

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

DR. JOHANN LEPSIUS ON THE SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE OF THE APOCALYPSE

A. INTRODUCTION.

No book in the New Testament has been so much misunderstood, distorted and misapplied as the Revelation of St. John. No book is still so obscure. There exists, accordingly, a prejudice against any new attempt to explain its meaning, for one dreads to find that the new attempt is only some variety of the old methods, and that the new theorist is discovering in the old book a prophecy against his special enemy. We have, on the whole, been doing as well as we can without the Revelation: we have, most of us, been setting it aside as unintelligible, and contenting ourselves with the remainder of the New Testament, leaving the interpretation of this one book to enthusiasts (whom some miscall cranks).

Yet the Revelation is one of the greatest of books, marked out as such by the beauty of the conclusion, by the insight and sympathy shown in the Seven Letters to the Churches of Asia, and by occasional passages where we can see through the symbolism to the soul of the writer. What can be more wonderful as a piece of historical denunciation and insight than the picture of the fall of Rome in chapter xviii. ? In that chapter we have a plain example of the method followed in the whole book. It expounds principles. It states the laws that govern society and the world's history. It does not foretell times and seasons. Most of the would-be interpreters of the Revelation have forgotten the last word uttered by the Saviour on the earth (Acts i. 7); and have attempted to find in the Revelation a prediction of "times and seasons" and of the exact manner in which, and the persons through whom, the Will of God shall work itself out to its fulfilment. All such attempts are condemned before-

hand. There is rarely anything to be learned from them. Frequently, they are only examples of evil, because they minister to mutual hatred among different sects of Christians, and foster divisions among the great Church with its many various parts and discordant adherents, and increase the disunion which is the scandal of so-called Christianity. Whosoever despises and excludes from communion those whom he ought to reckon as brethren in the Faith, though they differ from him in details and trifles of outward form, is condemned as erring from the truth and missing the real essence while he holds fast to the unreal ceremonies, however much those ceremonies may mean to his own individual self.

The misinterpretations of the Revelations come mostly from within the Church: few who stand outside are interested enough in the book to speculate about its meaning. One of the few attempts from outside to explain a part of the book was made by my old friend, M. Salomon Reinach, who applied a certain agricultural and economic measure of the Emperor Domitian regarding the cultivation of the vine, as recorded by Roman historians and poets, to the interpretation of Revelation vi. 6.

The attempt appears to me to be an example of wrong method. That passage in the Revelation is the statement of a great moral principle regulating the limits of devastation during warfare in the Levant World.¹—one of those deep-lying principles which we often find ruling in the warfare even of savage races, though occasionally disregarded by the civilised barbarism of the “enlightened” nations of the West at the present day in the stress of war. The passage is not expressed on the humble level of an allusion to an evanescent and useless, though well-intended, effort of Domitian to regulate agriculture in Italy. Even if we

¹ This view is stated more fully in the concluding part of my *Cities of St. Paul*.

descend to that level, the explanation explains nothing ; but the real fault of the explanation is that it is conceived on the wrong plane of thought. Yet it has tempted many scholars, among others Dr. Moffatt in the *EXPOSITOR* a few years ago ; and, therefore, I find that I must record my dissent from my old friend on the whole principle as well as on the special applicability of his explanation in this particular case.

We have, then, been on the whole doing without the Revelation, setting it aside as practically unintelligible and getting on as well as we can with the rest of the New Testament. Such is the deliberate resolve of many great interpreters of the New Testament, men of real knowledge and sympathy. I have conversed with such men, true scholars and true preachers : they had set the Revelation apart as not for them, and confined themselves to the other books. Yet I am convinced that in no book of the Bible is the great truth more strongly emphasised that the soul of history is the Will of God,¹ and that the succession of events in the world's history is simply the gradual unfolding of that Will. I cannot understand the language in which much of the book is expressed ; but parts of it are clear in a certain degree, and they show what is the character of the whole Revelation. Everything that helps to explain the symbolic speech in which the book is expressed ought to be welcomed ; and one of the soundest and sanest explanations of certain parts and of the general principles of the symbolism is contained in the following papers by Dr. Johann Lepsius.

