

A Conservative Thinks Again About Daniel.

(Concluded from page 346.)

Daniel 6, the story of the prophet in the lion's den, has a similar relevance in maintaining the faith of the Jewish resisters against those who would force them to abandon the worship of the one true God. In view of the constant animosity revealed in 1 Maccabees against the apostate informers, who allied themselves with Antiochus, we may not inaptly recall the fate of those who sent Daniel to the lions; cf. Daniel xii. 2.

To this correspondence of historical situation must be added the theological likeness between the book of Daniel and the post-exilic age of Judaism. Its doctrines of angels, resurrection, predestination, judgment and limited dualism, together with its general view of piety, do seem to correspond more with what we find in the non-canonical literature. On the whole, Driver's judgment on this matter seems justified: "This atmosphere and tone are not those of any other writings belonging to the period of the exile; they are rather those of a stage intermediate between that of the early post-exilic and that of the early post-Biblical Jewish literature" (Intro., to O.T. p. 477). It certainly is extraordinary that immediately after the crisis caused by Antiochus, in which it is postulated that the book of Daniel arose, there appeared a spate of apocalyptic works, written in a similar style to Daniel, that did not cease till the close of the first century A.D. The likeness extends to content as well as form, though it is true that the high standard set by the exemplar is not maintained in these writings. But the connection between Daniel and the pseudepigraphical writings in general remains as an indication of the age in which the former appeared.

To this conclusion also points the non-inclusion of Daniel in the Hebrew canon of the prophets. A satisfactory explanation for this omission, apart from the postulate of the late date of this book, has yet to be produced.

It is probable that the second century date of Daniel would long ago have been accepted by conservative theologians were it not for certain unwelcome consequences which seem to throw the book into disrepute and therefore degrade one's view of the Bible as a whole. These factors we shall proceed to face.

First of all, there is the obvious objection that the Kingdom of God did not appear after the overthrow of Antiochus: how, then, can he and his kingdom be the forerunners of the con-

summation? In one sense he is not. The juxtaposition of his career and the coming of the Kingdom is similar to the view of Isaiah, wherein the Kingdom is seen close on the heels of the fall of Sennacherib, similar to that of the exilic prophets, who look for the new age consequent on the end of the exile, similar to that of the New Testament seer, who looked for the dénouement after the approaching overthrow of Domitian, similar, we may add, to that portrayal of the End given by our Lord in His eschatological discourse, where no indication whatever is given of the stretch of ages between the fall of Jerusalem and the Parousia. It is, in other words, simply the view of every prophet. It would seem that God has been pleased to show to His servants the issues of time, but not the times themselves. Before this fact, whether in Daniel or in the Gospels' we must bow, not complain. In this respect, therefore, Daniel is on a par with the Biblical prophets as a whole, and the objection falls to the ground.

More serious is the charge that, on the assumption that "Daniel" was never written by Daniel, the book is a forgery and so "a lie in the name of God." It is unfortunate that conservative expositors have vied with each other in their use of abuse when making this point. Auberlen e.g. wrote: "Speak of the *fraus pia* in terms as lenient and exculpatory as you can devise, it is, and must always remain, a *lie*, if I consciously, and with a definite purpose pretend to be another than I really am; and moreover it is a lie of the blackest die, if I speak of divine revelations which were never really vouchsafed to me; indeed, according to the Old Testament, this is the very thing which constitutes a false prophet. . . . Would not a true Israelite shudder in his heart of hearts at the thought of inventing divine revelations? . . . From olden times it has been thought a heinous crime to remove boundaries and landmarks; but it is the boast and glory of our day to remove the holiest of all boundary lines, that between truth and a lie, and to invent something intermediate." Language of this kind leads people astray, as it led the present writer astray, and he finds it hard to forgive such men for their unwarranted excesses now that he knows how wrong they are. The fact remains, despite these asseverations of Pusey, Auberlen and company, that the writers e.g. of the Enoch literature were not *villains*; you have but to read the books for yourself to see how absurd the notion is; their contribution to religious thought is outstanding. So also the apocalypse ascribed to Baruch contains passages of the highest spiritual worth. 2 Esdras is one of the most tragic and earnest pieces of religious writing in existence, though it is sent out in the name of Ezra. The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs present an ethic that in many ways is an advance on

anything in the Old Testament; doubtless the reason for this is that they represent the outcome of prolonged meditation on Old Testament teaching, but the speeches are put in the mouths of the twelve sons of Jacob. The apocalyptic literature of post-exilic Judaism is rightly claimed by Charles to be the cradle of Christianity, in that it, rather than the legal side of Judaism, preserved the spiritual conceptions of the old dispensation and moulded the thought of the earliest adherents to Christianity. That fact in itself shows that the libel on the pseudonymous writers of apocalyptic is wrong, terribly wrong, and ought never to be repeated again.

