

*THE FOUR EMPIRES OF DANIEL.*

CONCERNING these Empires there has occurred within recent years a change of opinion which can only be compared to a landslide. Nothing seemed more irrevocably established, a few years ago, than that these four were Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome. Every schoolboy knew that in point of fact these *were* the four great Empires of ancient history, that the descriptions given of them tallied roughly with this order, that Christianity came to the front in the days of the fourth, and in a certain concrete form superseded it as the power which shaped the course of history. That seemed to almost everybody so clear as to be beyond cavil, so decisive as to exclude reasonable question. All this mass of opinion has gone and left hardly a trace behind. One may search in vain for any commentator of weight who ventures to say a word in defence of the old opinion. Probably Dr. Driver's "Daniel" in the Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges gave it the *coup de grâce* for the mass of English students. The mere fact that this volume was published in 1900, whereas no volume of the Pentateuch has appeared yet, shows conclusively that no hesitation was considered justifiable, and no caution necessary, with respect to the modern criticism of Daniel. To have said so much seems to convict myself of mere folly in challenging a position held with such confidence and by such a general agreement. If I venture to do so, I must at least indicate at once the grounds on which I go. It is not because I dissent from the modern view of the Book of Daniel as a whole. I am as much persuaded that it is an historical romance written about the year B.C. 166, as any one can be. I perceive with discomfort—but am bound to admit—that the author of this delightful book was but

imperfectly acquainted with the past history of the world, and was not at all acquainted with its future. He was indeed a noble spirit, and one who did splendid service to the cause of true religion ; but his history and his prophecy were alike erroneous in detail. There never was any such person as Darius the Mede ; Antiochus Epiphanes did not perish in the way foretold ; the Kingdom of the Saints did not come at all after the fashion, or even in the sense, of his prediction. Be it so. I am sorry. But one must be honest before all things in dealing with the Word of God, and the facts do not seem to admit of further controversy.

Admitting therefore the substantial accuracy of the modern position as to Daniel, I am obliged to reject the account given of the Four Empires because it is inconsistent with that position. It is so under two main heads. First, the Median Empire (which has to do duty for the second) existed neither in history nor in the imagination of our author. Second, this author, writing about B.C. 166, could not possibly have been ignorant of the Roman Empire or left it out of view.

I. That no separate Median Empire ever existed is acknowledged by everybody. That the author of " Daniel " believed it to have existed is a mere imagination of the commentators who have to make up the four without Rome, and can find no better way of doing it. It is, of course, true that our author represents " Darius the Mede " as taking the kingdom from Belshazzar. He also speaks vaguely in chap. viii. 20 of the " kings of Media and Persia." What was in his mind exactly concerning Darius and other " Median " princes cannot now be determined. But it is obvious that he knows nothing about any Median Empire, distinct from and prior to the Persian. The kingdom of Belshazzar was to be given to the " Medes and Persians " (v. 28). Darius is bound by the law of the Medes and Per-

sians (vi. 12). The necessity for Michael to withstand the angel-prince of Persia dates from the first year of Darius the Mede (xi. 1). Whatever mistakes he may have made (and the Greek historians seem to have made mistakes very similar) our author never suggests that there was more than *one* Empire between that of the Chaldeans and that of the Macedonians. Kings of different nationalities may rule a kingdom in whole or in part without imparting their own nationality to the kingdom. That the second Empire had a dual, or quasi-dual, character is made quite clear, but the Empire itself is invariably treated as one. No one (unless under the tyranny of some theory) can possibly mistake this in the vision of chap. viii., which is quite the simplest and easiest in all the book. Its imagery is, in fact, so transparent as to call for no ingenuity, and to permit of no controversy. It is an axiom of interpretation that we ought to start from what is simple and easy, and work on to what is more obscure. We must therefore in interpreting "Daniel" put ourselves right first and foremost with chap. viii. Now in this chapter there are two beasts, a ram and a he-goat, typifying the second and third Empires. The beasts (I repeat) are two, only two. The ram is as palpably and emphatically one beast, and one empire, as the he-goat is. It is impossible to argue that our author was only thinking here of the Persian Empire as distinct from and subsequent to the Median. For the quasi-dual character of the Empire is clearly intimated. The ram, although obviously one and only one, has two horns, and these are always understood of the two peoples, the Medes and the Persians, who formed the fighting strength of Cyrus, whose names were constantly bracketed together in speaking of his empire. It is gratuitous and unwarrantable to cut the ram in two because he has two horns, and call the first half of him "Median Empire" and the second half "Persian Empire." The horns

