

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:



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



<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for the *Journal of Theological Studies* (old series) can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jts-os_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[1st page of article]

The Journal of Theological Studies

JULY, 1907

THE APOCALYPSE.¹

THE appearance of Dr Swete's *Apocalypse* in two editions, following each other within a year, is an event of importance in the history of English exegesis. At last we have an edition of this remarkable book on an ample scale, covering the whole book and applying modern methods with the full apparatus of scholarly criticism. In saying this no disparagement is intended of the other books upon our list. Every one of them is good, and even very good, in its kind. Sir William Ramsay's *Letters to the Seven Churches* has all the qualities that we expect from him, a strong grip on the historical situation and abundant illustration of the political and geographical environment; but it is of course confined to the first three chapters. The two small books, by Prof. F. C. Porter (of Yale, though the book has an English publisher, Mr James Clarke) and Mr Anderson Scott, are excellent in their way, but their scale prevents them from taking the place of a classical commentary. This place Dr Swete has now filled, to the great satisfaction of all English-speaking students.

We learn incidentally from a note on p. civ of the new edition that Dr Hort lectured upon Apoc. i-iii in 1888 (rather 1889; see *J. T. S.* for April last, p. 431). I believe that these lectures are in existence, and I would venture to express the hope that they may be published. I am well aware that the reputation of

¹ H. B. Swete, D.D. *The Apocalypse of St John*, London, 2nd ed. 1907 (1st ed. 1906). Sir W. M. Ramsay, D.C.L. &c. *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia*, London, 1904. C. Anderson Scott, M.A. *Revelation (in the Century Bible)*, Edinburgh (n. d.). F. C. Porter, D.D. *Messages of the Apocalyptic Writers*, London, 1905. The same, art. 'Revelation', in *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible*. Joh. Weiss, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, Göttingen, 1904. W. Bousset, D.D. *Die Offenbarung Johannis*, Göttingen, 2nd ed. 1906 (1st ed. 1896).

a great writer is supposed to suffer when material that has not received his final touches is given to the world after his death. That this should be so is partly the fault of the critical press, which should be the guardian of such reputations and is sometimes apt to think too much of ephemeral fashions and too little of the value of exact statement. Dr Hort was an expert, if ever there was one, and every stroke of his pen had a lifetime of critical study behind it. For this reason anything from his hand possesses a high value, and I gather that he has left behind a reasoned argument for the earlier of two alternative dates of the book which, whether right or wrong in its conclusion, would in any case be welcome. To this question of the date I hope to return shortly.

The mention of Dr Hort leads us naturally to the relation of the present Regius Professor at Cambridge to the great triad of Cambridge exegetes. It is a happiness to every one in this country to think that their line should be so worthily continued as it is by the Dean of Westminster and Dr Swete. At present we are concerned only with the latter. Dr Swete fully shares the great Cambridge characteristics. He is, to begin with, an accomplished scholar. Perhaps he has even more literary finish than any of his predecessors. Bp Lightfoot would come nearest to him in this respect; but the bishop's was just a plain lucid style, which said with a maximum of clearness and effect all that its author desired to say. In the case of Dr Swete there is a touch of gentle refinement—in reference to another subject-matter I should have said, of elegance—which goes one degree beyond this: it is personal to the writer. And there is one other personal trait that cannot be suppressed, however little it is obtruded. That is, the religious feeling which runs through the commentary. There is a sentence in the preface which strikes a distinctive note of Dr Swete's work.

More especially I have had in view the wants of the English clergy, who, scholars at heart by early education or by the instincts of a great tradition, are too often precluded from reaping the fruits of research through inability to procure or want of leisure to read a multitude of books.

Those who are acquainted with the history of Dr Swete's labours—and what English churchman is not acquainted with

them?—will understand the depth of sympathy that is contained in those words. Of the yet deeper individual feeling which permeates the book I will give but one example—the concluding words of the same preface.

In letting it go from me, I can only repeat Augustine's prayer, which stood at the end of the preface to *St Mark*, and is even more necessary here. *Domine Deus . . . quaecumque dixi in hoc libro de tuo, agnoscant et tui ; si qua de meo, et Tu ignosce et tui.*

We know how even a quotation sometimes reveals the secret of a whole character ; and it seems to do so with peculiar felicity here.

