

a hurried and scrappy affair. The host was Simon, known locally as 'the Leper'; perhaps because our Lord had cured him of that disease. Though our Lord was naturally staying with Martha as her guest, He was able to accept Simon's invitation because His hostess, Martha, with her brother and sister were invited too. By custom the women could not sit at table with the men, but did the serving, and had their meal by themselves. Of course the irrepressible Martha took a leading share in the serving. Matthew and Mark who give us the name of the host, also tell of the woman who enters rather boldly, carrying a jar of precious spikenard, and anoints the head of the Master, breaking the pot and pouring the contents on His head. John adds the information that her name was Mary, that the ointment was one pound in weight and that she anointed His feet as well. As she had put it on too thickly she picked up the superfluity with her hair for which it was really meant. And the whole house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment.

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## DID CHRIST FORETELL THE END OF THE WORLD IN MARK XIII?<sup>1</sup>

FROM general considerations of the nature of 'the Kingdom of God' and from some particular observations upon Luke xvii: 20 ff, we have urged prudence in interpreting all passages which refer to the 'coming' of this Kingdom. With the 'Little Apocalypse' of Mark chap. xiii (Matt. xxiv; Luke xxi and cf. Luke xvii) we touch the heart of the problem. Catholic exegetes maintain the authenticity of this eschatological discourse (against many moderns who question it) but are divided in their interpretation. Most are agreed, however, that the passage treats of two distinct subjects: the Destruction of Jerusalem, the End of the World; they differ only in identifying the point of transition from one subject to the other.

In this brief, too brief, survey of the question we are trying to show that the discourse in its literal sense does not imply two distinct subjects at all but one only: the Destruction of Jerusalem with its positive counterpart, the establishment of Christ's Kingdom as an independent entity on earth.<sup>2</sup> We do not deny that this great judgement upon Jerusalem, a

<sup>1</sup> The first part of this article appeared in *SCRIPTURE*, Oct. 1950, pp. 222-30, under the title *The Eschatology of the Synoptic Gospels*.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. A. Feuillet, *Recherches de Science Religieuse*, 35 (1947) 303-27; 36 (1948) 544-65; *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, 71 (1949) 701-22, 806-28; *Revue Biblique*, 56 (1949) 61-92, 340-64; 57 (1950) 43-62, 180-211.

judgement which marks the end of a great Age (the Age of Israel), is the destined model, the type, of the Last Judgement which is to mark the end of the next great Age (the Age of the Gentiles, in which we live). Indeed it follows from the nature of the case that the divine judgement which closes the first act of world-history is an omen and earnest of the judgement which will finally close the second. We have said already (SCRIPTURE, Oct. 1950, 223-4) that the 'Day of Yahweh' has, in the prophetic writings, a shifting perspective and the reason is precisely that this day of judgement is considered more from the theological, transcendental, plane than from the historical and contingent point of view. But we do contend that just as Amos, for example, and Jeremias have a single historical event in mind when they speak of the Day of Yahweh (fall of Samaria, collapse of Egypt) so our Lord throughout this discourse has a single historical event before him. Even in the case of Amos and Jeremias the judgement is a rehearsal of the Last Judgement but the localized historical area of that judgement makes of it a minor rehearsal only; the judgement of which our Lord speaks is no less historical than theirs but it is a full-dress rehearsal of the Last Judgement not because his terms are stronger but because the Destruction of Jerusalem to which he refers is (as history shows) of immediate and world-wide moment, unparalleled in the past and never to be equalled in the future until Judgement falls on all the world. But literal interpretation is one thing, typical another and in the lines that follow we are discussing the immediate meaning of our Lord's words (literal sense), not the further significance of the thing signified by those words (typical sense). It should also be noticed that our Lord uses terms and offers advice inapplicable to the End of the World situation whereas (if we take due account of the prophetic style he uses) none of his expressions are incompatible with the Destruction of Jerusalem reference.