may stand for kings or dynasties which ruled (with some diversity of name and race) the one Empire, or they may stand for peoples or influences which prevailed within the Empire; but they cannot with any sort of propriety be interpreted of successive Empires. To do so is to obliterate the beast in favour of the horns, whereas it is obvious that the two horns belong to the ram and the ram is one. The imagination, therefore, of a "Median" Empire in Daniel goes to pieces at once against the great outstanding features of these visions. For in all of them the Empires (however pictured) are great and solid realities which succeed one another, not by any process of "peaceful penetration," but by some kind of catastrophe. Immense, overwhelming, irresistible, and (above all) definite, they go upon their way, separate and contrasted. No one can doubt that this is the *main* effect of the visions, and to this main effect all detail *must* be subordinate. The Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman Empires *were* as a fact thus separate and contrasted. Each of them had not only an existence but a character; each was a type. To intercalate a Median Empire which never existed, and to which the writer never alludes as a separate thing, is to attribute to him a misreading of history in comparison with which all inaccuracies of detail sink into insignificance. It is the more gratuitously unfair because he is at pains to shew that he knew of the quasi-dual character of the second Empire (see chaps. viii. 3 and vii. 5), and does in fact emphasise it very cleverly. No one, in fine, could ever have dreamed that the ram with two horns, the bear raised up on one side, was anything but the Persian (or Medo-Persian) Empire, unless he had been driven to it by the supposed necessity of putting the Roman Empire out of view. Many lamentable experiences have taught us to regard with great suspicion these solutions of Scriptural problems which com-

mentators accept because there seems no other way out—accept, and then defend by arguments which cannot really seem to them to have any independent value. Thus it appears that the second Empire must after all be the (imaginary) Median Empire, not the (actual) Medo-Persian, because in chap. ii. it is said to be “inferior” to the Babylonian. But who does not see that Daniel’s language throughout this chapter is in the highest degree honorific as far as Nebuchadnezzar is concerned? If one had to criticise it coldly, one would have to say that it was grossly exaggerated. A universal empire is attributed to Nebuchadnezzar “wherever the children of men dwell.” In the dream-image he was “this head of gold,” superior, no doubt, to the breast of silver which came next, but even more superior to the brass and iron which followed. Certainly the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar is consistently represented as finer and more splendid than any subsequent kingdom, which is, historically speaking, quite untrue. But from the Scriptural point of view it is quite intelligible and quite right. It was not only Daniel’s part to use the language of conventional flattery, where no moral principle was at stake; it was also the author’s part to magnify the power before which the City and Temple of the living God had gone down, the power which was itself to go down before the faith and courage of the servants of the living God. There can be no question that he thought of Nebuchadnezzar’s power and glory as of something vaguely vast and splendid, the like of which was never seen again. In short, whatever his four Empires are, the “Median” is not one of them; that is a hopelessly artificial solution, which ought to be put aside resolutely as unsound and unworthy.

II. In the second place I venture to maintain that a man of any intelligence, writing in Palestine about the middle of the second century B.C., could not be ignorant of the

Roman power, and could not leave it out of sight. When the Old Testament critics move down the date of "Daniel" to this period, they must not forget what it involves. The battle of Magnesia was fought in lesser Asia in the year B.C. 190. It was one of the most sweeping victories ever won by the Roman arms, and created an enormous sensation. It was evident to "all Asia and the world" that there was no Kingdom or Power upon earth that could stand for a moment against the overwhelming strength of Rome; it was especially evident that all the fragments of Alexander's Empire lay prostrate at her feet. True it is that after Magnesia Rome recoiled for a time from the consequences of her own victory. She did not choose, for good reasons of her own, to gather in the spoils. She left the East to its own disorders, but only as a cat which is not hungry leaves alone the mouse which it has seized. Who does not know the story of how the Roman legate met Antiochus Epiphanes in the full tide of his victory over Egypt, ordered him to quit the country, and (when he tried to gain time) drew a circle round him with his stick, and insisted on receiving a definite submission before he stepped outside? Does any one suppose that an incident like this did not come to the general knowledge? Wherever Antiochus was feared and hated—and nowhere more than in Palestine—this amazing humiliation would pass from mouth to mouth until it was known everywhere. The king of beasts—he with the great iron teeth—had but to make one step in advance, and the progeny of the leopard fled snarling or grovelled fawning at his feet. Rome might be quiescent in B.C. 165, but no writer about world-empires then could possibly leave Rome out of account. She was manifestly the greatest force upon earth, and as manifestly destined to make an end of all the rest. It is not a question of revelation or of prophecy; the only question is whether the author of "Daniel" was

a man of ordinary intelligence to appreciate the political facts of the actual situation.