It may well seem that in the description just quoted of those of the English clergy who are 'scholars at heart by early education or by the instincts of a great tradition' the author has unconsciously drawn a picture of himself. The influence of the traditional English classical training is still strong upon him. It determined the form of his commentary, with its predilection for quotations from the ancient commentators skilfully selected and worked in, with its careful technical treatment of textual criticism, and with its abundant illustration also from ancient sources. It is indeed scholarship conscientiously brought up to date, as it is incumbent upon all true scholarship to be. And yet we feel the difference when we turn to German work like Bousset's, which again is admirable in its kind. No one writer has really done so much for the understanding of the Apocalypse. With the exception perhaps of Sir W. M. Ramsay all the English and American commentators are largely indebted to him. Here, as so often elsewhere, it is the Germans who have led the way in breaking up new ground and by the boldness of their experiments. It is the difference between the specialist and the scholar. The specialist is intent upon discovery, upon getting to the bottom of the problems that present themselves to him. Half of his merit lies in the statement of these problems and in the fertility with which he invents hypotheses to solve them. He does not greatly care if these hypotheses prove untenable. He is ready to discard them as soon as anything better is propounded. He does not mind being wrong, if his failure contributes to the general advance. The monograph of Johannes Weiss is rather an instance of a very able man throwing away his labour by

mistaken method, or insisting upon points that will not bear the stress laid upon them. In the mass of collected material, in strenuous wrestling with difficulties, in the application of a strong judgement which neither allows details to be neglected in the pursuit of a general idea nor the general idea to be buried beneath the load of details, in comprehensive and systematic method, Bousset occupies the first place. His book is eminently 'workmanlike', but it does not aim at the finish and grace of diction, nor yet at the mild and wise reserve, which characterize Dr Swete.

The English commentator may be taken as really typical of the best Biblical study in this country. An adequate commentary on the Apocalypse has been long in coming, and follows in the wake of much that has been done upon the continent; its strongest point is not that of relentless logic and science; but it does sift the results that seem to have been obtained, and the meshes of the sieve are fine.

I

The broad meaning of the book is now at last after all these centuries sufficiently clear. The leading factors that enter into its explanation are contained in the history of the time at which it was written. It represents a death-grapple between the Roman State and Christianity. The empire of Rome is summed up in the person of the emperor, and its religion culminates in the worship of the emperors. To the Christian prophet this worship is idolatrous and blasphemous to the last degree. An attempt is being made, and threatens to be made on a still vaster scale, to enforce it upon all subjects of the Empire, including Christians. These can only resist to the death; and their resistance will not be in vain. Already the conflict which is about to be fought out on earth has been decided in heaven. Strange grandiose pictures of this heavenly warfare follow each other in succession. Events on earth and events in heaven are mingled up together, and run up into the great panorama of the end of the world-age, which is regarded as near at hand.

A far-reaching change has come over the relation of Church and State since St Paul and St Peter gave advice to their converts. In their time the Roman Empire was in the main a

beneficent power; they spoke of it with all respect, and urged their disciples to submit to its lawful demands. The worship of the emperors was indeed going on in the background, but except in the excesses of a madman like Caligula not in a very obtrusive way; it is probable that Christians had no great difficulty in evading it. Such sporadic persecution as appears to have been taking place in the provinces to which St Peter wrote was not like a battle of antagonistic principles; it turned largely upon the calumnies of which Christians were the victims in common report. There is still an element of uncertainty as to the exact date and the historical circumstances implied in the First Epistle of St Peter, but there is practically none as to the Epistle to the Romans. Between Romans xiii and the Apocalypse two great events have intervened. One of these was the Neronian persecution, and the other was the stricter enforcement of the imperial cultus, so that it pressed directly and personally upon Christians. The prophet of the Apocalypse foresees that this pressure will soon be still greater than it already is. His whole manhood rises in revolt against it; and he issues a trumpet-tongued appeal to all his brothers in the faith to join him in his resistance. He encourages them with the assurance that God is on their side; all the hosts of heaven will fight for them; they have only to endure, and their cause will be won. It is true that the hostile powers, the pagan empire and its false religion, are the instruments and agents of Satan himself, but Satan's reign itself is doomed, and will soon come to an end.

