

## THE BOOK OF DANIEL AND ITS INTERPRETATION.<sup>1</sup>

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NO subject engrosses the mind of to-day more than the study of prophecy, and especially that side of prophecy which deals with the coming of the End, which is called Apocalypitics.

There is this difference between the form of language in which Prophecy is conveyed to our minds and Apocalypitics. A Prophet, strictly speaking, *hears* the Word of God. An Apocalyptic Seer *sees* it dramatically presented in a series of visions. And for this reason. A Prophet has to convey the message of Jehovah to his contemporaries in the language of their day. An Apocalypse, which deals with the Last Things, has to speak in SYMBOLS which can be understood of all men because he is addressing posterity in the language of all time. In Old Testament days Isaiah, though occasionally a Seer, was essentially a Prophet whose "ear the Lord wakened morning by morning and opened to hear as that of one of the initiated" (Isa. l. 4). Daniel, though a Prophet, was essentially a Seer—one who "saw," "beheld," "considered the visions of his head upon his bed" (Dan. vii., viii., ix., x.-xii.). So in New Testament times St. Paul's message chiefly came by "the *hearing* of faith." St. John's was a Revelation "of all things that he *saw*." Hence, the Book of Daniel, like its counterpart, the Book of Revelation, is specially to be studied in "these last times" (I Peter i. 20).

For we, too, like the Apostles, are nearing the end of an era. For them the Jewish era was passing away, and the Christian era was being set up. For the Fathers of the fifth century the Apostolic age was passing away and melting into the Catholic era. For Luther and our Reformers Catholicism was the departing system

<sup>1</sup> Being a continuation of two Papers on "The Fulfilment of Prophecy" and "The Book of Revelation," contributed by the same author to THE CHURCHMAN for April and August, 1916. Of lucid commentaries on this book I know of none. Hävernicks monumental work, the parent of all subsequent orthodox compilations, such as Dr. Pusey's, Dr. C. H. H. Wright's and the *Speaker's Commentary*, is largely out of date (1832); while Ewald's performance, which has laid the basis for all future High Critical exploits in this fruitful field, is itself founded upon an extravagant myth—that Daniel is a Maccabean fiction! A colossal Roman Catholic work in four volumes by Fabre D'Envieu champions Daniel along with the Apocrypha. Bishop Wordsworth and Auberlen are, perhaps, the most useful of any.

and the new era of Protestantism was coming in. To-day we stand on the eve of new changes greater still. The period of St. Peter the Apostle, and St. Augustine the Churchman, and Luther the Reformer, are yet to culminate, as Neander has said, in a fourth era in which there shall be emphasized not so much the incarnate or the redeeming as the ascended Christ and the outpouring of His Spirit in Pentecostal power.

The Book of Daniel is a uniquely human book written half in Hebrew and half in Chaldee. It is a contemporary document (Ezek. xiv. 14; xxviii. 3) coloured by the high-flown Persian grandeur of its age, but re-edited and revised so often since Ezra's day, and so clumsily adapted by the Septuagint translators to the requirements of their later day, that it is difficult to reproduce the exact features of the original text. Yet in the minutest particulars of historical *data*, passed over or contradicted by the ignorance of later heathen chroniclers, Daniel has been so amply confirmed by the verdict of the monuments that it may safely be said that the name of Darius alone, the last King of the Medes, is the only point left that presents any difficulty which still awaits the attestations of science.

What is the design of the Book of Daniel? To teach that there is a Providence in the world, that history is not (as Gibbon thought) a register of the crimes and follies of mankind but (as Lord Acton wrote) a record of the conscience of mankind.

“ There's a Divinity that shapes our ends  
Rough-hew them how we will.”

And this book was written “ to the end that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men and giveth it to whomsoever He will ” (iv. 17, v. 21).

In proof of this Daniel is permitted to see the full and final development of four great world-empires in all the glory of their power :—

1. The empire of **BABYLON**, with the consummate and brilliant Nebuchadnezzar at its head.
2. The empire of **PERSIA** conquered and led by the far-famed and magnanimous Cyrus the Great.
3. The empire of **GREECE** sped by the genius of the all-accomplished Alexander the Great.
4. The empire of **ROME** rebuilt on the ruins of the Republic and

attaining the climax of all worldly glory in the person of the immortal Julius Cæsar.

