

to keep His laws; calling himself by the name of Christ, and denying Christ's cross; accepting his fellow men as his brethren in Christ, and not doing them even a stranger's service? How can he have learned to call God Father, whom he has never seen, when he does not treat his fellow man as a brother, whom he has seen? How can his sins have been forgiven of God—sins which were as scarlet and red like crimson—when he will not forgive his neighbour the trifling transgressions of human life? how can he be partaker of the Divine grace, whose poverty-stricken soul is not bearing the scanty fruits of common morality? Can it be in the reason of things that an ungrateful, unloving, dishonest and unrighteous person is saved? And when we ask the question, it answers itself: Without works there is no faith; and this man is walking in a vain show, and feeding his soul with wind. His exposure in some moral crisis of life, when, forsaken of the grace which he has abused, he falls into gross sin, or when, in the light of eternity, his refuges of lies and coverings of hypocrisy will be burned up, is going to be one of the most awful acts of Divine judgment.

JOHN WATSON.

## APOCALYPTIC SKETCHES.

### VIII.

#### THE SCARLET WOMAN AND HER FATE.

REV. XVII., XVIII.

WE were told that in the seven vials "is finished the wrath of God" (xv. 1). What then have we here? Clearly not anything apart from the vials, but something involved in them, as indeed is made quite evident by the fact that the invitation to behold is from one of the seven angels of the vials. His function is to call attention to one great result

of the outpouring of the vials, the downfall of Babylon. In the 17th chapter we have the symbolic representation of Babylon; in the 18th we have a dirge over her fall.

The symbolic representation is complex, a woman seated upon a scarlet-coloured beast. The woman is clearly a contrast to the woman of chapter xii., and a very striking contrast it is! The woman of chapter xii. was a representation of the ideal Church, her seat in heaven, her raiment the light, the great features which impress you being heavenliness, simplicity, purity, glory. The woman of chapter xvii. is the antipodes of all this; she is "of the earth earthy"; she is "arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls." In her hand there is a golden cup, and see what is in it (*v.* 4), and observe the name written on her forehead (*v.* 5), though from the very sight of her you know her character even if it were not so plainly told. Clearly the Sun-clad Woman and the Scarlet Woman are in strictest contrast; the one is to be thought of as over against the other. This leads to the conclusion that as the Sun-clad Woman represents the ideal Church, the Church, in so far as she is faithful to her Lord, the Scarlet Woman represents the antithesis of this, the Church not faithful to her Lord, as allowing herself to be seduced by the wiles of the world; and this is confirmed by the leading word in the inscription, "Mystery," a word which is suggestive of sacred rather than civil associations. And here some think of the apostate Jewish Church, others of the Pagan worship of the emperors, still others of the apostate Church of Rome. But is it necessary to tie down the reference to any one period? On the principles on which our exposition has proceeded, we might well suppose that the apostate Jewish Church came first into the seer's mind, but that the apostate Christians of the time would be in the very same condemnation; and as for the Church of Rome, its

applicability is only too obvious in much of her history; but to tie it down to the Church of Rome and say that it only is referred to, is not only to violate sound principles of interpretation but to pass condemnation on a particular Church more sweeping than is warranted by facts.

That the Church of Rome has acted as much in the spirit of the Scarlet Woman as any Church in history is no doubt true enough, but to say that she has shown no other spirit is to state what is not true. The fact is, we have in the two women a sharp contrast in the ideal, which never finds, either on the one side or on the other, full realization in history. What Church in all Christendom could claim to stand out in history as the realization of the symbol of the 12th chapter: "A woman arrayed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars"? Shall I claim it for the Presbyterian Church? Verily no: I may think it comes as near as any other, but that would surely be the very farthest any one will go. Is there any one dare claim it for the Anglican Church, after the iniquities which were perpetrated by her in the old days of cruel persecution? On the other hand, who will say that the worst of the Churches has been wholly bad, has stood out in history, age after age, as the representative of this frightful woman on the scarlet-coloured beast? No, no. There is the impressive contrast before us of light and darkness, the one applying to the faithful and true, the other applying to the faithless and false; but the contrast, when presented in its sharpness, as it is in these opposing symbols, is purely ideal. In actual life light and darkness are mingled, and every Church is of the nature of the Sun-clad Woman, so far as she walks in light, and of the nature of the Scarlet Woman so far as she walks in darkness, and especially so far as she makes herself partaker of the sin which is above all symbolized in the scarlet colour: "I saw the woman drunken with the

blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." And it is, no doubt, because the Church of Rome has been guilty above all others of this terrible iniquity that it was so universally assumed among students of the new-found Scriptures at the time of the Reformation that the Scarlet Woman could be none other than the cruel, persecuting Church of Rome. Their interpretation was correct so far: what was wrong was in restricting the application to one particular Church.