#### THE UNITY OF THE ESCHATOLOGICAL DISCOURSE

For various reasons of convenience we shall follow the text of the discourse as given in Mark. Now putting aside all preconceptions and approaching the passage as it were for the first time the reader will probably agree that the substance of the discourse itself (Mark xiii, 5-27) falls naturally into three parts. The first (5-13) is concerned with the conduct of the disciples during a period of distress which is called 'the beginning of sorrows'. Of this period it is expressly stated that it is not 'the end', whatever be the meaning of 'end' in this context. This, therefore, is the Prelude. The second section (14-23) opens with information regarding the sign of the advent of the great tribulation. It is the counterpart of the negative 'not yet' of the Prelude and contains the answer to the disciples' opening question. The last section (24-7) is the Epilogue

describing what is to take place 'after that tribulation'. We might observe that already we have the impression of a dramatic unity, the centre of which is to be found in vv. 14-23.

This unity of arrangement itself suggests a unity of subject; the suggestion is supported by the form of the question which is the starting-point of the whole discourse. It is possible that the disciples' ideas were not clear but it is certain that their question, as presented in Mark and Luke, refers to the single event of the Destruction of the Temple: when? and what sign? Now unless our Lord's reply clearly distinguishes two events we must assume that he too refers to one event and that event the Destruction of Jerusalem or, more accurately and more ominously, the Destruction of the Temple. The *onus probandi*, it must be firmly stated, lies on the shoulders of those who postulate a double theme.

#### FIRST PART OF THE DISCOURSE: MARK xiii, 5-13

It is certain that the catastrophes of vv. 7-8, wars and earthquakes and famine, are not cosmic calamities but historical. It is unnecessary when dealing with the prophetic or apocalyptic style to seek literal fulfilment but, should we do so here, there is not lacking ample historical evidence for such disasters between the years A.D. 30 and 70. As for the apostolic instructions of vv. 9-13, these very terms are applied elsewhere in Matt. and Luke (Matt. x; Luke xii) to the mission of the Twelve where there is no suggestion of imminent world-crisis. But we need not stress what is generally agreed. Yet there are two phrases which need comment. The first is the '*all nations*' of v. 10 which at first sight gives the impression that, before the 'Great Tribulation' comes, the whole round world will have been evangelized; this would compel the identification of the 'tribulation' with the end of the world. But in fact (as those who allow this identification admit; e.g. Westminster Version note to Mark xiii, 10) St Paul himself, writing before A.D. 60, could say that 'all nations' had already received the good news (Rom. i, 5) and by this he meant (cf. Rom. x, 18) the Jews spread over the Greco-Roman world. These, in the divine plan, must first have their chance (cf. the *proton dei* of v. 10) before the judgement of rejection. Afterwards, as the Vineyard parable of Mark, chap. xii shows, the kingdom will pass to others and this will be the beginning of the 'times' or acceptable season of the gentiles spoken of by Luke (xxi, 24).

The second significant phrase is '*the beginning of sorrows*' or better 'of birth-pangs' (*odinon*) in v. 8. It suggests the birth of a new order as it does in Micheas (iv, 9-10) where the daughter of Sion travails in Babylon to bring forth her redemption. Our Lord uses the same figure himself in the gospel of John (xvi, 20 ff) where he certainly refers to the new era which is inaugurated by his Resurrection. The disasters described

are therefore the prelude to the end of an epoch. For this our Lord prepares his disciples, instructs them on the meaning of the events and consoles them with the thought that all is but the birth of a new and greater era.

SECOND PART OF THE DISCOURSE: MARK xiii, 14-23

With verse 14 we come at last to the answer to the disciples' question about the Temple's destruction. It answers the first part of that question ('when?') by answering the second ('what sign?'); our Lord refuses a direct answer to 'when?' in v. 32 also. This is in line with his indifference to idle, speculative questions. He is concerned only with practical advice for his disciples. We remember a similar attitude to the question of the number of the saved. The practical advice in this case is 'flight'; it would be most unpractical advice if the end of the world were in question. It is Luke who specifies the historical event to which Matt. and Mark refer in the apocalyptic terms of Daniel (Dan. ix, 27) applied by the author of First Machabees to the Syrian profanation of the sanctuary. Luke says clearly: 'When you shall see Jerusalem compassed about with an army . . . then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains' (Luke xxi, 20 f).