The Neronian persecution, as an event in the past that has taken a strong hold on the imagination of the writer, and the enforcement of the emperor-worship seem to be the two main historical keys to the book. We are tempted to think that the writer himself had been a witness of the first, and was at the time of writing in more or less close contact with the second. The tremendous chapters xvii and xviii seem to suggest that the writer had himself actually visited Rome, and seen with his own eyes its public places dripping with the blood of Christian victims. He may have even had to undergo some form of torture himself.

Of course it is only a speculation, that cannot be historically verified; but I confess that in this connexion I should like to

think of the story of St John at the Latin Gate as having some real foundation. The first evidence for the story is in Tertullian, who was well acquainted with Roman traditions; and there are local details in the story that go some way to invest it with verisimilitude. But the main point is that we should understand the impassioned language of the Apocalypse better if its author had been in the earlier sense a martyr or a confessor not at Patmos only but at Rome. And the details of the picture of 'Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots', look as though they came from one who had himself stood at the centre of the imperial system (xvii 2, 12-13, 17-18; xviii 3, 7, 9, 15-19), who had moved about the crowded markets, and watched the ceaseless stream of traffic and the loading and unloading of varied merchandise. We may doubt if there is not rather more in all this than Ephesian experience will account for.

As to the other point, the threatened implication of Christians in the blasphemous rites of emperor-worship, we need not feel bound to suppose that either this or the persecution that went along with it had gone very far when the prophet began to write. He saw it coming, and close at hand, on a larger scale than ever before. That was enough. For the rest, he fills in his canvas with the traditional paraphernalia of dragon and beasts and heads and horns, which were the common property of apocalyptic writings.

II

The most conspicuous point on which Dr Swete departs from the tradition of the Cambridge triumvirate is as to the date of the book we are considering. Except in the unpublished lectures of Dr Hort's to which reference has been made, none of the three directly commented upon it. But, although this was the case, they had all made up their minds, and they were unanimous in the conclusion at which they arrived. The references given by Dr Swete on p. xcix shew that they had each expressed themselves definitely as to the date, and they may be said to have practically fixed upon the year 69 or thereabouts, before the Fall of Jerusalem. This was indeed the prevalent opinion among the more critical writers a quarter or half a century ago when the older Cambridge School flourished; among those who held it were Ewald and Renan. The stronghold of this view was the begin-

ning of chap. xi, from which it seemed natural to infer that the Temple at Jerusalem, though threatened, was still standing. There seemed to be also a clear allusion (xiii 3) to the recent death of Nero, as to whom a rumour soon got abroad that he was not really dead but hiding among the Parthians. We shall see presently that the hints in reference to this rumour are still better satisfied by a later date; but it might well be thought that both these data and those of chapter xvii 10 harmonized sufficiently with the beginning of the reign of Vespasian. Another very tempting feature in the hypothesis was that it seemed to make it easier than any other hypothesis could, to attribute all the writings that bear the name of St John, Gospel Epistles and Apocalypse, to the same author. The writer of this is free to confess that he himself was much inclined to go with the stream, though he could not pretend to have given the subject close study.

But in the later years of the last century there came about a steady reaction. It had to be admitted from the first that the critical theory which placed the book before 70 A.D. ran directly counter to the main body of early Christian tradition. And that in this particular instance was exceptionally strong. Irenaeus was able to appeal to the testimony of those who had themselves 'seen John'; and according to him the vision of the Apocalypse was itself seen towards the end of the reign of Domitian (81-96). We shall have to return to the interpretation of this phrase, which has recently been questioned; but I may as well say at once that in my opinion the ordinary explanation is correct. The whole body of external evidence bearing upon the date is well collected by Dr Swete on p. xcv f. Thus there was a conflict between the external and the supposed internal evidence, which to many minds was disquieting. An important note of Mommsen's (*Röm. Gesch.* v 520 ff) contributed to shake the current view. Prof. Ramsay, with his usual vigorous independence, declared in favour of a date that is practically that of Irenaeus, 'not earlier than about A.D. 90' (*The Church in the Roman Empire* p. 301). Harnack, in like manner, in his *Chronologie* (1897), adopted the Irenaeus date. So too did Bousset in 1896, and Prof. F. C. Porter, both in his little book and in the very learned and valuable article 'Revelation' which he contributed to Hastings' *Dictionary*. This strong phalanx of present-day opinion is now

joined by Dr Swete. Dr V. Bartlet (*The Apostolic Age* p. 404) and Mr Anderson Scott take a mediating line with 75-80 or 77 A.D.

