

*DR. MOMMSEN ON THE NERONIAN REFERENCE
OF THE APOCALYPSE, AND ON THE "ITALA."*

PROFESSOR MOMMSEN, in the fifth volume lately issued of his History of Rome, has a chapter on "Judæa and the Jews," in the course of which he mentions the attempt of Caligula to have his statue set up in the Holy of Holies, and the horror with which the Jews contemplated the possibility of the profanation of Antiochus Epiphanes being repeated. "It had been done," he remarks, "once already; a like proceeding of the king of Syria, Antiochus Epiphanes, had been followed by the rising of the Maccabees and the victorious restoration of the free national state. This Epiphanes—the Anti-Messiah who ushers in the Messiah, as the prophet Daniel had, certainly after the event, delineated him—was thenceforth to every Jew the prototype of abomination; it was no matter of indifference that the same conception came to be with equal warrant attached to a Roman emperor, or rather to the image of the Roman ruler in general. Since that fateful edict [of Caligula] the Jews never ceased to dread that another emperor might issue a like command, and so far certainly with reason, as according to the organization of the Roman polity such an enactment depended solely on the momentary pleasure of the ruler for the time." And he adds, "This Jewish hatred of the worship of the emperor and of imperialism itself is depicted with glowing colours in the Apocalypse of John, for which, chiefly on that account, Rome is the harlot of Babylon and the common enemy of mankind."

In support of the view thus expressed, Dr. Mommsen subjoins a pretty long note, which may be interesting to the readers of the EXPOSITOR, as exhibiting the considerably altered form, in which the theory—so much discussed of late years by M. Renan, Dr. Farrar, and others, most recently

and ably by Dr. Salmon in his Introduction to the New Testament—of the Neronian reference of the Apocalypse commends itself to one who looks at the matter from another standpoint than that of the ordinary commentator or theologian.

“This is perhaps the right way of apprehending the Jewish conceptions, in which the positive facts regularly run away into generalities. In the accounts of the Anti-Messias and of the Antichrist no positive elements are found to suit the emperor Gaius; the view that would explain the name Armillus, which the Talmud assigns to the former, by the circumstance that the emperor Gaius sometimes wore women’s bracelets (*armillæ*, Suetonius, *Gai.*, 52), cannot be seriously maintained. In the Apocalypse of John—the classical revelation of Jewish self-esteem and hatred towards the Romans—the picture of the Anti-Messias is associated rather with Nero, who did not cause his image to be set up in the Holy of Holies. This composition belongs, as is well-known, to a time and a tendency which still viewed Christianity as essentially a Jewish sect. Those elected and marked by the angel are all Jews, 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes, and have precedence over the ‘great multitude of other righteous ones,’ *i.e.* of proselytes (chap. vii.; comp. chap. xii. 1). It was written, demonstrably, after Nero’s fall, and when his return from the East was expected. Now it is true that a pseudo-Nero appeared immediately after the death of the real one, and was executed at the beginning of the following year (Tacitus, *Hist.*, ii. 8, 9); but it is not of this one that John is thinking, for the very exact account makes no mention, as John does, of the Parthians, and for John there is a considerable interval between the fall of Nero and his return, the latter still lying in the future. His Nero is the person, [in reality a certain Terentius Maximus from Asia Minor], who under Vespasian found adherents in the region of the

Euphrates, whom King Artabanus acknowledged under Titus and prepared to reinstate in Rome by military force, and whom at length the Parthians surrendered, after prolonged negotiations, about the year 88, to Domitian. To these events the Apocalypse corresponds quite exactly. On the other hand, in a writing of this stamp no inference as to the state of the siege at the time can possibly be drawn from the circumstance that according to xi. 1, 2, only the outer court, and not the Holy of Holies, of the Temple of Jerusalem was given into the power of the heathen; here everything in the details is imaginary [*Phantasmagorie*], and this trait is certainly either invented at pleasure or, if the view be preferred, possibly based on orders given to the Roman soldiers, who were encamped in Jerusalem after its destruction, not to set foot in what was formerly the Holy of Holies. The foundation of the Apocalypse is indisputably the destruction of the earthly Jerusalem, and the prospect thereby for the first time opened up of its future ideal restoration; in place of the razing of the city that had taken place there cannot possibly be put the mere expectation of the capture. If, then, it is said of the seven heads of the dragon βασιλεῖς ἑπτὰ εἰσιν· οἱ πέντε ἔπεσαν, ὁ εἰς ἐστίν, ὁ ἄλλος οὐπω ἦλθεν, καὶ ὅταν ἔλθῃ ὀλίγον αὐτὸν δεῖ μέναι (xvii. 10), the five, presumably, are Augustus, Tiberius, Gaius, Claudius, Nero, the sixth Vespasian, the seventh undefined; 'the beast which was, and is not, and is itself the eighth, but of the seven,' is, of course, Nero. The undefined seventh is incongruous, like so much in this gorgeous but contradictory and often tangled imagery; and it is added, not because the number seven was employed, which was easily to be got at by including Cæsar, but because the writer hesitated to predicate immediately of the reigning emperor the short government of the last ruler and his overthrow by the returning Nero. But one cannot possibly—as is done after others by Renan—by including