Into the complicated reason for the pseudonymous character of the Jewish apocalypses it is not possible to venture here. Whether H. H. Rowley is right in thinking that the attribution of the Daniel prophecies to Daniel was in the nature of an accident due to the necessity of showing that the prophecies came from the same author who wrote the stories (it being presumed that the book first appeared piecemeal, as occasion arose) and that other apocalyptists woodenly copied his example without his reason, or whether more deep-seated factors, such as those adduced by Charles, Gunkel and Guillaume, are implied in the matter, there can be no doubt that the attribution of prophecies to an ancient seer was done with the best of motives. These men did not lie in the name of the Lord; they sent out in a more worthy name than their own, a message they believed to be from God, and so for ever withheld their identity from the world. That sounds more like self-effacement than prevarication, and the men who wrote these books are to be honoured, not vilified. The author of the book of Daniel, if he lived in the fearful days of the persecution of Antiochus, should be accorded a place in the list of the great unknown who serve their God as best they can and are content that none should know but He.

A further difficulty arises, not so much on the hypothesis of its late date, but on the view that the visions find their goal in the age of Antiochus: the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks "from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem" until the overthrow of the oppressor and the revelation of the Kingdom of God is not an exact one. If the *terminus a quo* be the usually adopted date of the overthrow of Jerusalem 586 B.C., then we overstep the throwing off the yoke of Antiochus (at the cleansing of the temple) by something like sixty-seven years. On the other hand, the description of xi. 26-27, in common with the other descriptions of the "time times and a half" of the book, appears without doubt to have this ruler in mind. It does not seem permissible, because apparent

error is introduced into the visions, immediately to exclude that interpretation from consideration. The usual explanation of this discrepancy is that the writer followed the inaccurate chronology of his period, other historians being similarly at fault in their records. If that be so, the discrepancy can hardly be a fault on his part. It is also possible that we are to understand the "seventy sevens" simply as a round designation of the period in question. The first seven weeks are specifically mentioned as marking out the interval to the appearance of Joshua and Zerubbabel, the last week is carefully defined because it is part of the author's scheme of the end, but the period between needs no such exactitude; it is sufficient that the prophet can say of Jeremiah's seventy years, "Not seventy, but seventy times seven"; it would be foolish to have said, "sixty-nine times seven plus a little extra." Whatever the truth of the matter be, it cannot affect the question of the date of the book; it is a difficulty in face of the uniformity of the visions and must be settled by the expositors as an independent issue.

Objection is also taken to the identification of the fourth empire with the Greek because in the New Testament it is uniformly interpreted of the Roman Empire. Again, this is a point that has nothing to do with the date of Daniel. It would, however, be more accurate to say that the New Testament writers *re-interpret* the fourth empire as of Rome. It is well-known to students of the New Testament, that Old Testament statements are constantly applied in the New to situations that were never in the mind of the original authors. The Old Testament prophecies applied to Christ by Matthew and the Fourth Evangelist are cases in point, while the use of the Old Testament by the New Testament apocalypticist is original in the highest degree. This is not to say that the New Testament writers were at fault in so using the Old Testament: they were more concerned about the principles involved than exact exegesis, and modern students of prophecy are inclined to admit that such an attitude is more in agreement with the spirit of prophecy than our critical fathers realised (see e.g. Alfred Guillaume's remarks on Matthew's treatment of prophecy in *Prophecy and Divination* p. 176). Though this be admitted, it must not encourage us to neglect the exact exegesis of Old Testament prophecy; in the case of the visions of Daniel, it seems that the primary relevance of those visions was to the kingdom of Greece in its later stages.