Thus far there is little disagreement among Catholic exegetes. It is at v. 19 ('such tribulations as were not from the beginning of the creation') that they begin to go their separate ways. Lebreton, for example, would refer v. 19 and what follows, with some verses excepted, to the End of the World. Others (Knabenbauer, for instance) wait for v. 20, others for v. 23, others (cf. WV) for v. 24—a disturbing and possibly significant dissension which surely proves that the discourse does not *clearly* distinguish two themes. In defence it might be urged that our Lord speaks with a prophet's obscurity but it should be remembered that the ultimate reason for the obscurity of the prophets is their lack of sufficient revelation; this reason is inapplicable to our Lord's knowledge of the things which pertained to his Messianic mission. It should also be borne in mind that Jesus is usually anxious to remove this obscurity.

But in fact it appears that there is no need to accept the end of the world interpretation at all, provided we make due allowance not for the *obscurity* but for the *style* of prophets and apocalypsts. It is indeed the great merit of Professor Feuillet's theory that it approaches the question from the direction of the Old Testament. He stoutly and rightly maintains that the approach to the New Testament whether from Rabbinism or from Hellenism cannot compare with this.

But, to resume: it will be unnecessary to introduce this unwelcome break into the discourse if a consistent explanation of the text can be made without it; such an explanation seems possible provided we set

the terms and ideas of the discourse against their natural Old Testament background. This is especially necessary for verse 20 which is at once difficult and important. It tells us that the days, the period preceding the disaster which we have tentatively identified with the Destruction of Jerusalem, are to be shortened; the whole operation is to be hastened to save lives. As for the expression 'no flesh should be saved', both the primary sense of the words and the context in which we find them deter us from the sense of *spiritual* salvation. Nor is there any hint of a crisis for the whole of humanity, as there should be if we were dealing with cosmic eschatology. Jeremias (xii, 12) uses almost the same words: 'There is no salvation for all flesh' and yet he is speaking not of the spiritual fate of all humanity but of the earthly fate of the inhabitants of desolate Juda. With the *elect* in whose interest the days of destruction are shortened we encounter one of the pivotal notions of the prophets. The prophetic tradition sees Assyria, Babylon and the rest perishing without a trace; nor shall Israel escape God's destroying judgement but, and this difference is radical, Israel cannot wholly die. For Amos, this 'remnant', as Israel's surviving few are technically termed, is the 'two legs and tip of the ear' left by the lion Sargon; for Isaias it is the tattered and lonely standard on a hill after the passing of Sennacherib; for Ezechiel it is the dry bones of the exiled Israel touched to life again; for Zacharias after the return from exile it is the brand plucked from the burning, the new community which is called Judaism. The revelation takes the form of its historical vessel but its substance is always the same: a remnant of Israel shall return to the most high God. This theme that haunted the prophets is resumed by Paul: 'That which Israel sought he hath not obtained but the election have obtained it' (Rom. xi, 7). Paul is speaking of the Christian Jews and uses almost our identical phrase (*eklogē* for *eklektōi*). We might observe in passing that the difficult phrase in Matt. xx, 16: 'Many are called but few are chosen (*eklektōi*)' is probably to be explained in the same way: it is not a question of an election to glory but of those few of Israel elected to the grace of the messianic kingdom. It is for this 'remnant', then, that the catastrophe is mitigated. That the catastrophe is local and not universal appears even more clearly from Luke (xxi, 23) who speaks of 'God's anger—i.e. judgement—against *this people*'.

In vv. 21–3 we meet the false messiahs of v. 6 again; such pseudo-liberators were wont to multiply in Israel in times of national distress, but Providence watches over the 'remnant'. There is need for it: even the disciples themselves (*humeis de*) will be tempted, as modern Christians might be tempted in these times of economic crisis, to seek the wrong way out.