Cæsar in the reckoning, recognise in the sixth emperor, 'who is,' Nero, who immediately afterward is designated as he, who 'was and is not,' and in the seventh, who 'has not yet come and will not rule long,' even the aged Galba, who, according to Renan's view, was ruling at the time. It is clear that the latter does not belong at all to such a series, any more than Otho and Vitellius.

"It is more important, however, to oppose the current conception, according to which the polemic is directed against the Neronian persecution of the Christians and the siege or the destruction of Jerusalem, whereas it is pointed withal against the Roman provincial government generally, and in particular against the worship of the emperors. If of the seven emperors Nero alone is named (by his numerical expression), this is so, not because he was the worst of the seven, but because the naming of the reigning emperor, while prophesying a speedy end of his reign in a published writing, had its risk, and some consideration towards the one 'who is' beseems even a prophet. Nero's name was given up, and besides, the legend of his healing and of his return was in every one's mouth; thereby he has become for the Apocalypse the representative of the Roman imperial rule, and the Antichrist. The crime of the monster of the sea, and of his image and instrument, the monster of the land, is not the violence to the city of Jerusalem (chap. xi. 2),—which appears not as their misdeed, but rather as a portion of the world-judgment (in which case also consideration for the reigning emperor may have been at work)—but the divine worship, which the heathen pay to the monster of the sea (xiii. 8: *προσκυνήσουσιν αὐτὸν πάντες οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς*), and which the monster of the land—called for that reason also the false-prophet—demands and compels for that of the sea (xiii. 12: *ποιεῖ τὴν γῆν καὶ τοὺς κατοικοῦντας ἐν αὐτῇ ἵνα προσκυνήσουσιν τὸ θηρίον τὸ πρῶτον, οὗ ἐθεραπεύθη ἡ πληγὴ τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ*); above all,

he is upbraided with the desire to make an image for the former (xiii. 14 : λέγων τοῖς κατοικοῦσιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, ποιῆσαι εἰκόνα τῷ θηρίῳ ὃς ἔχει τὴν πληγὴν τῆς μαχαίρης καὶ ἔζησεν, comp. xiv. 9; xvi. 2; xix. 20). This, it is plain, is partly the imperial government beyond the sea, partly the lieutenantancy on the Asiatic continent, not of this or that province or even of this or that person, but generally such representation of the emperor, as the provincials of Asia and Syria knew. If trade and commerce appear associated with the use of the *χάραγμα* of the monster of the sea (xiii. 16, 17), there lies clearly at bottom an abhorrence of the image and legend of the imperial money—certainly transformed in a fanciful way, as in fact Satan makes the image of the emperor speak. These very governors appear afterwards (xvii.) as the ten horns, which are assigned to the monster in its copy, and are here called, quite correctly, the ‘ten kings, which have not the royal dignity, but have authority like kings;’ the number, which is taken over from the vision of Daniel, may not, it is true, be taken too strictly. In the sentences of death which are pronounced over the righteous, John is thinking of the regular judicial procedure on account of the refusal to worship the emperor’s image, such as the Letters of Pliny describe (xiii. 15 : ποιήση ἵνα ὄσοι ἐὰν μὴ προσκυνήσωσιν τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ θηρίου ἀποκτανθῶσιν, comp. vi. 9; xx. 4). When stress is laid on these sentences of death being executed with special frequency in Rome (xvii. 6; xvii. 24), what is thereby meant is the execution of sentences wherein men were condemned to fight as gladiators or with wild beasts, which often could not take place on the spot where they were pronounced, and, as is well-known, took place chiefly in Rome itself (Modestinus, *Dig.*, xlvi. 19, 31). The Neronian executions on account of alleged incendiarism do not formally belong to the class of religious processes at all, and it is only prepossession that can refer the martyrs’ blood shed in Rome,