I do not doubt that these considerations would be held decisive on every hand if it were not for one thing, and that one thing is the Little Horn. It will not do to allow the Little Horn of this book to be anything whatever but Antiochus Epiphanes, who was the enemy *par excellence* of the Jews when "Daniel" was written. Now the Little Horn is in chap. viii. (as in history) an offshoot of the Empire of Alexander; and in chap. vii. he is as definitely a product of the fourth Empire. It follows that the fourth Empire is the Grecian, and that *two* other Empires must, by some sort of ingenuity, be arranged between it and the Babylonian. No doubt the Little Horn is (in its primary sense) Antiochus Epiphanes. Let that be granted. But it is a fact that while Antiochus was of the progeny of the leopard as far as his origin and his title are concerned, yet in personal character and in the matter of religious policy he belonged to Rome; he was a true offshoot of the Fourth Beast. This Antiochus spent all his youth as a hostage in Rome, where he mixed with the most prominent of its citizens, and became thoroughly naturalised. There can be no question that he came back at last full of Roman ideas to assume the crown over the dominions of his ancestors, with their strange medley of inhabitants. It was a form of Hellenic culture which he tried with so much determination to force upon his subjects; but it ought to be observed (for it is of the essence of the matter) that behind the Hellenic culture, which was already common, more or less, to all the civilised world, there lay Roman ideals and Roman methods. It was from Rome, not from any Grecian state, that he fetched the most distinguishing feature of his policy, and *the* one which brought him into hopeless conflict with the Jews, the imposing, viz., of a common religion—a state religion—upon

the very varied populations of his kingdom. The Zeus Olympios of the Greek writers, the "abomination of desolation" set up upon the altar of burnt offering at Jerusalem on December 15, B.C. 168, was the Jupiter Capitolinus whom Antiochus had learnt to worship at Rome as the supreme deity of the Empire. It is true that Rome was at that time only in process of becoming an "Empire" (in the stricter sense); she had not then developed that appalling practice of state-heathenism, of Caesar worship, which brought her subsequently into that long and bitter conflict with the followers of Christ. But the germ of it, the principle of it, was there; it lay in the remorseless demand of the state to be supreme, to receive unqualified obedience, in every department of life, including religion; it lay in the accepted ideal of a patriotic unity which involved a certain uniformity of worship. Strangely enough, it was reserved for a Grecian prince, a foster-child of Rome, to develop this ideal along the exact lines which were afterwards followed, with such dreadful consequences, by Rome herself. Hence the very peculiar position occupied by Antiochus Epiphanes in the religious history of the people of God, and therefore in the Bible. He was at once a product of what Rome (the Fourth Empire) *was*, and an anticipation of what she *was going to be*. For if we turn from the scattered notices of Antiochus in the classical writers (which do not really tell us much) to the picture drawn of him by the hand of a contemporary in the book of Daniel, the distinctive features of his policy come out quite clearly. In the first place he was at bottom *irreligious* (xi. 36). In the second place he was essentially an innovator in religion, practically deposing the ancient deities of his land in favour of Mars and Jupiter (xi. 37-39). In the third place he was a blasphemer, practically identifying himself with the Supreme Deity whom he forced upon his people, and thus (indirectly, but really) claiming religious

worship for himself. That is not charged against Antiochus by any of the secular historians who make mention of him. In all probability it would not touch them at all closely ; they would not see anything dreadful in it. But it is directly asserted by the Jewish writer in xi. 36-37 ; it is indirectly (but none the less strongly) implied in the stories about Nebuchadnezzar's image of gold, and Darius's decree, in chaps. iii. and vi. ; and it is emphatically borne out by the coins which have come down to us. Antiochus Epiphanes *did* identify himself in a certain sense with the Jupiter Capitolinus for whom he challenged the religious veneration of all his subjects ; he *did* assume the conventional insignia of deity ; his very title of Epiphanes (" manifest in the flesh ") seems to express as much. What lay at the root, therefore, of the whole activity of Antiochus—as far as the Jews were concerned—was precisely that Caesar-worship, that religious exaltation of the state as embodied in its head, which exposed so many generations of Christians to torment and death at the hands of Imperial Rome. We may say, if we like, that Antiochus was a freak, that he was like one born out of due time, because he anticipated the settled and developed policy of Rome two hundred years later. All the same, he learnt his principles from Rome ; they were her's, although in him—thanks to certain peculiarities of his position and character—they ripened and fruited earlier than they did upon the parent stem. The Roman satyrist of a later day complained that the Orontes had emptied itself into the Tiber ; but the citizens of Antioch under the drastic rule of Epiphanes might have lamented with as much justice that the Tiber had diverted all his waters into the Orontes. In these facts, which were to a considerable extent within the ken of the author of Daniel, we may find an adequate explanation of the apparent confusion about the Little Horn. In chap. viii. he springs out of

the third (or Grecian) Empire ; in chap. vii. out of the fourth (the Roman) Empire. Both were true : by birth he was a Greek, and by sovranity a successor of Alexander ; by education, by temperament, by deliberate policy, he was a product of the Rome that was, an anticipation of the Rome that was to be.

