Isaiah. The Blessing of Moses is a collection of sayings of the time of Jeroboam II., inserted in the middle of a post-exilic Psalm, xxxiii. 2-5, 26-29.

That the author of Deuteronomy used sources is fairly certain, and in many instances Steuernagel has probably succeeded in distinguishing various sections as from different sources; but we are not yet convinced, either by the general argument or by the detailed analysis as it appears in this commentary, of the truth of his main contention, that Josiah's law-book was interwoven from two sources. Our author is driven to make too constant a use of his redactors. For instance, in order to justify the statement that D¹ is not dependent on the Book of the Covenant, he maintains that the closer parallels with the latter in D¹ were inserted by a late editor. Again, the use of the characteristic Deuteronomic formula throughout the book is often cited as a evidence of literary unity. But, according to Steuernagel, these too are mostly due to editors and scribes, who had a special affection for Deuteronomic phrases. This latter view is certainly supported by the LXX, especially in Joshua.

Nevertheless, even if we cannot at once accept our author's analysis, we have to thank him for a most interesting and suggestive book, and for a very lucid exposition of an important problem.

W. H. BENNETT.

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Die Offenbarung Johannis.

Neubearbeitet von Lic. theol. Wilhelm Bousset, Professor in Göttingen.


A remark on the cover informs us that in this new edition of Meyer's Commentary five volumes have been completely rewritten, and the book before us is one of these. It is in every way a striking and remarkable production. There is no part of the New Testament which presents a more difficult problem to the commentator than the Apocalypse, and of late years it has gone through the crucible of the critics, who for the most part have left us nothing but disjecta membra; or, in other words, a number of Apocalypses, Jewish or Christian, which we are to believe have been fitted into each other, the lesser within the greater, like Chinese boxes. The great merit of Professor Bousset's Commentary is that, in the face of all these theories of compilation, he has emphasised the unity of style which characterises the whole work. Yet it cannot be denied that, in spite of clear marks of one ordering
hand, there are also visible traces of a variety of more or less ancient materials, which have been incorporated by the writer, and worked up into a literary whole. It is the correct analysis of these materials which forms the literary problem of the Apocalypse. Bousset does not bind himself to any theory, but inclines perhaps to those of Weizsäcker and Sabatier.

The scheme of the Commentary is most exhaustive. We have first an introduction of 208 pages arranged under the following seven heads: (1) the general character of Apocalyptic literature; (2) the place of the Apocalypse in the canon of the New Testament; (3) the author of the work, whom the writer takes to be John the Presbyter; (4) the history of its interpretation—this extends to some 90 pages and is divided under 20 sections, the last of which, the methods of literary criticism, will naturally attract most attention, summarising, as it does, the various analyses of the work which have been proposed by modern scholars; (5) methods of interpretation; (6) the criticism of the text; (7) the language and style.

Then follow the notes with a number of excursuses on special points. It is in these excursuses that the writer's special point of view comes out most prominently. Here, as also in his other work on Antichrist, he has been largely influenced by Gunkel's Schöpfung und Chaos, and indeed the parallels adduced by the latter from the religious lore of the Babylonians are very interesting. It does not seem improbable that he is right in tracing the mystic significance of the seven stars and the twenty-four elders to early astronomical speculation. Astronomy and religion were at first inseparably connected. The seven heavens in the Book of the Secrets of Enoch, with their New Testament parallels, were doubtless originally the divisions of the heavens marked out by the seven planets, and we see a trace of the ancient personification of the stars as angels, both in Rev. ix. 1, where the key of the bottomless pit is given to a star fallen from heaven, and also in S. James' designation of God as the Father of "lights," i.e., "the heavenly luminaries." Perhaps, too, the reference of the Woman and the Dragon in ch. xii. to an original Sun myth, the birth of the Sungod, and the triumph of light over darkness, is correct. Such a myth is shown to be common to the Babylonian, Egyptian, and Greek religions, and may very well have been adopted by a Jew or a Christian, as symbolising the victory of Messiah over the powers of darkness. Vischer laid great stress on this chapter in support of his theory of a Jewish Apocalypse, and compared a late narrative in the Jerusalem Talmud which relates how Messiah was born in Bethlehem, but was caught up to heaven, while yet a child, by a whirlwind. This may simply be an invention of later times evolved
in the course of controversy with the Christians, and in any case it
differs in some essential points from the narrative of ch. xii. where
the child is born, not on earth, but in a heavenly region, and caught
up, as soon as born, to the throne of God. Yet while Bousset’s
criticism of Vischer is here just, he fails to shake one’s faith in the
latter’s general hypothesis that all the passages in which “the
Lamb” is mentioned are Christian interpolations. It is impossible,
however, to feel sure that Vischer is right in the exact limits of his
scheme of interpolations. One feels especially doubtful in dealing
with the last three chapters. Bousset has shown that at first the
Jews looked only for a New Jerusalem, i.e., a restored and enlarged
earthly Jerusalem. It was not till after the destruction of Jeru-
salem by Titus that they began to look for an entirely new heaven and
earth, and for the descent upon earth of a heavenly Jerusalem. And
one may plausibly conjecture that the Jewish Apocalypse, which under-
lies the work as we have it, ended up with a description, not of the
heavenly Jerusalem, but of the New Jerusalem. May we not see
a trace of this in xxi. 10 ff. “He showed me the holy city Jeru-
salem coming down from God out of Heaven.” The italicised words
may be a mere repetition from xxi. 2, and the seer may originally
have simply seen a vision of the ideal Jerusalem in Heaven, just as
Moses was supposed to have seen the ideal tabernacle in Heaven.
The New Jerusalem would thus have been conceived of as an
earthly copy of that heavenly ideal. I would also suggest that this
vision of the New Jerusalem was originally connected with the
coming of the Millennium, the world’s Sabbath day; but that just
as the New Jerusalem faded into the Heavenly Jerusalem, so the
Millennium, and the Messianic Kingdom upon Earth faded into the
vague and boundless perspective of the Kingdom of Heaven.
This would account for the extraordinary brevity of the paragraph
in ch. xx. about the Millennium. The ideal had moved forward: the
Millennium had become, as Bousset calls it, a mere
“Zwischenzeit.”