Dr. Lepsius, as I understand him,² is in perfect agreement

¹ This is only a rendering in modern more philosophic and abstract language of the last words in the first paragraph of the *Iliad* Διὸς ἐπέλελετο βουλή: in the events of the whole poem the will of the supreme God was worked out to its consummation.

² I have conversed with him on this question, and as regards the following republication in English form, and have his permission for the transla-

with what appears to me to be the correct principle of interpretation of the Revelation. As he quotes in the end of his preparatory remarks the words of the Saviour to His disciples, so we must hold firmly : no man knows, i.e. no man will ever at any moment in history know, the day or the hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.

The mere suggestion that astrology was an influence on the Revelation will shock and disgust many ; and Dr. Lepsius's real meaning must be properly understood at the outset. It is not for a moment to be supposed that, because magicians and astrologers used certain ideas and forms of thought, therefore John imitated those teachers of evil and enemies of the Faith. But those teachers were influential, because they used (and in so doing misused) forms and views which were current among the people of the Mediterranean lands. The views were not wrong in themselves : they were wrong only as perverted by the magicians. There was current in those lands an opinion that there is in heaven a world corresponding to and typical of the world of earth. Everything that is done rightly on earth has its prototype and justification in the heavenly world. Every congregation on earth has its heavenly counterpart : the Churches have their stars and their candlesticks in heaven, and these surround the Son of man. In my *Letters to the Seven Churches* I have published a relief, exemplifying the way in which this belief, that a heavenly counterpart of all religious ceremonial was concurrent with the performance of the ceremony on earth, was accepted in pagan circles. It was the same among the Hebrews and the Christians. The heaven and the earth unite in ministering to the glory of God. That pagan belief was

tion which my daughter has made. The copyright in his own work remains the property of Dr. Lepsius. I hope that the translation may direct English attention more to the rest of his writings.

one of the relics of truth misapplied, which Paul perceived in the pagan world (Romans i. 20, ii. 14 f.).

The stars in their courses obey the Will of God : they are His servants and ministers and angels ; so is fire and every phenomenon in earth and heaven. When He desired it, the stars in their courses fought against Sisera, and the sun and moon in their courses aided Joshua (not, however, by changing their courses, as is the common misunderstanding of a famous passage in the book of Joshua).

God is law, say the wise ; O soul, and let us rejoice,
For if He thunder by law, the thunder is still His voice.

The evil and the harm begin, when these ministers and angels and expressions of the Will of God are substituted in His place, and worshipped as independent of Him. Magic is the misapplication of beliefs and powers that have an original truth and are capable of a right application : ¹ magic is the degeneration of religion.

John expressed his vision of the world, of truth and victory and love, in the language of his time ; and we must go back to the language of his time in order to understand the vision. Such I take to be the meaning that guides Dr. Lepsius's exposition.

I see no discrepancy between my historico-geographical interpretation of some parts of the Revelation, and Dr. Lepsius's astrological interpretation of the language. We are only treating two different sides of the same process. Where real discrepancy exists, error may be suspected either on his side or more probably on mine. Moreover, Dr. Lepsius

¹ This is the principle which I have attempted to apply in regard to the frequent encounters between the Apostles and magicians or soothsayers (as described in the Acts)—first in my *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*, and afterwards more precisely and completely in *Pictures of the Apostolic Church*. Magicians like Simon and Barjesus possessed some real knowledge of nature and its powers and processes, but they eked out their knowledge by imposture and trickery, when the occasion required.

sees no fundamental discrepancy. He has to call in geography to aid in the explanation of the order of the Seven Churches and the Seven Letters. That order is neither the order of the Seven stars according to hours, nor the order according to days (horary or diurnal order). The horary order of the seven stars was astronomical (according to ancient conceptions of astronomy), first the higher stars, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, then the Sun, thereafter the lower stars, Venus, Mercury, Moon.

