not a Jerusalem man, but a person working under the influence of Jerusalem documents. But, whether the Apocalypse of Baruch is a single composition or not, the influence of Hebron and Mamre upon it is clear.

Mr. Charles allows that three of his sources are involved in the question, for c. lv. 1 (alluding to "the tree") comes, according to him, from his third Messiah-Apocalypse, A₃, and the allusions to "the oak" from the source which he culls B₁, the primitive Baruch-Apocalypse, while the allusion to "Hebron" he is inclined to refer to his source B₂. Now, as we cannot detach either "the tree" or "the oak" from an origin which is ultimately the oracle at Hebron, we are obliged to admit that three out of Mr. Charles' sources are Hebron-Apocalypses. The difficulty is a real one; it is not merely that the sources are too numerous, but that they begin to have a family likeness. One feels like asking again whether the use of iv. Ezra, which is altogether rooted in Hebron, would not be a more satisfactory explanation. We make the suggestion not with the idea that we have upset Mr. Charles' argument for divided authorship, but merely in the desire for more illumination on what is to us a difficult point in the analysis. Perhaps it will grow

clearer as we become more familiar with the disintegration which Mr. Charles has effected.

Turning to the notes which accompany the translation, we can only say that they are a mine of information on Judæo-Christian matters. We were especially interested with Mr. Charles' note on the sin of Manasseh; according to Baruch, he had made an image with five faces, four of which looked to the four winds, and the fifth, on the summit, was an adversary of the zeal of the Mighty One. Readers of Ephrem's *Commentary on the Diatessaron* will remember that he explains "the seven evil spirits" of the Gospel as those which entered into Israel, and counts four of them as derived from the four-faced image of Manasseh. Now, Mr. Charles points out that this curious gloss upon 2 Chronicles xxxiii. 7 is already in the Peshito, and we may therefore assume that Ephrem derived his knowledge of Manasseh's sin from the text of the Peshito, where the image is said to have been "an image with four faces," and no mention is made of a fifth. What is significant is the antiquity of the gloss, which appears in the most evolved form in Baruch as early as A.D. 100(?), if we may trust the date assigned to this part of the book by Mr. Charles. Mr. Charles refers also to Talmud, *Sanhedrin*, 103*b*, where it is said that Manasseh "made for his idol one face, and in the end he made for it four faces, that the Shekinah might see it and be provoked." This appears to correspond with Baruch's "adversary of the zeal of the Mighty One," quoted above. But both expressions run back into the Hebrew text, "to do evil before the Lord, and provoke Him." And no explanation has apparently yet been found of the statement that Manasseh made an image with four (or five) faces.

In c. xxix. 7 and c. lxxiii. 2, where we have the expressions, "clouds distilling the dew of health," "healing will descend in dew," a reference should have been made to the

passage of the Old Testament upon which the Apocalyptist is working. It is Isaiah xxvi. 19, according to the LXX., which underlies the passage. How will this affect the theory of a Hebrew original?

There are a number of errors in the printing of the Syriac which the reader will readily correct.

Whether Mr. Charles succeeds in establishing all his positions or not, he has certainly written a very valuable work, for which the students of Apocalyptic Literature will give him their hearty thanks.

J. RENDEL HARRIS.

THE LAMB ON THE THRONE.

(REVELATION V. AND VI.)

THERE are two opposite things which cause a literary work to suffer—the unpopularity or the over-popularity of its subject. It may deal with themes so high as to be above the common appreciation; or it may be so intimately connected with the interests of life that its phrases have become household words. The Bible belongs to the last of these. Strange as it may sound, it is not too much to say that its literature has suffered from its own popularity. Its words have become so familiar that to the mass of readers they have lost their freshness. We have come to associate the Bible with simplicity as distinguished from originality. We look upon it as the wisdom of God seen through the foolishness of man, a rich gem in a very mean casket. A greater delusion is not to be conceived. Lord Byron says, that from being compelled to repeat the odes of Horace at school he was never able in after life to see their literary beauty. This is still more true of the Bible. We are taught its words before we can understand the half of their meaning. I do not condemn the practice;