of which John speaks, exclusively or pre-eminently to these events. The current conceptions as to the so-called persecutions of the Christians labour under a defective apprehension of the rule of law and the practice of law that subsisted in the Roman empire; in reality the persecution of Christians was a standing matter as was that of robbers; only such regulations were put into practice at times more gently or even negligently, at other times more strictly, and were doubtless on occasion specially enforced from high quarters. The 'war against the saints' is only a subsequent interpolation on the part of some, for whom John's words did not suffice (xiii. 7). The Apocalypse is a remarkable evidence of the national and religious hatred of the Jews towards the Occidental government; but to illustrate with these colours the Neronian tale of horrors, as Renan does in particular, is to shift the place of the facts and to detract from their depth of significance. The Jewish national hatred did not wait for the conquest of Jerusalem to originate it, and it made, as might be expected, no distinction between the good and the bad Cæsar; its Anti-Messias bore the name of Nero, doubtless, but not less that of Vespasian or of Marcus."

We may briefly indicate some of the points in which the view here given differs from those put forward by Dr. Farrar and M. Renan. While they all agree in the reference to Nero and to the expectation of his return, and in that exposition of the number 666, which Dr. Salmon has assailed afresh with argument and sarcasm, they differ as to the date of the work. M. Renan and Dr. Farrar place it before the destruction of Jerusalem, and assign it to the short reign of Galba; while Dr. Mommsen places it after the destruction of the city, and refers it apparently to the latter years of Vespasian. He disposes, after a fashion more summary than satisfactory, of the passage which points to the subsistence of the Temple (xi. 1, 2), by assuming that

here the details are drawn from the writer's imagination, which is the very point in question. His suggestion, on the other hand, that Galba is not of sufficient account to be included, any more than Otho or Vitellius, in the list of emperors, may claim to be countenanced by Dr. Farrar's admission, that "Galba, Otho, and Vitellius passed like phantoms across the imperial stage," and that "it is not impossible that Vespasian may have been regarded by the Apostle as really the sixth emperor" (*Early Christ.*, ii. p. 195; see also p. 315). As regards the false Nero who is assumed as referred to, M. Renan, while not absolutely pronouncing against the opinion that Nero was with the Parthians, "readily admits that John in Patmos had knowledge of the events in the neighbouring isle of Cythnos," and finds the principal cause of his writing in the strange rumours as to the *soi-disant* Nero who established himself there for a time in 68-69 (*Antechrist*, pp. 436-439); and Dr. Farrar seems to lean to this view when he remarks, "It is probable that one of these was making himself extremely formidable in the very region in which St. John was writing, and at that very time." This is the pseudo-Nero referred to in the detailed account of Tacitus, *Hist.*, ii. 8, 9, and Zonaras, xi. 15; but Dr. Mommsen considers that the Apocalypse points to a later pretender emerging in the East under Vespasian, and spoken of in Tacitus, *Hist.*, i. 2; Suetonius, *Nero*, 57; and Zonaras, xi. 18. In all these passages there is special mention of the Parthians, which helps to explain the Apocalyptic allusions to the Euphrates (ix. 14; xvi. 12). Dr. Farrar finds an argument for his interpretation of the false prophet as Vespasian in the view that "the forbidding all to buy or sell who have not got the mark of the beast," points to Vespasian's prohibition of exports from Alexandria, in order to starve Rome. Dr. Mommsen here so far agrees with M. Renan as to see a reference to the Roman currency bearing the effigy and legend of the em-

perors, which the Jews abhorred because of its connexion with blasphemous claims to Divine homage. Dr. Salmon's objection, that our Lord, when He asked, "Whose is this image and superscription?" indicates no censure on that score, can hardly, perhaps, be held fully applicable to a period and a state of things when such claims had been more openly and offensively put forward.