When each hour of the day is appropriated to its own special star in this horary order, recurring in due course time after time, the first hour of each day is found to belong to a different star (diurnal order of days in the week), Saturn, Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus. But the order of the Seven Churches is : (1) Saturn, (2) Jupiter, (3) Mars, (4) Venus, (5) Mercury, (6) Moon, (7) Sun ; and the reason is sought by Dr. Lepsius "in the geographical situation of the Seven Cities" (p. 175).

In English I know only of one book about the New Testament which follows a path not essentially dissimilar to that of Dr. Lepsius. That is Colonel Mackinlay's book on *The Magi : How they Recognized the Star of Christ*. His work¹ is one full of suggestion and inspired by new ideas ; but it was too bold and too novel to be appreciated by English scholars, and very few have had the courage or the insight to understand it. When its results have been again reached by a great German scholar working on the more scientific methods of German learning, it may be remembered and appreciated in England also. At present it shares in the neglect which by most English scholars is accorded to anything that cannot quote German precedent and so justify its right to exist.

W. M. RAMSAY.

¹ Hodder & Stoughton, 1908.

B. DR. LEPSIUS'S PREFACE TO HIS EXPLANATION OF
THE SYMBOLISM.

AMONGST the books of the Holy Scriptures, the Revelation of John is, with regard to its form, the most singular ; with regard to its contents the strangest and most difficult to understand. Nevertheless it has always possessed a great charm for lovers of the Divine Word, a charm which appeared to increase in proportion as the most contradictory explanations accumulated. The number of commentators who have attempted to break the seals of this book and to interpret its secrets is incalculable. With the exception of the Talmud and the Mohammedan commentaries of the Koran, there is (it must alas be said) no more hopeless and crazy literature than the interpretations of the Revelation of John. They resemble a bundle of strangely-shaped and rusty keys amongst which indeed no two are alike, but of which none fits the lock we wish to open.

Beyond doubt there was a time when this book was understood, for it is impossible to assume that the first readers for whom it was written were as perplexed by the book and its symbolical language as we are. No one could read the hieroglyphics on the walls of the Egyptian temples until the key of this picture-writing had been found ; but certainly the Egyptian priests could read them. The images of the Revelation are hieroglyphics. Is there a key for them ?

I do not assert that I am able to interpret the Revelation of John. For long since, Peter reminded the numerous prophets, who would gladly seat themselves like sparrows on the wings of the eagle in order to surpass by a little the height of his flight, that "no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation." Nothing should make us shrink so much from such an undertaking as a backward

glance from the fulfilment of the New Testament to the promise of the Old. Or was any one ever able to construct for himself, simply from the description of the suffering servant of God in the 53rd chapter of Isaiah without looking at the actual events, a picture of the Crucified Saviour and the manner of His death? Not until a prophecy is fulfilled is its explanation found.

Nevertheless I think I may say that in our time the Revelation of John can be read with more understanding than was possible before, for the riddle of the symbolical language of the Apocalypse is in the main solved.

The investigation of the Babylonian literature and its latest decipherment have disclosed to us much more richly and deeply the old Oriental methods of thinking and ways of presenting thoughts; but even this was not an indispensable preliminary. The Jewish literature outside of the Bible contained already sufficient hints and indications to explain the symbolical language of the Revelation.

Certainly the solution of the riddle will seem strange to many.

The symbolic pictures which make the Apocalypse so difficult to understand belong to the technical speech of a study which, since the days of Confucius, has been banned by science, namely, astrology. The Apocalypse was a book with seven seals for us, because we were unacquainted with the symbolical language of the ancient oriental astrology, and because we so little expected to receive disclosures about a book of the Holy Scriptures from this strange world of thought.

In a certain sense the Revelation of John is an astrological book, for it makes use of the speech of the old astrology, the speech of the sages of the East. But it does not, therefore, cease to be a prophetic book. For the

prophet as well as the poet may go for his images wherever it pleases him and the Spirit which moves him.