The chief support of this last which we may call the Vespasian theory is the passage xvii 9-11:—

The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth ; and they are seven kings ; the five are fallen, the one is, *the other is not yet come* ; and when he cometh, he must continue a little while. And the beast, that was, and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is of the seven ; and he goeth into perdition.

It is one of the best modes of reckoning to regard Nero as the fifth and Vespasian as the sixth, not counting the brief usurpations of Galba, Otho, and Vitellius ; Vespasian appears to have considered himself to be the next successor of Nero. But, if the words in italics seem to point to Vespasian, those which follow point no less distinctly to Domitian. The reign of Titus (79-81) was very short ; and Domitian (81-96) was regarded as a second Nero (Tert. *Apol.* 5 : *portio Neronis de crudelitate*, and the other passages quoted by Dr Swete *ad loc.*). The writer assumes a double standpoint, first an earlier and then a later. We shall have to come back to this under the next head of our treatment.

If we are to determine the date of the book we must in any case follow the latest indications contained in it. One of these seems to have escaped the notice of the English writers, though it is duly noted by Prof. Porter (p. 190). At the suggestion of the Dean of St Patrick's Dr Swete has introduced a reference to it into his note on vi 6 in his second edition, but he has not utilized it in his discussion of the question of date. Really the point was first brought forward, not by Harnack, but by Salomon Reinach in an article in the *Revue Archéologique*, at the end of 1901 (reprinted in *Cultes, Mythes et Religions* ii 356-380, 1906). The verse vi 6 had hitherto been a *crux interpretum* : a voice proclaims, ' A choenix of wheat for a denarius, and three choenixes of barley for a denarius ; and the oil and the wine hurt thou not.' The denarius as Dr Swete tells us, ' the silver " franc " of the Empire,' was the daily wage, and a choenix of wheat the average daily consumption of the workman ; barley was the food of the very poor. According to M. Reinach's computation the price of

wheat is to be seven times the ordinary, and that of barley four times; in other words, the necessities of life were to be at famine prices, while luxurics (like wine and oil) were to be abundant. It was natural to look for some historical allusion here; and M. Reinach found it in the fact that in the year 92 Domitian, wishing to benefit the Italian vine-growers, issued an edict forbidding the planting of new vineyards in Italy and ordering the reduction by one half of those in the provinces. Asia Minor was so much affected by this that an agitation at once began, which led to the withdrawal of the edict, and the production of wine and oil was left to take its course unchecked. The Apocalypticist regarded this as a calamity, which only pandered to drunkenness and immorality. If this allusion holds good, he would be writing soon after the withdrawal of the edict, or about the year 93.

To me, as at present advised, the general situation seems to favour some such date as this. It may be true that some of the more general arguments adduced for it are not quite stringent. I could not (e.g.) lay so much stress as Sir W. M. Ramsay does on 'persecution for the Name'. The prominence given to 'the Name' or 'My Name' in the Synoptic Gospels and the Acts would seem to account sufficiently for this without supposing an allusion to the laws of the Empire. No great stress can be laid upon the slender hints as to the constitution of the Asian churches. And, though it may be well to widen the interval which separates the Apocalypse from the missionary labours of St Paul, there is nothing under this head that could be pronounced incompatible with such a date as 77, or even 69. It does indeed seem to me that the Nero-legend is too far developed for the earlier year. Later in the reign of Vespasian it was no doubt in full force; but even then we should hardly have had anything quite so definite as 'The beast that was, and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is of the seven'. On the other hand, it is not easy to think of an acute crisis arising out of the pressure of emperor-worship in a peaceful period like the end of Vespasian's reign, and under an emperor who took his own divinity so lightly (*ut puto deus fio*). Domitian was much more in earnest on this head; and the zeal of the provincials would anticipate his wishes.