But what was this Jewish Apocalypse which underlies our
Apocalypse? According to Vischer it was not written by the
author of the Epistles to the Churches, but that writer—S. John
—incorporated it. So far, probably, Bousset agrees with him,
though it seems to me it is quite possible S. John wrote it before
he became a Christian. Polycrates of Ephesus says S. John was
a priest and wore the πεταλωμα— which may be used loosely for
the priest’s turban, though it is strictly the plate on the high
priest’s turban. May not S. John have written the original
Jewish Apocalypse in the year 69 a.d. when still a Jewish priest?
The fulfilment of Christ’s predictions in the fall of Jerusalem might
very well have converted him to Christianity.
But Vischer not only denies the Johannine authorship; he holds also that S. John practically incorporated this Jewish Apocalypse without change, only interpolating the name of the Lamb and a few references to the Christian martyrs. Here Bousset, and I think rightly, differs from him. He urges the similarity of style which runs through the whole Apocalypse, as also the mere mechanical nature of the supposed compilation, so unworthy of one who could write the fourth Gospel. Further, he points out that the original Jewish Apocalypse could hardly have included the section of the seven vials, which is an artificial reduplication of the seven trumpets (see p. 463). Also, both the writer of this part of the Apocalypse and the author of the fourth book of the Sibylline oracles seem to have written after the great eruption of Mount Vesuvius in A.D. 79 (see p. 475). Some time ago I read an article by Mr Theodore Bent, in which he most ingeniously connected the narrative of this part of the Apocalypse with certain old histories of the phenomena of volcanic eruptions, and the nature of the pain caused by the burning lava. This part of the Apocalypse may then, with considerable probability, be assigned to the Christian redactor, i.e., to S. John.

The date of the Jewish Apocalypse is fixed by ch. xvii. 10, from which it appears that it must have been written in the time of Vespasian, c. 69 A.D. Even if verses 10, 11 were a later interpolation, it would still be clear that the interpolator, while inserting a vaticinium post eventum, adapted it to a writer who lived under Vespasian.

It further follows, from ch. xvii. 8, that this original Jewish Apocalypse was connected with the idea of "Nero redivivus." Bousset has, in a most interesting excursus, traced the gradual growth of this idea. The outcome of his investigation is that, in this original Apocalypse, Nero was not thought of as Antichrist, only as a Roman emperor in league with the Parthians for the overthrow of Rome. The Christian redactor advances a stage—Nero becomes Antichrist. By comparing the Sybilline books, it is shown that this change did not emerge in Apocalyptic literature earlier than about the end of the first century. Nero is now Antichrist, and, as such, in league with "the false prophet." One is "the beast from the sea," i.e., from Rome; the other "the beast from the land," i.e., from Palestine. To the mind of the Christian writer, the Jews and the Romans are leagued together against Christ. In what way these two enemies of Messiah were supposed to co-operate is a matter of conjecture; but, from the references to the worship of the image of the beast, one may suppose that the Jewish authorities—perhaps some one in particular, some false prophet—had advised Jews to tolerate the idolatrous worship of
the emperors. It may be that Professor Spitta is right in connecting the matter with the attempt of Caligula to set up his statue in the Temple. He supposes that we have in the Apocalypse a fragment of a Caligula-Apocalypse, in which it was prophesied that “the man of sin” would succeed where Caligula had failed. Bousset only gives a very hesitating assent to this theory. All that is certain is, that Nero came to be conceived of as Antichrist and in league with the Jews, as represented by some false prophet. It might almost seem possible that S. John’s banishment was the penalty of his stern opposition to the cult of the Caesars, which appears to have been specially popular in Asia Minor. Even if the refusal to burn incense before the emperor’s image were only made penal throughout the empire in the time of Trajan, it is quite possible that local persecutions for this cause may have originated somewhat earlier. The net result of these considerations is, that our Christian Apocalypse is not, as Vischer and Harnack contend, merely the epistles to the Churches, together with a series of interpolations in which the name of the Lamb is mechanically introduced, but a much more integral part of the work, including the sections of the Seven Vials and the heavenly Jerusalem. The remainder is a Jewish Apocalypse, which probably pictured the overthrow of Rome by Nero redivivus and the Parthians; the supernatural birth of Messiah, and his reservation in heaven till the time came for him to appear in the clouds of heaven as the Son of Man, and reap the Vine of the Earth; the preaching, death and ascension of Moses and Elias, his two witnesses, and, finally, the coming of His Millennial Kingdom and the New Jerusalem.

Perhaps the chapter about the two witnesses, and other fragments, were taken from earlier Apocalypses. Bousset points out remarkable coincidences between the section about the two witnesses and the predictions of Christ about the fall of Jerusalem in S. Luke’s gospel, as also between “the sign of the Son of Man,” in S. Matthew’s gospel, and Rev. i.7. The study of Jewish Apocalyptic thus throws valuable sidelights upon the Apocalyptic portions of the gospels. Professor Bousset’s work is worthy of the most careful study, and will doubtless meet with the appreciation which it deserves.

J. H. Wilkinson.