Though Luke, the Greek, omits the characteristically Hebraic passage dealing with the 'elect' he comes now to our help with the

very clear statement that the subject under discussion is still the Destruction of Jerusalem. He then goes on to speak of the dispersal of the Jewish nation and of the ruin which is to last until 'the times of the gentiles' should end. The 'times' or season of opportunity have ended for the Jews with the destruction of Jerusalem and it is now the gentiles' turn ; the vineyard has been given to others. It is only from Paul we know that the entrance of the gentiles will, in its turn, provoke the Jews to salutary emulation (Rom. xi, 25). So are the first last.

### THIRD PART OF THE DISCOURSE : MARK xiii : 24-7

Up to this point the new synthesis has met a divided opposition. With verse 24 its opponents draw together and the whole weight of modern and ancient exegesis is now thrown on the side of the End of the World reference. The falling stars, the son of Man coming in the clouds, the trumpet (Matt), the angels, the gathering of the elect from the four winds, these suggest to almost all exegetes the final catastrophe. By way of encouragement, however, it should be noticed that the opposition splits again on the interpretation of the Fig-tree parable (vv. 28-9). Some, including Lagrange and the Catholic majority, refer the parable not to the end of the world (of which, in their hypothesis, our Lord has just been speaking) but back to the destruction of Jerusalem—the first subject of the discourse. We cannot but think, with Prat, that such exegesis is arbitrary ; that the natural subject of reference is what immediately precedes, namely the 'end of the world' passage (as Prat would call it). We have here an example of the obvious meaning of a passage pulling against its equally clear context ; hence the division of exegetes. In the newly proposed solution both text and context are saved : Lagrange is right in holding that the parable speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem period, Prat is right in insisting upon the context ; both are wrong (we hold) in thinking that the context is the End of the World.

We shall explain this later but meanwhile let us approach the difficulty drawn from the flavour and details of vv. 24-7 : collapse of the heavenly bodies, coming of the son of Man, gathering of elect. May I remind you of a text quoted in the first part of this article—Peter's speech at Pentecost.<sup>1</sup> It was a lovely summer day between half-past eight and nine in the morning, yet Peter said : 'This is what was spoken of by Joel . . . "I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth beneath : blood and fire and vapour of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood."' Who would venture to interpret this apocalyptic style literally ? Certainly not Peter. To those who have heard Isaias speak of the heavens rolled up like a

<sup>1</sup> Cf. SCRIPTURE, Oct. 1950, p. 224.

book when it is a question only of the destruction of Edom (Is. xxxiv, 4) or read of Jeremias seeing the light of heaven extinguished in Nabuchodonosor's destruction of Jerusalem, or of Ezechiel making the stars put on mourning for Pharaoh's fall, or even of the Rabbis exclaiming that on the fatal day of the translation of the Septuagint 'darkness covered the earth for three days', it comes as no surprise if we state that vv. 24-5, at least, of our passage are no more than a vivid picture of Vespasian's destruction painted in prophetic style. The event, though not of the astronomical order, well justifies the terms; it was the manifest collapse of the old era. The Destruction of the Temple was the nativity of Christianity—the severance of the umbilical cord; and, though exegesis does not deal in futurables, we tremble to think what confusion there might have been in the young Christianity had the Temple stood for longer than it did. Now if these observations are justified, the close connexion of v. 24 with what precedes is a difficulty no longer though it has been a difficulty for years. The events of vv. 24-7, if one may strictly call them 'events', are the direct and immediate outcome of the great tribulation which is the Destruction of Jerusalem. Jerusalem has died in child-birth and a new order is born.