Still other arguments are subsidiary; the main argument for the later date must be the strong tradition first expressed by

Irenaeus. For myself I must confess that the attempt to invalidate this so ably made by Dr Chase in the last number of this JOURNAL is quite unconvincing. It seems to me that the Latin version of Irenaeus is exactly right with its rendering *visum est*; it is not, to be quite precise, so much the apocalypse itself that was seen as the vision (of the apocalypse). It seems to me that *τοῦ τὴν ἀποκάλυψιν ἑωρακότος* and *ἑωράθη* in such close juxtaposition must have the same reference. Nor can I think it a natural way of speaking to say that a man 'was seen' simply in the sense of 'he lived'. It is a different thing where attention is called to individual links in a chain of testimony: 'Clement, who also had sight of the blessed Apostles and conversed with them'; 'Polycarp, whom we also saw in our early youth.'

III

The substantial agreement of so scientific a worker as Bousset and so cultured a scholar as Dr Swete on the date of the Apocalypse seems to me to be important; and not less important is their practical agreement as to its unity. I believe that on this subject sounder and truer views are being arrived at than have been current for some time. Bousset's close analysis of the style of the book shews that a single masterful hand has been at work all through. And Dr Swete's careful examination of the use of the Old Testament tends to the same result. There is no objection on principle to the use of 'sources'; but at least they have not been reproduced crudely side by side. The most that can be said is that now and again perhaps particular features derived from such sources have not been completely harmonized with the rest.

As Dr Swete's position on this point has been not quite accurately represented in some quarters, it may be well to give his own words.

That the author of the Apocalypse made free use of any materials to which he had access, and which were available for his purpose, is highly probable. But did he transfer large masses of earlier apocalyptic writing to his own work, in such a manner as to make his book a compilation or to detract from its unity? Was this his method of dealing with the works of older apocalyptists? It so happens that we are in a position to give a definite answer to the second of these questions.

The writer of the New Testament apocalypse has made large use of the apocalyptic portions of the Old Testament. He refers to the Book of Daniel in some forty-five places, and the Books of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah are used with almost equal frequency, while the other Prophets, the Psalter, and the Pentateuch are often in view. No book in the New Testament is so thoroughly steeped in the thought and imagery of the Hebrew Scriptures. Yet the writer has not once quoted the Old Testament, and rarely uses its *ipsissima verba*. Seldom does he borrow from it a scene or the suggestion of a vision without modifying the details, departing from his original with the utmost freedom, or combining features which have been brought together from different contexts. This method of using Old Testament materials runs through the whole of the Apocalypse, and is characteristic of the book. Whether the writer is indebted to non-canonical apocalypses is less certain, but if he is, he has followed the same principle. There is no evidence that any one of them has served him as a 'source'; coincidences between the work of John and the extant Jewish books are nearly limited to minor points connected with the imagery and diction. Under the circumstances it is more than precarious to postulate sources of which nothing is known (p. liii).

I think that I should have expressed the last part of this paragraph rather differently. While fully admitting the possibility that foreign material has been used, Dr Swete seems to deprecate that hypothesis rather more than I should. And, besides the express quotation of non-canonical apocalypses, I should allow for a more indirect influence of floating material of that kind. In some cases—and indeed perhaps in the two that are most important—the balance of probability seems to me to incline in this direction more than it does to Dr Swete.

The first of these is the curious and difficult passage xi 1, 2, which runs thus in R. V. :—

And there was given me a reed like unto a rod ; and one said, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. And the court which is without the temple leave without, and measure it not ; for it hath been given unto the nations ; and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

Dr Swete would spiritualize the interpretation of this. For him the inner court represents the Church, and the outer court perhaps the rejected Synagogue, while the holy city stands for the Jewish polity. I should prefer, if not exactly to take it

literally, yet to think that it was suggested at least by literal external events; and in accordance with this view I should be disposed to date the passage, or its original, from that stage in the siege of Jerusalem when the outer court was in the possession of the Romans but not the inner.

In like manner as to the other passage, xvii 10, 11, which I have already quoted. I agree with Dr Swete that these two verses as a whole probably date from the time of Domitian; but I do not see how it is possible to apply this to the seventh king, who 'is not yet come'. I do not quite understand what Dr Swete means by suggesting that the writer perhaps 'purposely transfers himself in thought to the time of Vespasian', though I should wholly endorse the clause which follows, 'interpreting past events under the form of a prophecy after the manner of apocalyptic writers.' Why should the time of Vespasian be chosen more than any other time? In other words, why should the writer say that the seventh king 'is not yet' for any other reason than that he himself was living under that reign? To me it seems that there are two distinct notes of time in the passage, and that we are almost compelled to suppose that what was written at one date has been adapted to another.