It is not accidental that the greatest poem amongst all the works of the world's literature which the Christian Church has called forth, the Divine Comedy of Dante, most nearly resembles the Revelation of John, not only by its symbolic garb and the subjects which it treats of, but also by its peculiar mixture of cosmological, theological, and historical speculations. I repeat that it is not accidental, for Dante, like the seer of the Revelation, believed in the old oriental idea of the universe; he was familiar with the seven heavens and the seven hells, with the doctrine of gods and angels and with the cosmic conception of divinity which was common to the ancient world. Perhaps some readers will find the Revelation more interesting when they realise the spiritual relationship of Dante and the writer of the Apocalypse, and will then be the more willing to grant to the seer of the Revelation that right of symbolic speech which they unhesitatingly accord to the author of the Divine Comedy.

If in the following paper ¹ we again endeavour to give a brief explanation of the Revelation of John, it is solely with the idea of making its astrological picture-language clear, and not in order to further the misuse to which even nowadays (as in former times) this book is subjected, namely, the attempt to see in it prophecies regarding a near or distant future. The reserve which the Son of God laid on Himself to avoid the questions of the curious: "But the day and the hour no man knoweth, neither the angels in heaven, nor yet the Son, but the Father alone," should not be too difficult for us as disciples of Jesus.

¹ An earlier short essay by the writer did not rouse general attention; it was published in *Reich Christi*, iv. 1901, part i. Compare also an article on "die geschichtlichen Grundlagen der christlichen Weltanschauung" in *Reich Christi*, vi. 1903, Parts vii., viii.

C. THE SEVEN STARS AND THE SEVEN CANDLESTICKS.

Every reader of the Revelation must be struck by the frequent use which John makes of symbolical numbers in connexion with images and visions. The number seven and the number twelve appear to rule this whole symbolical world, and to be in the highest degree significant. In the greeting with which the seer begins his messages to the seven communities it astonishes us that where we had expected to find the Holy Ghost beside God and Jesus Christ in the usual trinitary formula, we meet instead with "the seven spirits before His throne." In the first vision which John describes we see the Son of Man in a divine vision standing between the seven golden candlesticks, holding seven stars in His right hand and giving the command to write to the seven congregations in Asia Minor. The vision of the stars and candlesticks is thus interpreted :

The seven stars are the angels of the seven congregations.

And the seven candlesticks are seven congregations.

It is well known that everywhere in the old Eastern cosmology the number seven refers to the seven planets and the number twelve to the twelve signs of the zodiac. The seven gods and the twelve gods of the ancient religions are most easily explained if we convince ourselves that the old Eastern religions were originally astral religions, and had turned aside from the worship of the Most High God to the cult of the spirits of the stars. The attributes of the Most High God were given to His servants, the princes of the heavenly hosts, and individual star-gods, especially from among the circle of the seven planets, were arbitrarily raised to the head of the heavenly Pantheon, principally for

political and hierarchical reasons. The doctrine of the angels and that of the star-gods have the same origin. According to the belief of the Jewish people also, the angels are star-spirits who form the heavenly court of God. We shall see that in the symbolism of the Apocalypse, too, the seven archangels appear as the spirits of the seven planets, and the four Cherubim (beasts) as angels of four quarters of the zodiac (circle of beasts). But amongst the peoples of the ancient world, the Israelites alone continued to regard the angels of the stars as inferior to the highest God, and did not raise them to the rank of gods, much less set aside the highest God to make room for them. On this fact rests the rightful historical title of the Israelites, alone amongst the peoples of the ancient world, to be called "the people of God." The pagan nations all went over to the cult of the planets, the Israelites alone did not do so, or at least only when they consciously fell away from their faith.

When the Son of God ascended to heaven and was set upon the right hand of the Father, He was raised above all the spirits of the planets and fixed stars and the "dominions, thrones and principalities" of the celestial world, that is to say, all ranks of angels or star-spirits became subject to Him.