In connexion with Daniel and with the incident of our Lord before the Sanhedrin we have already discussed the passage relating to the son of Man's appearance on the clouds of heaven.<sup>1</sup> It is puzzling that commentators should refer this same passage to the end of the world in our context when they refuse, quite rightly, to do so in the context of our Lord's trial. The meaning in both cases is surely basically the same—the establishment of the messianic kingdom. We venture to repeat that in Daniel there is no suggestion of a 'coming of a son of Man' in a distant perspective of final judgement; Daniel thinks entirely of a messianic kingdom on earth. It should be noticed, too, that the order of this chapter of Mark is also that of Daniel: in each case the coming of the Son of Man follows a description of divine judgement, on the pagan beasts in Daniel, on Jerusalem itself in Mark. In Daniel this judgement is the signal for the establishment of the messianic kingdom on earth; why should Daniel's text have, in Mark, a substantially different significance? Moreover, the sequence demanded by the End of the World theory—judgement after judgement, of Jerusalem first and then of the world—is not in the vein of Daniel or of any prophet. Thus Ezechiel, for example, follows his description of Jerusalem's destruction with a tableau of scattered Israel's reunion. It is unlikely that our Lord should desert the prophetic tradition in a passage so manifestly of the prophetic style. We naturally expect the 'woe' eschatology of vv. 14-23 to be followed by 'bliss' eschatology from v. 24 onwards.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *SCRIPTURE*, Oct. 1950, pp. 224-5.

It is difficult to read verse 27 with an open mind, especially as St Paul has been before us with an application of its terms to the End of the World. This might appear to settle the question; in effect it does not because Paul on more than one occasion uses, with an end of the world reference, texts which the majority of commentators admit to have originally indicated the fall of the holy city. Such procedure surprises no one familiar with Israel's literary tradition of borrowing and adapting. It should also be pointed out that there is no suggestion here, as there is in Thessalonians and Corinthians, of any resurrection from the dead; nor is the savour of our passage in any way that of the last judgement scene in Matt. xxv. If to these remarks we add that the context has been hitherto satisfied by the Destruction of Jerusalem reference we stand a chance of approaching v. 27 without prejudice. Now the words of this verse, as many commentators observe, are a combination of two Old Testament texts. The first is from Deuteronomy xxx, 4: 'If thy dispersal (O Israel) be from pole to pole of heaven, the Lord will fetch them back from there'. The second is from Zacharias (ii, 10) which reads, in the Septuagint version: 'From the four winds of heaven shall I fetch them back'. It is the doctrine of the 'remnant' from another angle. The prophets insist that the religious and national unity shattered by schism and by exile will be restored in the great messianic future. Our Lord deliberately uses this stereotyped formula. It would be prudent to conclude that he too speaks of the messianic age and not of the end of all earthly things. He now swings back the happy panel of the great diptych of vv. 14-27 which is hinged on the 'But after that tribulation' of v. 24 and we stand before the bright picture which paints the fulfilment of all the prophets. The preserved chosen of the chosen people are called to the unity of the new Israel of God. This is the *summoning* together which is called so commonly in the Septuagint the '*ekklesia*'; or the great *gathering* together called the '*sunagoge*'; both of which expressions are applied in the New Testament to God's new people. Unfortunately the new Israel is composed only of the remnant docile to the gathering. Our Lord himself had lamented that he had tried to gather all (*episunagein*) as a hen her chickens; he is now content with the 'remnant'. Notice especially that he is the centre of this gathering: they are *his* elect. There is no mention of the Father here as there is in the last judgement scene of Matt. xxv: 'Come ye blessed of my Father'. Here, therefore, he speaks not of the kingdom in heaven which is the Father's but of the kingdom on earth which is the Son's. Lagrange has well called attention to this distinction in the context of the Cockle parable (Matt. xiii, 41-3). It is strange that he has not applied it here.

As for the angels in this passage and the trumpet in the parallel place in Matthew it must be noted that the angels share the benefit of the prevailing apocalyptic atmosphere. In John's Apocalypse, for

instance, the angels are the ministers of God in the affairs of the everyday world and the sound of their trumpets punctuates the progress of world history. In Zacharias (xiv, 5) it is the angels who come with Yahweh precisely to establish the messianic era on earth.