What a roll of names! What a succession of epoch-making events! But they were not to stand. *The Roman Empire was to be the last on earth.* In its day should be laid the foundations of a kingdom not of this world which should endure for ever. "In the days of these [Roman] kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never pass away." "A stone cut out without (human) hands shall smite the Image upon its feet of iron and clay and break them in pieces. And the stone that smote the Image shall become a great mountain and fill the whole earth" (chap. ii. 44, 45). *Christ's Kingdom was founded in Cæsar's day!*

Such were the visions of chapter ii. In chapter vii., Daniel beholds the same vision in another form. The Four World-Empires, representing hitherto the four Ages of gold, silver, brass and iron, have now become four beasts of prey. The Lion of BABYLON appears with Eagle's wings reinstated in his pride. The Bear of MEDO-PERSIA, clawing the three tributaries of Lydia, Egypt and Babylon, has changed its Median rulers and is now seen to be "raised up" by Cyrus "on its (Persian) side." GREECE leaps like a panther with four wings from continent to continent in the might of the youthful Alexander. ROME comes last, most "terrible" of them all,

"Black as a fury, terrible as Hell,  
And shook a dreadful dart."

So far the two visions agree. The ten horns of savage ROME correspond with the ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar's Image of the superman. *Rome did fall when the Church became world-wide!* (454, A.D.).

But there is a significant addition to the picture.

"Behold, there came up among the horns another horn, little (at first). And before it three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots"—to make way for it. "And behold in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man"—that is, astute human intelligence, politic and far-seeing—"and a mouth boasting marvellous claims" (chap. vii. 18).

To deal with this apparition the Son of Man is called upon to pronounce sentence and "its body is given to the burning flame"—the Lake of Fire.

Now who and what is this mysterious power? It is evidently

however expedient it may be, which is not found in the New Testament. The Apostolic Church gives us these as facts and principles.

#### NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH.

*Organization.* The New Testament stands for the principle that *no form of Church government and organization can claim Christ or the Apostles as its founders* (Hort). The needs of time, place and occasion decide, and it is as the Christian people or Church think best. There was little or no organization in the New Testament Church, and, as to it, Christ and the Apostles just gave broad guiding principles and expected the Christian people to apply them for themselves; e.g., Christ's: "Be ye not called Rabbi, for One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren," constitutes the Church a Brotherhood, where no one is above or below other, no one stands between a man and his God. The Apostles added: "Let all things be done decently and in order, and to the edification of the Church." The fact is Christ's return was daily expected. Preach Christ's kingdom, prepare for it, win men into it, was the Church's one aim. All else, organization included, was secondary. Converted souls, not machinery, mattered. Hence the Apostles' reply when urged to organize: "It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables. Look ye out among you seven men of honest report . . . but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word."

*Ministry.* The New Testament has a *higher ministry for which the only ordination is that of the Spirit, and a lower ministry of administration to which men appoint.* It is quite true, as Hort says, that there was nothing like our own clergy and bishops;<sup>1</sup> they were not needed, for the congregation conducted its own services. Yet there were two ministries: (1) The "Ministry of the Word," or highly-prized preaching ministry; its ministers were "apostles, prophets, teachers," tied to no Church, not appointed by man, for theirs was a call and ordination of the Spirit, needing no human warrant, for it was patent to all. They were in no sense office-bearers; they were responsible to no congregation of Christians, burdened by no cares of office and no pastoral duties, simply mis-

<sup>1</sup> "Much profitless labour has been spent in trying to force the various terms of Paul's lists into meaning so many ecclesiastical offices. The feat is impossible . . . he is not speaking of Church-officers or posts at all, but of spiritual 'gifts' or functions open to the whole congregation."