But we have to think of the beast as well as of the woman. And here there is no difficulty except in matters of detail. Clearly the beast on which the woman sits is the world power by which she practises her cruelties, represented at the time, of course, by the world-wide Roman Empire. It is clearly the same beast as in chapter xiii., with only such new features in description as are specially suited to the surroundings. We need not then dwell on the old features, but only look at some of the new ones.

The most striking part, perhaps, is the 8th verse, which seems a travesty of the great words of Christ Himself in the first chapter. Recall the travesty of the name Michael in the 13th chapter. We found, when we were studying that portion, that Michael is a title of Christ Himself, the meaning of it being: "Who is like unto God?" Presently comes the mocking blasphemy from below, "Who is like unto the beast?" a travesty of the great name Michael. In the same way, just as Christ had said in the opening of the Apocalypse: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, which is and which was and which is to come"; and again, "I am the first and the last, and the Living One; and I was dead, and, behold, I am alive for evermore"; so now we have, as it were, a fearful contrast which is at the same time something of a counterpart: "The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and is about to come up out of the abyss, and to go into perdition."

There is an obvious parallel between the two utterances, and at the same time a most striking contrast. And see how it is dwelt on; and how it puzzles those who have no true knowledge of Christ: "And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder (whose names were not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world) when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is."

Now what does it all mean? The interpretation is given in what follows, though unhappily it is not so clear to us as to afford the certainty one would wish. The interpretation which seems most natural is that which makes the seven kings impersonations, as in Daniel (see Dan. vii., especially v. 23) of so many kingdoms. Then the sequence would be Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome. So Rome comes in as the sixth. This agrees with what is said in verse 10, "Five are fallen, and one is." The seventh will come in the days of the ten horns, when the Roman Empire shall be broken up: "Five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come."

But so far we have not seen anything in the history of the beast to be thought of as a travesty of the death and resurrection of Christ. Those who take the kings not as successive kingdoms, but as successive emperors of Rome, refer to the common belief of the time that Nero would rise again from the dead with new power and prestige. But if we adhere to the interpretation of the successive kingdoms, then the reference would be to the great victory which Christ gained over the Prince of the World by His cross,<sup>1</sup> by which he was supposed to be driven into the abyss; but, behold, he has emerged, he is raging again with resistless force; if Christ, as you Christians say, has risen from the dead and has all power in heaven, then His great antagonist, the Prince of this World, has risen from the

<sup>1</sup> "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (John xii. 31).

pit of the abyss into which you suppose he had been cast, and has all power on earth: "The beast that thou sawest was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss"—not indeed to live and reign for ever, but "to go into perdition."

It is evident that there is uncertainty as to these details of exposition; but the broad facts surely are clear enough that the woman, if you distinguish her from the beast on which she rides, means the apostate Church; and the beast, when you separate it from the woman who rides upon it, means the world power in its ferocity and cruelty, as represented at the time by the Roman Empire.

Observe, however, that the seer does not so sharply distinguish between the woman and the beast. He regards them as one, and takes them both together as symbolic of Babylon the Great. And surely from the whole description this cannot mean anything else than Rome. I know that a good deal can be said in favour of Jerusalem; but this is only by treating the woman apart from the beast on which she rides, which the language of the seer seems scarcely to allow; and surely the reference to "peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues" suggests the empire city rather than the provincial capital; and though the expression "the great city" might in itself be applied, and indeed in chapter xi. 8 is applied, to Jerusalem, the fact that it is spoken of as "reigning over the kings of the earth" (xvii. 18) seems to settle the question. Moreover, when we come to the dirge, we shall find it expressed in language which would surely seem exaggeration as applied to any other city than the great metropolis of the world.