The first vision of the Revelation, the Son of Man who holds the seven stars, that is, the seven planets, in His hand, utters with the impressive power of symbolic language the first message which is given to the seer of the Revelation: Jesus, the Son of God, is raised to the throne of the Cosmos, the planet-gods who were worshipped by all the world are in His hand, the spirits of the stars have become His servants and have lost their right of sovereignty over the earth. The attributes and power of the pagan gods, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, Mercury, Moon and Sun, have passed over to

the Son of Man ; adorned with their lustre He appears in celestial splendour to His mortally terrified disciple.

D. THE SEVEN CONGREGATIONS.

The angels of the seven congregations, which the Son of Man holds as stars in His right hand, are the seven planet-angels, according to the Jewish belief the seven archangels. The seven candlesticks are the seven congregations of Asia Minor, and at the same time, in the symbolic imagery of the whole vision, the representatives of the entire pagan-Christian community. The seven congregations, according to the astrological point of view which underlies the vision, are under the astral influence of the seven planet-spirits, who on their side again are represented as the bearers of the sevenfold power of the Holy Ghost. The identification in the Koran of the angel Gabriel with the Holy Ghost is probably a remnant of that belief which saw in the seven archangels the bearers and mediators of the power of the Holy Ghost. The attributes which are given to the Son of Man in the seven letters, are not taken merely from the Jewish doctrine of the angels, they correspond also to the Graeco-Roman theology,¹ as a sign that the cosmic power of the Greek gods has passed over to the Son of Man, just as the angels now exercise their power over the earth only as instruments of the Son of Man. In a later vision (v. 6) the spirits of the seven planets are represented with bold symbolism as the "seven horns and seven eyes" of the Lamb, with the explanatory remark: "These are the seven spirits of God which are sent forth into all the earth" (compare Zechariah iv. 7, "those seven; they are the eyes of the Lord which gaze upon the whole earth").

It may seem strange to us that the angels are made

¹ *Götterlehre.*

responsible for the congregations which are under their influence. But here we have to do with an idea which appears in Jewish theology also, according to which angels and men are so bound together in their reciprocal influence that they mutually decide one another's destiny. This point of view therefore permits us to regard the angels of the seven communities not only as the spirits of the seven planets, but also as bearers of the spirit of the seven communities, and as their directors or bishops. To whomsoever God gives an office, to him He likewise grants the Spirit for it.

In the promises also which are made to each of the congregations at the end of each message, is reflected the astral character of the several congregations. It is not improbable that the seven messages decided Dante, who was guided by a correct understanding of the Apocalypse, to place the spirits of the blest after their death in the seven heavens, that is, the seven planets. In the whole ancient oriental cosmology, which was known to the Apostle Paul too, the seven heavens are the spheres of the seven planets. When the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians xii. 2-4 speaks of his raptures and says that he was taken up once into the third heaven and once into Paradise, we may assume, in conformity with the promise which is made to the Church of Ephesus, that in his view Paradise was a name for the seventh heaven. During his progress through the seven heavens, Dante, led by Beatrice, visits the seven planets one by one, and finds there the departed souls of the righteous, in sevenfold order of degree, and in different stages of bliss which correspond to the spiritual character and maturity of their past terrestrial life. But he expressly wishes that this should not be literally understood, and blames Plato because he in his *Timaeus* "seems," as he says, "to believe that the soul returns to the star from which,

according to his opinion, it came when Nature gave it its form" (*Paradiso*, Canto 4, 52).

But, if Plato meant it in a different sense, "that the good or evil influence returns to the spheres, then surely his bow struck the truth" (*Paradiso*, Canto 4, 58, 59, 60).

Dante's meaning, therefore, is that the transporting of the souls to the planets is only the symbolic way of expressing that men during their terrestrial life are subject to the benignant or malignant influence of the stars, an influence which returns to the stars at the death of those men.

The seven messages also, with their promises, are not intended to give expression to the idea that the souls of the "overcomers" will find the reward of their faithfulness after death in the seven heavens (through transportation to the planets), but only that the good spirit of their star will continue to influence their future life if they are found worthy of resurrection. "He that overcometh shall inherit all (the bliss of the Paradise which has arisen again on the new earth), and I will be his God and he will be My son."