#### FIG-TREE PARABLE AND CONCLUSION : MARK xiii : 28-37

With the parable of the Fig-tree our Lord passes to certain practical observations upon the revelation he has just made. The summer with its prospect of harvest naturally suggests to us, and more so to the Palestinian, a time of happiness rather than one of final judgement : 'The fig-tree hath put forth her green figs. Arise and come !' says the Canticle (ii, 13). Indeed, summer and harvest-time are a conventional prophetic image of the happy messianic future and it is most natural to understand our parable in the same sense. The disasters are the prelude to the messianic kingdom and this knowledge must make the disasters supportable. Such is, in fact, the explicit comment of Luke who replaces Mark's vague 'it is very nigh' with the phrase 'your redemption is at hand' and by the still more definite 'the kingdom of God is at hand'. If this is the correct interpretation of the parable the old difficulty passes from v. 30. That the word 'generation' signifies the Jewish race as a whole we cannot admit ; on the other hand we are not prepared to refer vv. 28-31 to anything but the immediately preceding context. It remains that our Lord announces that Jerusalem's destruction of which he has just spoken will take place within a period of forty years—the normal meaning of the word 'generation'. Nevertheless, it must be remembered, it is not so much the destruction of which he directly speaks here ; he speaks rather of the counterpart and immediate consequence of that destruction, namely the splendid independence of the new kingdom of God. This kingdom is represented in both Old and New Testaments as a new creation. When Christ speaks, therefore, of the passing of heaven and earth, as he does in v. 31, he speaks as Isaias spoke of the scroll of heaven ; he signifies the creation of a new and better world. It is in this sense, it would appear, that our Lord elsewhere (Matt. v, 18) declares that the Law is in force until the old heavens and earth pass ; when they do pass, as he says they shall, then his word remains. The new Law in the new creation—and in this newly created world we live—is the word of Christ.

The disciples' question concerning the time of Jerusalem's destruction has not been fully answered ; they have been told only of the signs of its approach. There is a striking similarity of words and ideas, and a most illuminating one, in the first chapter of the Acts. The disciples ask the risen Christ when God's kingdom on earth is to be established :

'Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?' But he answers: 'It is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father has reserved to his power'. All they are told in the Acts, as they are told in the tenth verse of our chapter, is that the gospel must first be preached to the nations.

To Mark's conclusion (xiii, 33-7) Luke's is not dissimilar and adds some precision of reference. In Mark, the man who commits his authority is certainly Christ who is said, in the sixth chapter of the same gospel and in the same terms, to have committed his authority to the Twelve; it is for the apostles in particular to be on the alert. For what? Luke says that they may 'escape all these things that are to come' (Luke xxi, 36). His whole context demands that we understand this, of escape from physical misfortune; one can certainly not imagine an escape from the final judgement.

The hypothesis we have summarized—much too briefly to do it justice—is not claimed by its author as new. It was in Augustine's mind and was accepted by Calmet. There is one concluding observation that should be made. Exegesis is not a branch of mathematics; its conclusions are often based upon a convergence of maximum probabilities. Those conclusions are to be preferred which give the most natural and satisfactory explanation of all the texts in all their contexts. We are of the opinion that Feuillet's theory presents an over-all solution better than those offered so far.

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## THE ANTIOCHENE TEXT<sup>1</sup>

I THINK it was the perusal of Dr Black's valuable work, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*,<sup>2</sup> that finally convinced me that what is sometimes called the Western Text of the New Testament should rather be called the Antiochene text. Not that I wish to make him responsible for that view, or indeed for anything else I put forward. I ventured upon a letter to the *Times Literary Supplement*, which appeared in the issue for 11th October 1947; but it seems worth while to develop the idea a little more fully in the time allowed me, in the hope of securing a more general assent, or at all events of learning reasons to the contrary. When I suggested the title for this class of text in the *Times Literary Supplement*, I had not seen it put forward before, nor have I seen it up

<sup>1</sup> One of the shorter communications read before the *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas* at Worcester College, Oxford, on Thursday, 14th September 1950.

<sup>2</sup> Clarendon Press, 1946.