The chapter is mainly taken up with a development of the symbolic figure of the woman and the beast; but there is a passing reference to the conflict in which the enemy, apparently so irresistible, is overthrown, not by another beast more ferocious or another woman more seductive, but

*passim*, but as an angelic mediator, "by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush." In like manner, according to Stephen, the Law was not given directly by God to Moses, but in this case also he was but an angelic mediator (Acts vii. 38). "This is he that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake unto him in Mount Sinai, and with our fathers who received living oracles to give unto us" (R. V.).

Strange as this notion of angelic intervention between God and Moses in the giving of the Law appears to us, it finds support, *e.g.*, in such passages of Scripture as Deuteronomy xxxiii. 2 foll. (R. V.).

The Lord came from Sinai.

And rose from Seir unto them.

He shined forth from Paran.

And He came from the ten thousands of holy ones.

At His right hand was a fiery law unto them.

Although in Acts vii. 38 Stephen only refers to *one* angel as having been the medium through whom the Law was conveyed to Moses, yet it is evident from *v.* 53 that he regarded this angel as being the chief of "ten thousand of Holy Ones" then attendant on Jehovah, for he now uses the *plural* number *εἰς διαταγὰς ἀγγέλων*. We shall see later on that St. Paul takes advantage, for the purpose of his argument, of the use of the plural number here by Stephen.

That angels were the enactors of the Law was, as is well known, the Rabbinical view (see the quotations given *in loco* by Alford, Ellicott, Lightfoot, etc.), and it was the view held, as appears from the passages quoted, by Stephen also. It follows therefore from this view (and this is clearly the argument which St. Paul is urging in the third chapter of this Epistle), that Moses was not, in the giving of the Law, the mediator between God and man, but only between angels and man. He was therefore, so to speak, not a Divine but only an angelic mediator.

The contrast then between the Dispensation of Angels as presented by the Law, and the Dispensation of Promise as presented by the Gospel, is vital to the Apostle's argument, and the phrase *διαταγείς κ.τ.λ.* is not to be regarded as a mere passing reminiscence of Stephen's *εἰς διαταγὰς τῶν ἀγγέλων*, but *necessary* to the line of reasoning which St. Paul is here pursuing.

If further confirmation of this view be required, we find it in the Epistle to the Hebrews, which, whatever opinion be held as to its authorship, expresses, as is generally admitted, the main features of St. Paul's teaching. There we find the course of argument pursued, the phrases employed in many cases identical with those adopted in the Epistle to the Galatians.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews we see that the author's object, just as in the Epistle to the Galatians, is to show the superiority of the gospel to the legal dispensation by proving that the latter was promulgated through the instrumentality of angels and by an angelic mediator, Moses, while the former was proclaimed by God through His Son (*One* with the Father), who was thus the "Mediator of a better covenant, which hath been enacted upon better promises" (Heb. viii. 6, R. V.).

In the three chief places in the New Testament in which the promise and the law are contrasted, viz., the speech of Stephen, Galatians iii. *passim*, and the Epistle to the Hebrews, the argument is made to turn on the word *ἄγγελοι*. That the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews was saturated with the Jewish theory of angelic ministration which figures so conspicuously in Stephen's speech is sufficiently obvious. Indeed, he evidently has that speech in his mind through the whole course of his argument. His *ὁ δι' ἀγγέλων λαληθεὶς λόγος* (Heb. ii. 2) bears manifest reference to Stephen's words in Acts vii. 38, *μετὰ τοῦ ἀγγέλου τοῦ λαλοῦντος αὐτῷ ἐν τῷ ὄρει Σίνα κ.τ.λ.* Indeed,



the word ἄγγελοι in that Epistle is repeated almost *usque ad satietatem*, occurring eleven times in the first two chapters.

But though the course of St. Paul's argument so far may be tolerably clear, there are serious difficulties yet to come. What is the meaning of ὁ μεσίτης in verse 20? How are ἐνὸς οὐκ ἔστιν and εἷς ἔστιν to be interpreted?

Space will not allow me to do much more than give that explanation of the verse which I myself venture to propose. Both A.V. and R.V. translate ὁ μεσίτης as if the article were generic. "Now *a* mediator is not of one; but God is one." Bishop Ellicott, *in loco*, says, "In the first part of the verse all are agreed; 'now *every* mediator involves the idea of more than one.'"