In Dante's *Paradiso* the seven heavens are introduced in the order which corresponds to the order of hours of the planets. The association of the days of the week with the seven planets is founded on the order of hours of the planets. According to Dio Cassius, the naming of our week days after the planets (which has certainly come down to us from the Babylonians), has the following origin. The first hour of the Sabbath was placed under the influence of Saturn, and by placing each of the twenty-four hours of the day one by one under another planet, always going round the circle again, with the first hour of the next day the Sun was reached, with the first hour of the following day the Moon, and so on to Mars, Mercury, Jupiter and Venus. This gave occasion to name the days of the week after the planets that ruled their first hours.

The horary order is obtained by arranging the planets according to the duration of their course. The enumeration of the seven heavens (which is followed by Dante also) corresponds regularly to this order.

1. Heaven : Moon.
2. Heaven : Mercury.
3. Heaven : Venus.
4. Heaven : Sun.
5. Heaven : Mars.
6. Heaven : Jupiter.
7. Heaven : Saturn.

Thus the lower planets come first, then the Sun, and then the higher planets. The Sun and the Moon were counted as planets by the ancients.

By counting the horary planets throughout the whole week ¹ a different planet falls every time on the first hour of each succeeding day, from which arises the order of planets which corresponds to the week-days.²

Sun : Sunday (Sonntag), dies Solis.

Moon : Monday (Montag, Lundi), dies Lunae.

Mars : Tuesday (Mardi, Dienstag), dies Martis.³

Mercury : Wednesday (Mercredi), dies Mercurii.

Jupiter : Thursday (Jeudi, Donnerstag), dies Jovis.

Venus : Friday (Vendredi, Freitag), dies Veneris.

Saturn : Saturday (Samedi, Samstag), dies Saturni.

The planet-angels of the seven messages are arranged according to the horary order of the planets, from Saturn

¹ Ideler, *Handbuch der mathematischen und technischer Chronologie*, ii. p. 177 (Berlin, 1826),

² Tew-Zin—Mars, Mercury—Wodan, Jupiter—Donar-Thor.

³ Saturday (Saturn) 765432176543217654321765

Sunday (Sun) 432176543217654321765432

Monday (Moon) 176543217654321765432176

Tuesday (Mars) 543217654321765432176543

Wednesday (Mercury) 217654321765432176543217

Thursday (Jupiter) 654321765432176543217654

Friday (Venus) 321765432176543217654321.

to the Moon, except that the Sun is placed at the end. The cause of this arrangement is probably to be looked for in the geographical situation of the seven cities of Asia Minor, to which the book of the Revelation was to be sent as a circular letter. From this arises the following order, which makes apparent the connexion of the planets and their angels with the seven communities. We add the Aramaic names¹ of the seven planets and the seven archangels as they correspond to the seven Roman planet-gods :

Ephesus : Saturn : Sabbathai (Sabbath star) : Caphziel or Saraphiel.

Smyrna : Jupiter : Zedek (the just) : Zedekiel.

Pergamos : Mars : Maadim (the red) : Sammael.

Thyatira : Venus : Voga (the shining one) : 'Anael.

Sardis : Mercury : Kokab (the star) : Michael.

Philadelphia : Moon : Lebana (the white one) : Gabriel.

Laodicea : Sun : Chamma (the shining one) : Raphael.

E. THE LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES.

I. *Ephesus.*

The angel who rules the community in Ephesus is the angel of the seventh heaven, the angel of Saturn. His name, Caphziel, has been retained in Mohammedan astrology as Cazphiel. Saturn or Sabbathai is the star of the Sabbath, the day on which God rested from all His works, on which the first man lived the first day in Paradise. The life of Paradise is the life of blissful rest and eternal peace, of which the Sabbath is a symbol. In the Greek mythology

¹ The Aramaic names of the planet-angels have passed into the Mohammedan astrology, where they are thus called, according to Abdul Maaschari Belki: Melik Rufail (Raphael). Sun: M. Gabriel. Moon: M. Semsemail (Sammael). Mars: M. Michael. Mercury: M. Sarfial (Saraphiel). Jupiter: M. Anjajil ('Anael). Venus: M. Kesfial (Caphziel). Saturn.

also the age of Saturn is the age of Paradise. It is ruled by Kronos (Saturn), the father of Zeus (Jupiter), and is called the Golden Age in which the race of men dwelt in Paradise.