Whether these conclusions are right or wrong, they belong entirely to the sphere of historical criticism. It remains to add something from the point of view of theology, something to vindicate the " Scriptural " character of the book. At present its character in that respect is practically gone. One has to admit, with whatever secret uneasiness and chagrin, that what purports to be history is not historical, and what appears to be prophecy is not prophetic. The writer has no insight even into the immediate future. Living on the very eve of the Maccabean rising, he had no inkling of its brilliant character or of its ultimate success. Foretelling the death of Antiochus, he foretold it all wrong. What he predicted was merciless persecution and slaughter endured with indomitable patience, a sudden and spectacular interposition of the Powers of Heaven, an end of all secular things, and the timeless kingdom of the saints. What really happened was an armed resistance on the part of the Jewish patriots which turned out surprisingly successful, the casual death of Antiochus in some obscure expedition to the East, the slow winning of religious and political liberty by a mixture of very heroic fighting and somewhat crafty policy. Precisely because of this remarkable discrepancy the book is in complete harmony with Christian thought and the Christian apocalypse. Our Saviour not only deprecated, but forbade any appeal to the sword. Persecution was to be met by patient suffering, not by armed resistance. Deliverance would come, not from soldiers or statesmen, but from God Himself. Everybody

knows that such is the whole tone and tenour of the Revelation. The two Apocalypses are in perfect harmony both as to the conditions which they accept, and as to the deliverance—the dénouement—which they expect. The destruction of the Little Horn, or of the beast with seven heads and ten horns, is not of man or of any ordinary combination of circumstances, but of God. He that endureth to the end shall be saved. As it was under Nebuchadnezzar and under Darius of old, as it was under Antiochus Epiphanes later, so it should be under Nero, or that other Nero Domitian. Men had only to endure and be faithful; at the supreme moment they should see the salvation of God.

This was, as a fact, the teaching of Christ and of His apostles. This was, as a fact, the attitude of Christians throughout those terrible ages of persecution for which the sacred writings were (in so great a measure) the designed preparative. We owe it to that attitude that the civilised world is at least nominally Christian to-day. Had they flown to arms against Nero or Domitian, as the Jews did against Antiochus, all would have been lost.

Here, then, we may find (in part) the inspiration of "Daniel." The author was no historian and no prophet; but he was moved so to treat the struggle against Antiochus, and so to treat Antiochus himself, as to bring them into closest touch with the Christian conscience and the Christian experience. In his splendid stories from Jewish history, as in his astonishing visions, he sets forth the eternal truth that the tyranny, the cruelty, the presumption of man are bound to go utterly to pieces against the Powers of Heaven. In the days of the "Little Horn" (originally Antiochus, afterward in a very true sense Nero or Domitian or some other representative of the Fourth Beast) men needed this lesson more than any other. Doubtless they will need it again. The power of the irreligious state intruding itself

into the domain of conscience will surely reappear in some form or other. For the attitude of the state is ever liable to be determined by the (practical) negation of God, the negation, viz., of One infinitely superior to itself, Whose claims limit its own, Who rules and will rule in the kingdom of men.

RAYNER WINTERBOTHAM.

*HISTORIC CHRISTIANITY AND THE MYSTICAL  
SENSE.*

THERE have always been in the Christan Church a certain number of people—necessarily a small minority, but a minority of the very best—who have based their belief in the Gospel, less on external testimony than on the inner witness of their spirit. They have held that where through moral effort the spiritual nature reaches a certain level of development, faculties are aroused which respond to the realities of the spiritual world as truly as our bodily senses respond to material things; and that just as the world of colour and sound would grow round the man born blind and deaf if those faculties in him could be awakened, so all Heaven grows round the man whose inner sense begins to respond to its wonderful and glorious vibrations.

If we place a gold coin in a closed wooden box the ordinary eye will, of course, see nothing but the wood, but under the X-rays the wood which before alone appeared real now seems only a shadow, while the coin invisible before is now seen as the only solid reality.

Let us imagine a number of people endowed with what we might call X-rays sight. They would move about among their fellow-men, yet they would be largely living in a different world. Their actions would seem strange to others