

the most attractive and stimulating form; for what can be conceived more desirable than comradeship with the Faithful One in the "land of the leal"?¹

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CHRISTIAN INTERPOLATIONS IN JEWISH
WRITINGS.

THE hypothesis of Vischer² in regard to the Apocalypse, for which Harnack became sponsor, has attracted the attention of students of the New Testament. Briefly stated it is this. The kernel of the book of the Revelation is a Jewish Apocalypse. A Christian writer translated this from an Aramaic original, adding a Christian introduction (i.-iii.), and a Christian ending (xxii. 6-21), and interspersing Christian interpolations, notably the passages in which the Lamb is mentioned, interpolations however which can be easily distinguished, and whose removal admits the light into dark places. Thus according to Vischer chapter xii., "the touchstone by which it must be proved of what spirit the seer is," describes the birth and the assumption of a purely Jewish Messiah.

In order to test this method of criticism, which Vischer

¹ Delitzsch, among recent commentators, holds the view advocated above, taking *μέτοχοι* as = *socii*, "partners." So also Rendall, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. The chief argument against this view is drawn from the fact that the noun and the corresponding verb are used in the epistle mainly in reference to things as expressing participation in them (ii. 14, iii. 1, v. 13, vii. 13, xii. 8; the things participated in being "flesh and blood," a "heavenly calling," "milk," "another tribe," "chastisement"). Chap. vi. 4 is hardly an exception, as the "Holy Spirit" is referred to impersonally as an influence. But the fact remains that in iii. 14 we have an exception of the same kind as in i. 9, and referring to the same subject, the Messiah, and it is natural to deal with both in the same way. That i. 9 is a quotation is immaterial, except indeed as creating a desire to know who in the view of the writer the *μέτοχοι* of Messiah referred to in the quotation are.

² *Texte und Untersuchungen*, ii. Band, Heft 3. *Die Offenbarung Johannis eine Jüdische Apocalypse in Christlicher Bearbeitung* von E. Vischer. 1886. The theory was discussed by Mr. Simcox in *THE EXPOSITOR*, 3rd series, vol. v., p. 425 f.

has thus used in reference to what has been commonly considered the earliest of St. John's writings, I have ventured to apply it to the earliest of St. Paul's epistles, and to follow as far as possible the lines of his dissertation. It seems best, in assuming the character of a destructive critic, to write with as much force and directness as possible. I have not hesitated therefore, with such an end before me, to employ arguments and to use expressions for which I desire to offer beforehand this brief explanation and apology.

I. An investigation into the origin of the Thessalonian epistles must start with the apocalyptic passage in 2 Thessalonians ii. 1-12. This touchstone will reveal the real spirit of the writer (comp. Vischer, p. 19).

The greatness of the difficulties which have to be met by those who accept the common view becomes sufficiently clear (comp. Vischer, p. 22 f), when we compare the view of Bishop Lightfoot with that of Prof. Warfield (EXPOSITOR, 3rd series, vol. iv., p. 40). The former (Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, Art., *Second Epistle to the Thessalonians*) asserts "that it is on the whole probable that the antichrist is represented especially by Judaism. . . . Corresponding to this view of the antichrist, we shall probably be correct in regarding the Roman empire as the restraining power." With the latter scholar this interpretation is exactly reversed. "We cannot go far wrong," writes Professor Warfield, "in identifying him [the Man of Sin] with the Roman emperor. . . . The restraining power, on this hypothesis, appears to be the Jewish state." In such a quagmire of contradictions does the conservative school find itself.

But if we suppose the writer to be a Jew at Jerusalem, the perplexities vanish.

There are but two interpolated Christian phrases which must be removed; *viz.* ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, in ver. 1, and the doubtful Ἰησοῦς of ver. 8.

The main thought therefore of the passage seems to be this: the day of the Lord—an Old Testament phrase—will come, when once the new heresy of Christianity has reached its head; then it will be completely swept away by Jehovah's mere Presence. The following points demand notice: (1) *ἡ ἀποστασία* (ver. 3). Christianity would appear to a Jew at Jerusalem simply as a defection from the national faith; *ἀποστασίαν διδάσκεις ἀπὸ Μωυσέως* (Acts xxi. 21) was the charge brought against St. Paul. (2) *ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀνομίας* (ver. 3), *τὸ μυστήριον τῆς ἀνομίας* (ver. 7), *ὁ ἄνομος* (ver. 8). The emphatic repetition of the idea of lawlessness will be noticed. Treachery towards the law was the great accusation urged against the earliest Christians by the Jews (comp. Acts vi. 13, xxi. 28). The conjecture might be hazarded that in the phrase *ὁ ἄνομος* the Jewish writer confuses the Divine Author of Christianity Himself with St. Paul, its chief missionary.

“One called Paulus; we have heard his fame.
Indeed, if Christus be not one with him—
I know not, nor am troubled much to know.”