Against this translation I venture, with much deference to the learned authorities *contra*, to protest, and that on more than one ground.

In the first place, if we take the words ὁ μεσίτης to introduce a general proposition, it is impossible to see their relevancy to the argument. This is shown by the hopeless disagreement as to the bearing of that proposition of all the authorities who uphold that translation.

Again, it is not easy to see on grammatical grounds why the article should not here be regarded as *individualising*, not generic. Granted that οὗτος ὁ μεσίτης would be the more usual expression, are we to say that St. Paul was so nice in his observance of grammatical rule, so pure in style, that he *could* not have used the article here in an individualising sense? The very form of expression [ἐν χειρὶ μεσίτου. ὁ δὲ μεσίτης] in which the article, omitted with the noun first employed, appears when that noun is repeated as the subject of the following sentence, imparting a slight distinguishing emphasis to the noun so repeated, is found, *e.g.*, in this very epistle:

v. 13: ἐπ' ἐλευθερίᾳ ἐκλήθητε . . . μόνον μὴ τὴν ἐλευθερίαν.  
 And v. 16: ἐπιθυμίαν σαρκὸς οὐ μὴ τελέσητε. ἡ γὰρ σὰρξ.

And twice in the following verse, Romans v. 4: ἡ θλίψις ὑπομονὴν κατεργάζεται. ἡ δὲ ὑπομονὴ δοκιμὴν, ἡ δὲ δοκιμὴ ἐλπίδα.

In the face of such examples from St. Paul's own epistles, examples which it would be easy to supplement from other Greek authors, it is surely somewhat rash to assert, as Bishop Ellicott does, that ὁ δὲ μεσίτης ἐνὸς οὐκ ἔστιν must necessarily mean, "Now every mediator involves the idea of more than one." Why may we not, on the contrary, giving the individualising sense, as in the above passages, to the article, translate, "Now the Mediator (just referred to) is not of one," etc. ?

There is one difficulty yet remaining, of which I shall offer an explanation which I have not seen put forward elsewhere, but for which, should it even on a first view appear somewhat startling, I beg, at least, a patient hearing. The translation which I suggest has, at all events, the merit of intelligibility, a not unimportant consideration, it will be admitted, in a controversy such as that in which the Apostle was then engaged.

"Now the mediator (in question) is not a mediator of one (*i.e.*, appointed to act by, or the nominee of one); but God is One."

The gist of the argument is now plain, viz., that the mediator here spoken of, Moses, not being appointed to act in his mediatorial capacity directly by One person, viz., by God, but by a *plurality* of persons, the angels, must be regarded as an angelic, not a Divine mediator, not the direct, but the indirect agent between God and man, and thus, as an inferior mediator, he gives a stamp of inferiority to the temporary and provisional system with which he was connected.

We can now see why St. Paul uses the *plural* number in speaking of the angelic ministration of the law on Mount Sinai, why he says δι' ἀγγέλων, as in Acts vii. 53, instead

of speaking of a *single* angel, as in Acts vii. 38, *μετὰ τοῦ ἀγγέλου τοῦ λαλοῦντος*, etc. It was because it suited his argument better to use the plural number, which he also believed the facts of the case justified him in using.

If any one objects to such an argument as trivial and unworthy of the subject, I reply that it is exactly similar to one which the apostle has used immediately before, vv. 16 foll. : " Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his *seed*. He saith not to *seeds*, as of *many*, but as of *One*, and to thy *seed*."

The force of the argument in both these cases lies in a numerical opposition. If the apostle founded an argument upon this opposition in the one case, he may well have done so in the other.

Finally, we must remember that the whole discourse is a polemic directed against Judaising teachers, and is, to a large extent, an *argumentum ad hominem*. The Apostle is turning against his Judaising opponents the very arguments which they had employed to undermine the faith of his Galatian converts. He has attacked and routed his enemies on their own ground.

They trusted in the mediator Moses, but he shows that not only was Christ the Mediator of a better covenant, but that, strictly speaking, Moses was not a mediator of the One God, but only of the angelic host, "for," as he elsewhere (2 Tim. ii. 5) affirms with unqualified emphasis, "there is *One God, one Mediator* also between God and men, Himself Man, Christ Jesus."

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