The most striking features in Dr. Mommsen's theory are the stress laid by him on the antagonism of the Apocalypse not merely to the imperial system, and to the *cultus* of the emperor generally, but to the representation and embodiment of them in the government of the Asiatic provinces; and the ingenious, but not adequately successful, grounds on which he seeks to discharge from the picture those colours of the Neronian persecution which M. Renan may have exaggerated, but which are stamped too deeply and vividly to be mistaken.

NOTE ON THE "ITALA."

"How far our Latin texts of the Bible are to be referred to several translations originally different, or whether, as Lachmann assumed, the different recensions have proceeded from one and the same translation as a basis, subjected to manifold revision with the aid of the originals, are questions which can scarcely be definitely decided—for the present at least—in favour of either one or the other view. But that both Italians and Africans took part in this work—whether of translation, or of correction—is proved by the famous words of Augustine, *De doct. Christ.*, ii. 15, 22; *in ipsis autem interpretationibus Itala ceteris præferatur, nam est verborum tenacior cum perspicuitate sententiæ*, over which great authorities have been perplexed, but certainly without reason. Bentley's proposal, approved afresh of late (by Corssen, *Jahrb. für Protestant. Theol.*, vii. p. 507 f.), to change *Itala* into *illa* and *nam* into *quæ*, is inadmissible

alike philologically and as to substance. For the twofold change is destitute of all external probability, and besides *nam* is protected by the copyist Isidorus, *Etym.*, vi. 4, 2. The further objection, that linguistic usage would require *Italica*, is not borne out (*e.g.* Sidonius and Jordanes, as well as the inscriptions of later times, *C. I. L.*, x. p. 1146, write *Itala* by turns with *Italica*), and the description of a single translation as the most trustworthy, on the whole is quite consistent with the advice to consult as many as possible; whereas by the change proposed a rational remark is converted into a meaningless commonplace. It is true that the Christian Church in Rome in the first three centuries made use throughout of the Greek language, and that we may not seek there for the *Itali* who took part in the Latin Bible. But that in Italy outside of Rome, especially in Upper Italy, the knowledge of Greek was not much more diffused than in Africa, is most clearly shown by the names of freedmen; and it is just to the non-Roman Italy that the designation used by Augustine points. We may perhaps also call to mind the fact that Augustine was gained for Christianity by Ambrosius in Milan. The attempt to identify the traces of the recension called by Augustine *Itala* in such remains as have survived of Bible translations before Jerome's will at all events hardly ever be successful; but still less will it admit of being proved, that Africans only worked at the pre-Hieronymian Latin Bible-texts. That they originated in great part—perhaps mostly—in Africa, has certainly great probability. The contrast to the one *Itala* can only in reason have been several *Afrae*; and the vulgar Latin, in which these texts are all of them written, is in full agreement with the vulgar Latin, as it was demonstrably spoken in Africa. At the same time we must doubtless not overlook the fact that we know the vulgar Latin at all principally from African sources, and that the proof of the restriction of any indi-

vidual linguistic phenomenon to Africa is as necessary, as it is for the most part unadduced. There existed side by side as well vulgarisms in general use as African provincialisms (comp. *Eph. epigr.*, iv. p. 520, as to the cognomina in *-osus*); but that forms like *glorificare, nudificare, justificare* belong to the second category, is by no means proved from the fact that we first meet with them in Africa, since analogous documents to those which we possess *e.g.* for Carthage in the case of Tertullian, are wanting to us for Capua and Milan."

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DR. M. M. KALISCH.

THE writer of these lines was not personally acquainted with the late M. M. Kalisch, whose decease at the early age (for a scholar) of fifty-seven, has been chronicled in the newspapers. That he came to this country as a political refugee in the fateful year 1848, and that his literary labours, facilitated by the munificence of the Rothschilds, were bravely continued to the last amidst the drawbacks of impaired health, are facts open to all, and only repeated here, because they throw a bright light on a remarkable career. Dr. Kalisch was more than a scholar, more than a Jewish theologian; he felt that there were deeper questions than the criticism of the Pentateuch, and wider interests than those even of his own oecumenical Jewish Church. But he could bear to dwell habitually in the lowlands of patient research, and to regard this assignment of work as more than a compensation for the seclusion involved in his ill-health. Few men have been bolder in their generalizations, none more unweariable in their amassment of minute philological and historical facts.

"A dry, cold rationalist, and the author of a Hebrew Grammar." Such somewhere is the obituary notice of the brave combatant who has passed away. He *did* take the