(3) Ver. 4 may, on this hypothesis, be considered to point to the Divine honours paid by the Christians to our Lord. With the reference to the Holy Place compare Matthew xxvi. 61; Acts vi. 13, xxi. 28. (4) In ver. 9 there is a distinct reference to the miracles which accompanied the earliest preaching of the Gospel. Further, in *κατ' ἐνέργειαν τοῦ Σατανᾶ* the old charge is revived, “By Beelzebub the prince of the devils casteth He out devils” (Luke xi. 15). (5) The writer of the letter had explained to his friends when with them (ver. 5) the nature of the Roman tyranny. This foreign oppression (*τὸ κατέχων*) in the person of the Roman governor at Jerusalem (*ὁ κατέχων*) held down the natural tendencies of Jews and Christians alike. But the writer as a loyal Jew looks forward with confident hope

to the time when this alien yoke shall be removed, though naturally he uses cautious language (*ἕως ἐκ μέσου γένηται*) to express his expectation. Then at last Christianity will be seen in its true light. The final conflict between Christianity and Judaism will be fought out, and the coming of the Lord will quickly annihilate these new pretenders.

Such an interpretation of the cardinal passage of the Thessalonian epistles seems clear, self-consistent, and free from the difficulties which beset any interpretation suggested by those who uphold the Christian authorship of the whole of these epistles.

II. We next attempt to separate the interpolations of the Christian *Überarbeiter* (comp. Vischer, pp. 33-76). These are of three kinds.

1. The name *Jesus Christ*, or its equivalent, is inserted in addition to, or in place of, the name of God.

The phrase *לפני יהוה* is one of very constant occurrence in the Old Testament. It is natural that a Jewish writer should dwell on the thought, and our author recurs to it four times in the first epistle (i. 3; ii. 19; iii. 9, 13). In the second of these passages, the Christian interpolator has added the words printed within brackets: *ἐμπροσθεν τοῦ Κυρίου [ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ]*. In the remaining three places he has allowed the reference to God the Father to remain undisturbed (comp. Vischer, p. 60 f.). Comp. 1 Thessalonians ii. 6, 10.

The presumption that the name of Christ is added in these passages by a later hand is strangely confirmed when we compare the two passages which follow, where the interpolator, after inserting the name of the Lord, has forgotten to alter the singular verb. The interpolated words are printed in brackets.

1 Thessalonians iii. 11, 12: *Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ Θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ ἡμῶν [καὶ ὁ Κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς], κατευθύναι τὴν ὁδὸν ἡμῶν πρὸς ὑμᾶς· ὑμᾶς δὲ ὁ Κύριος πλεονάσαι κ.τ.λ.*

2 Thessalonians ii. 16: *Αὐτὸς δὲ [ὁ Κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, καὶ] ὁ Θεὸς ὁ πατὴρ ἡμῶν, . . . παρακαλέσαι ὑμῶν τὰς καρδίας καὶ στηρίζαι κ.τ.λ.*

The interpolator, it will be noticed, has manipulated the two passages in different ways. Both sentences however, when the interpolated words have been eliminated, are seen to be formed on the same model; and this type of sentence is proved to be characteristic of the original writer when the following passages are compared: 1 Thessalonians v. 23, *Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ Θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης ἀγάσαι ὑμᾶς*: 2 Thessalonians iii. 5, *Ὁ δὲ Κύριος κατευθύναι ὑμῶν τὰς καρδίας*: iii. 16, *Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ Κύριος τῆς εἰρήνης δαη ὑμῖν τὴν εἰρήνην* (comp. Vischer, pp. 18, 37, 42).

Some of the other interpolated words which come under this head must be briefly mentioned. Thus in the first epistle (*a*) i. 3, omit *τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*. The strain of the piled up genitives is thus relieved. (*b*) i. 10, *υἰόν* may have been substituted for *Χριστόν*, and the words *ὃν ἤγειρεν . . . Ἰησοῦν* were inserted. (*c*) iv. 14 should be omitted. Thus the awkwardness of two consecutive clauses beginning with *γάρ* is avoided. (*d*) iv. 16: if *ἐν Χριστῷ* be omitted, the antithesis between *οἱ νεκροὶ* and *οἱ ζῶντες* is clearly maintained. (*e*) Further, it is remarkable that in one passage (2 Thess. ii. 8) the critical attestation seems to betray a sense of the precariousness of the insertion.

2. The salutations and personal allusions are obviously the additions of a later hand, if this hypothesis be accepted on other grounds, and can easily be removed. How far however there may be incorporated in these passages fragments of the original, it is impossible now to form an opinion (comp. Vischer, p. 34). Thus in 1 Thessalonians ii. 14, it is probable enough that the original Jewish writer drew a parallel between the sufferings of his friends in Thessalonica (if we assume that this was the destination of the letters in their original (Jewish) form), and those of his fellow

countrymen in Judæa. Both were the victims of the Gentiles, on whom the Divine vengeance would shortly fall.

3. Certain Christian, and especially Pauline, phrases and words may be eliminated, and the context remain unharmed, if it be not improved (comp. Vischer, pp. 36, 68).