“First of all, a golden race of mortal men did the Immortal Dwellers in Olympos fashion. These lived in the time of Kronos when he was king in Heaven. Like gods they lived, having a soul unknowing sorrow, apart from toil and travail. Neither were they subject to miserable eld, but ever the same in hand and foot, they took their pleasure in festival apart from all evil. And they died as overcome of sleep. All good things were theirs. The bounteous earth bare fruit for them of her own will, in plenty and without stint. And they in peace and quiet lived on their lands with many good things, rich in flocks and dear to the blessed gods.”¹

According to Dante, Saturn is the star of the cold time. (*Purg.*, 19. 3) which is warmed for the first time by the love-power of Christ, the heavenly lion, who has renewed the Golden Age.

We are raised into the seventh splendour which, under the breast of the burning lion, shines down, mingled with his strength (*Paradiso*, Canto 21. 13-15).

In the seventh heaven Dante finds the holy hermits who lead a happy life of Eden-like simplicity which is given up to the blissful contemplation of God.

The angel of the Sabbath-star, as the star of the seventh day and the seventh heaven, has, like all planet-gods, resigned his power to the Son of Man, “That holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, Who walketh amongst the seven golden candlesticks.”

The community of Ephesus is reproached for its coldness and lovelessness and is exhorted to return to the works

¹ Hesiod, *Opera et Dies*, 109-120. Taken from the excellent translation by Professor A. W. Mair.

of its first love ; but to him that overcometh is promised the fruit " of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God."

II. Smyrna.

The star of the community in Smyrna is the planet Zedek or Jupiter, Zedekiel, the angel of the sixth heaven. Zedek signifies justice. Jupiter is the judge of life and death, the lord of the tribunal and guardian of right. Dante, too, makes Jupiter the star of the sixth heaven. When he is raised into the light of the sixth star, he sees the swarm of souls which hover in its light forming with their wings characters from which he deciphers the words : " diligite iustitiam, qui iudicatis terram," love justice, ye that rule the earth (*Wisdom of Solomon*, i. 1).

Then Dante sees the swarm of souls which inhabit the sixth heaven form themselves into the likeness of a shining eagle, as the symbol of the power of justice, upon which he cries out to the star :

" Oh, sweet star, such and so many jewels show
me that our justice is the effect of the heaven which
thou dost adorn " (*Paradiso*, Canto 18. 115-117).

The dominion of Jupiter has, as the message to the Church of Smyrna shows, passed over to the Son of Man, Who as " the first and the last, who was dead and is become alive again," is now the only lord over life and death, and alone can condemn to the " second death," which is damnation. The Church is still at war with the Synagogue of Satan and its lord the Devil, who tries to pervert them to unfaithfulness by imprisonment and death. But the Lord will lead those who overcome and remain true to Him through tribulation, prison, death and judgment, will guard them, and as judge of the living and the dead absolve them from the second death, damnation.

III. Pergamon.

The angel which rules the Church in Pergamon is the angel of the fifth heaven, the planet Mars, in Aramaic Maadim, the red one, the war-god, an angel named Sammael. His attribute, "the sharp, double-edged sword," has passed from his hands into the power of the Son of Man; it is, however, not in the right hand but in the mouth of the Son of Man that the sword appears, as a sign that He rules, not by violence, but by the power of His word. In the later Jewish literature, Sammael, the angel of Mars, is identified with Satan. How old this identification is it will be difficult to ascertain. But already in the book of Job, Satan appears in heaven among "the Sons of God," the "angels who come before God," that is among the seven archangels or planet-angels. When Goethe, in the prologue in heaven, chose the scene from Job as his model, and made the devil appear before God, with the archangels Raphael, Gabriel and Michael, he followed not only the book of Job but also the later Jewish belief.