It is in his treatment of chap. xi that Dr Swete appears to be still to some extent entangled in an old method of interpretation, which as a whole he has rightly abandoned. He explains the Two Witnesses of xi 3-12 of the Church in her function of witness-bearing.

The witness of the Church, borne by her martyrs and confessors, her saints and doctors, and by the words and lives of all in whom Christ lives and speaks, is one continual prophecy.

It may perhaps be possible to come round to something like this; and for homiletic purposes the application would be legitimate. But it can hardly be said that such a sense was directly present to the mind of the writer. He is thinking of the near future, not of the distant future; and he is thinking of it in terms of the past. The Two Witnesses are probably Moses and Elijah (the Law and the Prophets) conceived as prophesying of Christ, much as they are represented in the scene of the Transfiguration.

IV

So far I have argued steadily for the date under Domitian, *circa* 93 A.D. And it is really very disinterested of me to do so. I have been led by what seemed to me to be the probabilities of the case, and by nothing else. I am free to confess that for me the earlier date, 69 A.D., would be more welcome. To assume this date would greatly simplify what we are in the habit of calling the Johannine problem. On the strength of it I should not much hesitate to believe for myself, though I should not be equally confident of convincing others, that one hand might have written not only the Apocalypse but also the Gospel and Epistles that bear the name of St John.

Prof. Porter is a more uncompromising critic than I am. And the view that he expresses is so natural that I should not like to say that it is worded too dogmatically. 'Our author', he says, 'is certainly not the writer of the Fourth Gospel. The difference in style and in type of religion remains too great, after all that has been said of minor points of contact between the two books' (p. 184). I cannot agree that the points of contact are 'minor', though I frankly admit that the differences are at first sight considerable, and even very considerable. Great as the differences are, they do not seem to me to be greater than could be accounted for by twenty years of continuous residence in a Greek city. If the present writer were to speak for himself, he would say that he has undergone changes every whit as great in his own career. And these changes, he would say, were due in part to environment and in part to new knowledge. He is conscious of great revolution, though of no violent breaks. It is only that he has become aware as time went on of new facts and new points of view which were not present to his mind when he formed the provisional conclusions of his youth. And yet he does not think that there is one of these changes of which he need be ashamed, when once it is assumed that he made his start with mediocre abilities of all kinds, though he hopes with a certain singleness of aim. There has been a thread of continuity running through them all; and he believes that just such a continuity may be discerned in the writings that bear the name of St John.

We have to remember that in the case of their author (sup-

posing him to be the same person) allowance would have to be made for a change of time and place not only within like conditions but within widely different conditions—indeed with a complete difference of civilization. The divergent handling of language and grammar would become a mere trifle, if we might suppose twenty years familiar intercourse with Greeks. The important term *Logos* in the Gospel as compared with the Apocalypse might well be a Hebrew word filled out with Greek meaning. No one who touches upon this subject in future can possibly overlook the elaborate section in Bousset's Introduction (pp. 159-179). The conclusion, which is expressed as follows, is, we may be sure, well within the mark.

It is certainly right when this Johannine colouring of the language is set down to the last redactor of the Apocalypse (Harnack, Spitta). But it may be seen again that this redactor has recast the material before him far more drastically than is commonly supposed. The parallels just collected appear to justify the supposition that the whole cycle of Johannine writings comes from circles which stood under the influence of John of Asia Minor. From this side too we arrive at the conclusion that 'my servant John' is not intended to be, and is not, any one else than John of Asia Minor. And when of late the conjecture has been thrown out that there existed in Asia Minor the language and style of a specifically Johannine School, it seems to me that the facts presented by the Apocalypse go to confirm this conjecture.

The argument might be pressed even further than this, not only to the identity of a school but to actual identity of authorship, if only we could adopt the hypothesis of migration from Palestine to Ephesus and a lapse of twenty years.