The interpolator, for example, wishes to give a Pauline tinge to the epistles by inserting references to *πίστις*, *ἐλπίς*, *ἀγάπη*, though it was not till a period later than the supposed date of these epistles that St. Paul formulated the great triad of Christian graces. Thus in 1 Thessalonians i. 3, the Pauline graces must needs have a conspicuous position given them in the forefront of the epistle. If they are eliminated from the passage, it gains clearly in simplicity of construction and in point (comp. 1 Thess. ii. 9, *τὸν κόπον ἡμῶν καὶ τὸν μόχθον*).

A still clearer case is 1 Thessalonians v. 8. The passage is in fact a quotation from Isaiah lix. 17. In the second of the two clauses, if *ἐλπίδα* be omitted, the exact phrase of the LXX. (except for the insignificant alteration of *σωτηρίου* into *σωτηρίας*) is given. But *ἐλπίς* having been inserted, it became necessary to find a place for *πίστις* and *ἀγάπη*. The breastplate therefore, which in Isaiah answers to "righteousness," is incorrectly described as made up of two materials, and the metaphor becomes confused.

Again, it is clear from their position that the words *καὶ τοῦ Κυρίου* in 1 Thessalonians i. 6 are an addition. They do not harmonize with the defining words which follow, *δεξάμενοι τὸν λόγον κ.τ.λ.*

The excision of other phrases as Christian will readily suggest itself. I have only dwelt on two typical cases.

III. It remains to show the Jewish character of what is left when the interpolations have been removed (comp. Vischer, pp. 76-91).

1. We notice how in the original portion the writer speaks of God the Father, when a Christian would naturally

have referred to Christ. Thus it is not *ὁ λόγος ὁ τοῦ σταυροῦ* (1 Cor. i. 18) which is gaining ground, but *ὁ λόγος τοῦ Κυρίου, τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Θεοῦ, λόγος ἀκοῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ*. Again, it is not to a belief in a Redeemer that the heathen have turned, but *πρὸς τὸν Θεόν, . . . δουλεύειν Θεῷ ζῶντι καὶ ἀληθινῷ* (comp. Vischer, pp. 72, 86).

2. The sternness of some passages is very remarkable. Not the salvation, but the punishment, of those who stand outside the circle of safety is the object of deep desire. What words could be fuller of a passionate craving for vengeance than 2 Thessalonians i. 6-10 and ii. 1-12 (comp. Vischer, pp. 55, 82) ?

3. The advice of St. Paul to an inquiring heathen, as recorded in the Acts (xvi. 31) was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Here however all stress is laid on such moral duties as occupied the thoughts of Old Testament prophets. The will of God is described as being chiefly abstinence from fornication and from meddling in magic (2 Thess. iii. 11 *περιεργαζομένους* : comp. Acts xix. 13, 19 *τῶν περιερχομένων Ἰουδαίων ἐξορκιστῶν . . . τῶν τὰ περιέργα πραξάντων*), kindness of man to man, and honest labour.

4. No reader of the Gospels can forget the strength of the Lord's denunciation of those who "held fast the tradition of men" (Mark vii. 8). It is echoed by St. Paul at two different periods of his life (Gal. i. 14, Col. ii. 8). If the writer had been a Christian, would he twice over have spoken of "the keeping the traditions" as the main guarantee for stability in right living (2 Thess. ii. 15, iii. 6) ?

Thus I have stated an hypothesis in regard to the two epistles which form the earliest group of St. Paul's writings, and I have supported it with arguments of considerable weight, I believe, from a critical point of view.

I do not accept the theory myself, nor have I the slightest

fear lest any one else should become enamoured with it. But I do not think that its discussion is purposeless. Vischer's theory in regard to the composition of the Apocalypse is wonderfully ingenious, and seems to offer the explanation of many difficulties. I do not pretend to have dealt with it as a whole. I cannot however but think that the application of the same critical method to another portion of the New Testament brings to light several important points.

1. If such an hypothesis can be maintained with any show of reason in regard to a letter, which, from its nature, vividly reflects the mind of its writer, and is one of a large collection of his letters, we need not be surprised that a similar theory can be made very plausible in the case of the Apocalypse, a much more artificial work, if the word may be allowed, and one which is largely founded in regard of both its imagery and its language on the Old Testament.

2. "Knowledge grows from more to more." The associations of Judaism may perhaps have clung more than we commonly suppose even to the Apostles, and especially in their earliest works may have influenced their conceptions and their phraseology. If this was the case with the "fusile Apostle," "the Apostle of the Gentiles," how much more should we expect it to be so with St. John, one of "the Three," who deliberately chose "the circumcision" as the sphere of his work (Gal. ii. 9)?

3. Parallels to some of the more striking phenomena in the Apocalypse pointed out by Vischer have been adduced.

4. It has been shown that the adoption of such a theory may happen to have the appearance of throwing an altogether unexpected light on a passage, the interpretation of which has always presented most difficult problems to Christian scholars.

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