In the message to Pergamon the expression twice occurs, first: "I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is," and then "among you, where Satan dwelleth." The planet Mars was regarded as the seat of Satan's authority.

When Dante enters the sphere of the fifth heaven, he recognises

"By the inflamed smile of the star, which seemed
to me glowing more red than usual" (*Paradiso*,
Canto 14. 86-87)

that he is in the planet Mars. In Aramaic Mars is called the Red One. Then in a wonderful vision Dante sees how a cross is formed out of the rays of Mars:

"Here let memory take the place of wit: for on

the cross I saw Christ shining, so that I can find no worthy comparison" (*Paradiso*, Canto 14. 103-5).

"Then from the lights which had appeared to me there arose about the Cross a melody which charmed me, although I could not understand the words of it. But I could well note that it was full of high praise, for I caught the words *resurgi*, and then *vinci!*" (*Paradiso*, Canto 14. 121-125).

"Arise and overcome!" sounds from the cross of Christ. The war-god Mars has had to give up his power of victory to Christ. "Or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth."

A remarkable parallel helps us to an understanding of the strange promise which is made to those of the congregation in Pergamon who overcome. In the Midrash the seven heavens are introduced in the following order :

1. vilun = Sun. Cholta. Sunday.
2. rakia = Moon. Rokeita. Monday.
3. schechakim = Mars. Gemmita. Tuesday.
4. zebul = Mercury. Nehorita. Wednesday.
5. maon = Jupiter. Rochashita. Thursday.
6. machon = Venus. Churpita. Friday.
7. araboth = Saturn. Regoita. Saturday.

Since, according to the Midrash, the "archangel Michael" dwells in the fourth heaven, we may assume that the seven heavens are reckoned in the order given above (that of the days of the week), for Michael is Mercury. The third heaven, according to the order of the days of the week, thus corresponds to the fifth in the horary order of the planets, the planet Mars. We have placed alongside of the seven heavens, from the Targum of the book of Esther, the names of the seven handmaids who served Esther on the seven days of the week. The name Rokeita, the name of that one of Esther's maids who on Monday, the day of creation,

brought her the *rakia* (vest), proves that the second heaven, called *rakia*, is to be ascribed to the Moon. Thus the third heaven, *Shechakim*, is the heaven of Mars. Of this heaven we read in the Midrash: "In the heaven called *schechakim*¹ there are millstones, which grind the heavenly Manna for the departed righteous." It is evidently to this that the promise refers which they that overcome among the community in Pergamon receive: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white mill-stone² and on the stone a new name written, which no man knows saving he that receiveth it."

J. LEPSIUS.

HELENA RAMSAY, *transl.*

DID PAUL EVOLVE HIS GOSPEL ?

(1) THERE are fashions in thought, which sometimes become almost superstitions. About the value of the idea of evolution for modern knowledge there can be no doubt or question. In nature and in history alike it enables us to think things together. In every department of science the *static* view is being replaced by the *dynamic*, the world and man are being interpreted as not at rest, but in movement. At present at least we cannot conceive a category which is likely to supersede this dominant conception. Nevertheless there is a twofold danger in the universal application of

¹ From *schachak* = to grind.

² It is possible that the reference to the manna-mills was not comprehensible to the Greek translator of the Apocalypse, who translated stone as *ψήφος*. Nevertheless *ψήφος* signifies a pebble. In the East large pebbles are used as millstones. [This is the least convincing detail in Dr. Lepsius's explanation. The purpose of the "white stone" was to receive a name. Millstones are not intended to receive a name. The kind of stone (*ψήφος*) which the writer of the Apocalypse had in mind was a *tessera*, as is pointed out in my *Letters to the Seven Churches*.—W.M.R.]