It was these last two kingdoms that by their geographical situation fatally affected the future of the Jews. Chapter viii. describes how a certain King of Syria corrupted and destroyed in the interests of Greek manners and Greek licence the loyalty of the servants of Jehovah. Chapter xi. describes the long wars and stratagems by which the "Kings of" Syria in "the North" and the Kings of Egypt in "the South" tried to overreach each other for *world-dominion*, while Judah lay exposed to their internecine rivalry, ground down as between an upper and a nether mill-stone. Both these chapters treat of the rise of ANTIOCHUS, a "King of the North," whose portrait shades off into the darker lineaments of the Antichrist that is yet to come (viii. 23; xi. 36 sq.). Such is the dim language of PROPHECY.

The first Book of the Maccabees gives us the HISTORY. *For over six years* (170-164 B.C.) the conflict between the Jews and Antiochus on the Syrian throne continued to rage. In the first year Jerusalem was taken, the Temple entered and a sow sacrificed upon the Altar. This was "the Transgression (or 'abomination') that causeth Desolation" (viii. 13; xi. 31; xii. 11). In the third year the religion and services and customs of the Jews were interdicted, the Temple dedicated to Olympian Zeus, and the Greek religion (with a revival of its games, its licence and its idolatry) made compulsory. It was now that Judas and his faithful band of Maccabees retired to the mountains and in *a little over three years and a half* recovered Jerusalem, restored the altar and cleansed the Sanctuary (168-165 B.C.). In the next year their royal persecutor was dead!

With this explanation of the subsequent history in our hands, let us go back to Daniel and read the sacred hieroglyph.

Chapter viii. 8: "The he-goat [Alexander] waxed very great and at the height of his power the great horn was broken, and instead of it there came up four notable horns toward the four quarters of heaven. And out of one of them [Syria] came forth a horn from small beginnings which grew exceeding stout toward the South and toward the East and toward the land of glory. And It grew stout against the host of heaven [the Priesthood] . . . yea, It magnified Itself against the Prince of the host [God Himself], and by It the daily sacrifice was taken away. . . . Then I heard one Angel speak and another Angel said unto a certain mysterious Angel which asked: How long shall last . . . the Transgression that causeth

Desolation . . . ? And he said unto me : *For 2,300 evenings-and-mornings* ; then shall the sanctuary be put right " (*i.e.*, the *six years and more* of the Antiochian persecution from 170-164 B.C.).

In the eleventh chapter the description is resumed. Antiochus' usurpation of the throne is first described, then his interminable intrigues to get world-dominion, and to "honour the god of Forces" (chap. xi. 38).

Chapter xii. 6 : " And one said . . . How long shall the end of these signs be ? . . . *For a time, times and a half.* And when God shall have finished scattering the power of the holy people all these things shall be accomplished. And I heard but I understood not. Then said I : O my Lord what shall be the outcome of all these things ? And He said : . . . From the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away and the Abomination of Desolation set up there shall be 1,290 days. Blessed is he that waiteth and cometh to 1,335 days " (or *just over six years*).

The dates here have a significance by ANALOGY, as they stretch onward beyond the first Coming to the second Coming. *The Jews' sufferings under Antiochus are made the symbolic TYPE of the final great persecution of the Christian Church* by the future Anti-Christian State or Church ; and he will live to see the triumph of Christ who can stand firm. " By patience ye shall win your souls."

Once Daniel alone of all prophets risks a CHRONOLOGY for his visions of the future. Bolder than Isaiah himself he predicts " Seventy septads " (*i.e.*, 490 years) from Artaxerxes' edict to rebuild Jerusalem to the coming of the Gentiles, and " half a septad " (*i.e.*, three and a half years) for our Lord's ministry, for the rejection of which Jerusalem was to be laid desolate by the Roman armies (chap. ix. 24-27). If the first Book of Maccabees guarantees the chronology of the former visions of Antiochus' persecution, Josephus has not less amply and deliberately confirmed the chronology of this last (*B.J.* vi. 2, 1).

The Jews, as St. Paul reminds us (1 Cor. x. 1-6), were a TYPICAL people. Their history foreshadowed the future Church of God. Prophecy cannot be tied to its primary fulfilment (2 Peter i. 20), but has ever-expanding circles of further adaptations to the course of the world's history before the final end comes.