Perhaps the most serious difficulty of all is that on the recognition of the fourth kingdom as the Greek, we are forced to postulate the third as the Persian, the second as the Median, and

the first as the Babylonian Empire, whereas we know that the Median Empire did not interpose itself between the Babylonian and Persian. Again, it must be recognised that this is a problem due to the natural exegesis of the book, not to any critical perversity; the older scholars who adopted the Greek view of the fourth empire only had the uncertain testimony of the Greek historians to compare with the Biblical narrative, whereas their modern successors have access to the contemporary Babylonian records. The Median Empire was *contemporaneous* with the Babylonian, and the two were merged into the realm of Cyrus. The author of our book spoke of Darius *the Mede* as succeeding Belshazzar and so felt it legitimate to speak of the Median Empire as stepping into the succession before Cyrus *the Persian* took control. Unfortunately, no one can identify Darius the Mede with any known historic personality. It is the opinion of most modern critics that he is the result of a confusion of traditions relating in the main to Cyrus and Darius Hystaspis. Conservative theologians revolt at the suggestion. In all candour, it must be said that until H. H. Rowley's work is refuted, *Darius the Mede and the Four World Empires of the Book of Daniel*, there is no alternative open to them, for Professor Rowley has all too well demolished every statement of the various hypotheses concerning Darius the Mede that has yet appeared.

But need the conservative theologians be offended? What if the author of the book of Daniel was confused concerning events that took place in foreign lands four centuries before he wrote? He was not really concerned with the Median Empire, any more than he was with the Babylonian or Persian. Two kingdoms only held his gaze, the Empire of Antiochus and the Kingdom of God: the others came into the picture only because he needed to traverse history from the exile to his own day, in order to put the real prophecy regarding these kingdoms (of Antiochus and of Heaven) into the mouth of his hero. A discrepancy concerning the person of a supposed eastern monarch of long ago had nothing to do with the validity of his message from God. As Rowley himself put it (in *The Story of the Bible*, vol. 1, p. 784), "If . . . these stories were written for an immediately practical end and not as a historical treatise, the author would be more concerned to make them the vehicle of his message than to make them historically inerrant. When Judaism was engaged in a life-and-death struggle, and issues of so great moment were at stake, a mere antiquarian interest in the sixth century would have been but a frivolity."

As far as the essential message of Daniel is concerned, the issue is something similar to the laboured attempts to harmonise

some of the variations in the synoptic accounts of the ministry of our Lord. The question, "Did our Lord heal Bartimaeus before He entered Jericho, while He was passing through it, or as He left it?" is of hardly any importance beside the major one, "Did our Lord really have the power to heal Bartimaeus, and did He actually exercise that power in so remarkable a way?" If He did, then arguments about which part of Jericho, or even which Jericho, was the scene of that act are of little moment; in that hapless individual the powers of the Kingdom of God were manifested, mediated through the Redeemer, and in that is implied our own salvation too, for the Lord of the Kingdom bestows the salvation of God even now on all that will receive it. Similarly, the crucial question in Daniel is, "Did the prophet who put his messages into the mouth of the ancient sage receive those messages from God? Is it true that the Kingdom of God will smite the colossus of world-sovereignty? Will the saints of the Most High possess the Kingdom? Are these visions of the Kingdom that shall know no end in harmony with the Biblical revelation as a whole?" With the New Testament in our hands we do not hesitate to answer, "Yes." Then Daniel is as truly inspired of the Holy Spirit as the prophecies of Isaiah, or the Letter to the Romans, or the Book of Revelation. The only people who could remain unsatisfied with so great an assurance are those who cannot conceive of revelation apart from absolute inerrancy. It is to be hoped that others, equally taught of the Spirit of God, will rejoice in the gain to faith that this view provides, and will realise how untrue is the charge that the affirmation of the late date of Daniel is disruptive of faith in the Word of God.

Finally, whatever our attitude be towards these problems, it is earnestly to be hoped that the extravagant, misleading and hurtful language used by earlier apologists regarding the book of Daniel will for ever disappear. It is monstrous that it should be regarded as a crime to hold the late date of this prophecy, or to dub all who incline to it as "modernist" or "infidel." That this is the prevalent attitude of Evangelicals is undeniable, and it is a slur on their name, for it is demonstrably untrue. Conservative theologians with a regard for fearless research should squash all such characterisations wherever they rise and encourage every attempt to illuminate the Word of God that comes to us in the name of Daniel. Meantime, if the highly respected professor, to whom reference was earlier made, should chance to read these lines, it is to be hoped that his abounding charity will cover the hasty imputation of one who has since become a "sadder and a wiser man!"

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