It will be seen from what has just been said how tempting this hypothesis is. At present I cannot see my way to commit myself to it, because of the other group of facts that seem to locate the Apocalypse in the reign of Domitian. But the penalty that we have to pay is that of leaving the Johannine problem still unsolved. Dr Swete, too, is compelled to do this. And the candour with which he does it will, we think, inspire great confidence in his judgement. The passage is worth quoting:—

But the question of the authorship of the Apocalypse must not be complicated by considerations connected with the still more vexed

question of the authorship of the fourth Gospel. The issue which lies before the student of the Apocalypse is in fact independent of the decision at which the critics of the Gospel may ultimately arrive. Was the John who wrote the Apocalypse the Synoptic son of Zebedee? Was it John the son of Zebedee who lived in Asia, and was exiled to Patmos, or was it the mysterious Elder, who is distinguished by Papias from the Apostle of the same name? A fair case may be made for either view. On the one hand the general character of the book accords with what the Synoptists relate with regard to the Apostle John, and the main current of Christian tradition favours this conclusion. On the other hand, there is some uncertainty as to the length of the Apostle's life, and some reason to suspect that the Apostle and a disciple who was not of the Twelve are confused in our earliest authorities. While inclining to the traditional view which holds that the author of the Apocalypse was the Apostle John, the present writer desires to keep an open mind upon the question. Fresh evidence may at any time be produced which will turn the scale in favour of the Elder. There are those whom this indecision will disappoint, but it is best frankly to confess the uncertainty which besets the present state of our knowledge (p. clxxxiv f).

That is a presentation of the case that I would entirely endorse.

V

The last and most interesting of all the questions arising out of the Apocalypse is concerned with its religious value, its value as a book of the Bible. How far do these modern views to which we have been giving expression affect this value? At first sight they may appear to affect it seriously. We can no longer go to the book as a prediction, literal or otherwise, of events which at the time when the book was written were still in the womb of the future. So far as we do go to it in that sense, we shall only be disappointed. The great persecution did not come as the prophet expected, or the fate of Rome and of the Empire, or the end of the world. What then is left?

1. First, we may learn something as to the nature of Prophecy. We have come to see that both in the Old Testament and in the New it is a mistake to identify prophecy with prediction. It is true that prediction does enter into prophecy, but it is by no means identical with it. Well-attested instances of prediction would be 1 Kings xi 26-39; 2 Kings xix 32-36; Jer. xxviii 16, 17; Acts xxi 11. Such passages have to do with comparatively

small incidental details in the carrying out of God's purposes. Distinct from them is the gradual creation of that great expectation of one summarily called the Messiah, which was so remarkably fulfilled in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. But there is a great deal in prophecy that had very little to do with prediction; and its non-fulfilment as prediction leaves untouched its value as prophecy. There is a very admirable paragraph in Sir W. M. Ramsay's *Letters to the Seven Churches*, p. 112 f, which sets this in the right light:—

The most dangerous kind of error that can be made about the Apocalypse is to regard it as a literal statement and prediction of events. Thus, for example, xvii 1-xix 21 is not to be taken as a prophecy of the manner in which, or the time at which, the downfall of the great Empire and of the great City was to be accomplished; it is not to be understood as foreshadowing the Papacy, according to the foolish imaginings, 'philosophy and vain deceit' as St Paul would have called them (Col. ii 8) of one modern school; it is not to be tortured by extremists on any side into conformity with their pet hatreds. Those are all idle fancies, which do harm to no one except those who waste their intellect on them. But it becomes a serious evil when the magnificent confidence and certainty of St John as to the speedy accomplishment of all these things is distorted into a declaration of the immediate Coming of the Lord and the end of the world. Time was not an element in his anticipation. He was gazing on the eternal, in which time has no existence. Had any Asian reader asked him at what time these things should be accomplished, he would assuredly have answered in the spirit of Browning's Grammarian:—

What's time? Leave Now for dogs and apes!
Man has Forever.

The really prophetic element in the book—and it is to be remembered that it is throughout described as a prophecy (i 3, xix 10, xxii 7, 10, 18, 19)—is the extraordinary exaltation of spirit under which it is written, and which sustains the other characteristics of which we are about to speak.

2. The central feature of the book is the clash and collision between the Church of Christ and the great idolatrous world-power. The prophet sees this coming, as no Christian writer had ever seen it before. To all outward appearance the Empire of Rome was omnipotent; it could impose its will upon the subject nations with the greatest ease. At the moment it seemed as

though this will took the form of enforcing an idolatrous and blasphemous worship of a human being in place of God. Nearly all the religions of the Empire seemed to welcome this new divinity. The Jews, by the privileges secured to them, escaped compulsion. It is strange that the Roman government should have so observed its pledges; but it did observe them. The only body that had the audacity to attempt resistance was the insignificant sect of Christians. It is this resistance that the prophet of the Apocalypse undertakes to animate and champion. And how magnificently does he do it! It is one man—*unus homo*—against the embattled power of the world. And the one man wins! He wins, because he is a prophet, and because the Spirit of God is in him and behind him. Let us hear Bousset on this subject.

This one thing the Apocalyptist knows how to drive home with inimitable sureness: the tremendous seriousness of responsibility before the judgement-seat of God, the thought of the nearness of the end, the duty of fidelity unto death and endurance in the wild struggle that is on the point of breaking out. A defiant confidence of victory over against the Dragon, who has been already overthrown in heaven, and whose reign upon earth can only last a short time longer; an irrepressible delight in martyrdom: Blessed are the dead, who die in the Lord—a diction that at least in places kindles into flame, a glowing longing for the end and for the new age: Surely I come quickly. Amen, come Lord Jesus—all this imparts to the Apocalypse, in spite of all that is bizarre fantastic and fanatical, which is plentiful enough, a thrilling charm and an impressive force. Of incomparable beauty and tenderness are in any case a series of pictures in which the seer paints the world to come. One must have heard such words as *vii 9 ff, xx 1 ff (xx 11 ff or xxi 1 ff?)* by the side of the grave or at the commemoration of the dead to understand the magical and imperishable effect that is in them. They fall on the ear even now like unearthly music (p. 140).

The Apocalypse is not only a rallying cry to all who are on God's side at a single historical crisis, but it is the inspiration of martyrs and confessors—of all who are banded together to resist the powers of evil—to the world's end. It is for ever a triumph song over Death and Hades.

3. There is one particular in which the Apocalypse comes to us with peculiar force in these latter days. Between the first and

second centuries and the nineteenth the world can have hardly known a capital city on so vast a scale as Rome. Now the huge capitals are a conspicuous feature of modern civilization. The contemplation of them is terrible enough as it is ; and, if it were not for Christianity and the knowledge of the devoted Christian work that is going on in them, would be more terrible still. In the face of these huge weltering aggregations of humanity, with their ceaseless current of commerce and trade, with their flaunting extremes of wealth and poverty, with their luxury and their misery, their splendour and their degradation, a chapter like Apoc. xviii is an impressive warning. It may well serve as a call to flee from the wrath to come.

4. If on the one hand the Apocalypse seems to gather up together the forces of evil and present them to us as it were marshalled for the final conflict, so on the other hand it brings to a climax the forces that make for good, and in contrast to the world's Babylon it sets before us an ideal picture of the New Jerusalem, the City of God. Much of the imagery by which this is described is of a rather formal and conventional kind. But we see that through all this the Prophet has really grasped the heart of the matter ; the essence of his thought is not formal and conventional, but rather that towards which all revelation has been tending and in which it must end.

And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God : and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes : and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying, nor pain, any more, the first things are passed away. And he that sitteth on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. . . . I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit these things ; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

5. Incidentally the writer lets us see what are his convictions on other points besides those which form the main subject of his book. These are collected by Dr Swete in the section of his Introduction headed ' Doctrine '. They are the more important because they are taken for granted—they are the accepted Chris-

tianity of that branch of the Church to which the author belongs. And the reason that gives them an enhanced significance at the present day is that this branch of the Church is independent of St Paul. The author of the Apocalypse is a Jew, and in all probability a Jew of Palestine. He brought with him to Asia Minor the beliefs of his home ; and it is to those beliefs that he really testifies.

The Apocalypse thus supplies welcome evidence of a line of teaching that is parallel to St Paul's, and that really goes back behind his. The point on which most turns is naturally the Christology. It is not necessary for me to go into this at length ; for it is impossible to read even the opening verses and the rest of the first chapter without seeing that fundamentally the Christology is that which has been held by the Church Universal. This one chapter is enough to dispose of the theory that has obtained some currency in recent years that the Church owes its doctrine of the Person of Christ to the initiative of St Paul.

W. SANDAY.