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"MISERABLE-SINNER CHRISTIANITY" IN THE HANDS OF THE RATIONALISTS

III. WINDISCH AND THE END

The assault on the Reformation conception of the Christian life could not end on so ambiguous a note as that struck by Pfeiderer. On the contrary, what may very properly be spoken of as the last word said in furtherance of it, was the most direct that had been said since Wernle's own, and in many respects the most forceful and telling of all. We are referring, of course, to Hans Windisch's at once brilliant and ponderous volume on *Baptism and Sin in the Oldest Christianity up to Origen*,¹ which was published in 1908. We have already pointed out the relation of the book to Wernle's published twelve years before. It came into the controversy which Wernle had provoked, very distinctly at the end, when the debate was languishing, and indeed, from the point of view of Wernle's contentions, when the battle was lost. It had much the appearance accordingly of a last vigorous attack, seeking to wring a victory out of defeat. And assuredly little was left unsaid by Windisch that could be said to rescue and save a lost cause.

What Windisch undertakes to do, to speak now of the formal contents of his volume, is to take up Wernle's proposition that to Paul Christians are in their actual nature sinless men, to justify it by a really thorough exegetical survey of the Pauline material, and then to place it in its histor-

¹ *Taufe und Sünde im ältesten Christentum bis auf Origines. Ein Beitrag zur altchristlichen Dogmengeschichte*, 1908. The book, published when he was twenty-seven years old, was Windisch's first book; at least it was preceded only by his Doctor's dissertation on *The Theodicy of Justin*, 1906.

AN INTERPRETATION OF ISAIAH XL. 3

Wilderness and desert—words such as these fittingly describe the world which lay outside the borders of Israel. A moral waste it was for the most part: a region blighted by superstition, stunted in its religious growth, lacking adequate knowledge of God, where a constant struggle must be maintained to obtain the barest necessities for the spiritual life. The words wilderness and desert were also peculiarly apt to bring vividly to mind that inhospitable region where the people of God had once wandered for a generation, outside of the promised land, in sight of it, but not able to enter and take possession because of their sinful faithlessness, where they suffered hardship, and were beset by wild and murderous nomads who prowled about and slew and plundered the weak who lagged and those who strayed from the way, where the people languished for food and water, and must have perished had not God in his mercy by his good providence given them bread from heaven to eat and sweetened the brackish pool and opened the flinty rock that water might gush forth for them to drink. God found them in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness (Deut. xxxii. 19). And so a return to the wilderness early became an apt emblem for the loss of the promised land and an enforced sojourn among the nations of the world. The prophet Hosea declares that God will cause Israel to go into the wilderness because of its unfaithfulness to him (Hos. ii. 16, English 14; comp. xiii. 10, English 9); and Ezekiel calls the world outside of the promised land the wilderness of the nations (Ezek. xx. 35, xix. 13).¹ Yet wilderness and desert

¹“Der Ausdruck ist vielmehr typisch, indem die zukünftige Führung Israels als eine Wiederholung der früheren Führung desselben aus Aegypten nach Canaan dargestellt ist, wie Hos. 2, 16” (Keil, *Commentar über den Propheten Ezeziel*, 2te Aufl., 1882). “Ezeziel (xx. 33-38) . . . is evidently a reminiscence of” Hos. ii. 14 (Cheyne, *Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges: Hosea*, 1889). “Die Vorstellung . . . hat aber weiter gewirkt, bei Ezeziel (20:35) und in der späteren Eschatologie” (Wellhausen, *Die Kleinen Propheten*, 1898). Ézékiel, qui

were also words to conjure with. They spoke indeed of loneliness, desolation, danger, hardship, punishment for sin; but they spoke also of God's love for Israel even in its waywardness, and of his constant care of his people. Had he not found them of old in the wilderness, and kept them from destruction and at length brought them to their own land? (Deut. xxxii. 10-13). The history of the past opened a door of hope to Israel once more in the wilderness outside of the promised land and that land as of old under foreign domination (Hos. ii. 17, English 15).

In Isaiah xl. 3 these three ideas are apparently embodied in the prophet's reference to the wilderness and the desert.²

développe cette idée du retour au désert en un sens différent (xx. 34 s), paraît l'avoir empruntée à Osée" (van Hoonecker, *Les Douze Petits Prophètes*, 1908).

² The wilderness and desert have been understood to denote the desert which lies between Babylonia, where the exiles of Judah dwelt, and their native land of Palestine (Knobel). This interpretation assumes that the prophet is addressing only those scattered children of Zion who were in Babylonia. But no exegetical need in the chapter itself demands this limitation of the meaning; and such interpretation is too narrow, for the discourses to which the prophecy of Isa. xl. 1-11 forms the introduction have clearly in mind and explicitly announce the redemption of the people of God not only from Babylonia, but from all parts of the world. Interpreters, however, who adopt this explanation generally see in the wilderness and desert a figure of spiritual things also: thus Dillmann says, "Der Ausdruck aber ist, wie auch sonst oft bei diesem Profet, so gehalten, dass sich das höhere geistige Verständniss leicht anknüpft"; and more fully Bredenkamp, "Obwohl scharfe geographische Begrenzung wider den Geist dieser Prophetie ist, so ist doch wohl bei der Wüste an die zwischen Babel und Judäa gelegene zu denken, durch welche hin Jahve vor seinem Volke herzieht, um in Jerusalem sein Heil aufzurichten. Wie er einst durch die Wüste ziehend sein Volk erlöste, so auch jetzt wieder. Die Application der physischen Hindernisse auf das geistige Gebiet liegt nahe" (p. 233); and similarly Skinner, "The prophet seems to have expected the deliverance to issue in a triumphal progress of Jehovah with his people through the desert between Babylon and Palestine, after the analogy of the exodus from Egypt. But all such passages probably look beyond the material fulfilment and include the removal of political and other hindrances to the restoration of Israel" (*Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges: Isaiah*). Even in this revised form, however, justice is not done to the broad outlook of the prophet upon a worldwide re-

He is thinking and speaking of the world that lies outside the promised land: the world ruled by the nations, where Israel languished, deprived of its own inheritance and condemned to dreary sojourn in a country not its own, longing for the promised land, in sight of it at times, but debarred its possession because of sin; yet not forsaken of God and, having his promise, not without hope. That such is the breadth of the prophet's thought is reasonably inferred from the fact, namely that the situation of the people as depicted is the same as was foretold in an earlier prophecy it would be, and the words of the earlier prophecy are echoed in the later.³ The prophet Hosea had announced that as punishment for her sinful abandonment of God and

demption, in the discourses to which this opening prophecy is the recognized prologue.

Calvin exactly reverses this interpretation, and puts the whole emphasis on the figurative meaning. His words are: "The wilderness is employed to denote metaphorically that desolation which then existed; though I do not deny that the prophet alludes to the intermediate journey; for the roughness of the wilderness seemed to forbid their return [from Babylon]. He promises, therefore, that although every road were shut up, and not a chink were open, the Lord will easily cleave a path through the most impassable tracts for himself and his people." And Marti refuses to see anything but the figurative sense: "*Wüste und Steppe* sind nicht auf besondere Gegenden, die diese Namen *kat' exochen* trugen, etwa die Wüste Judas und die Steppe des Jordanthales, zu deuten, sondern gehören zum ganzen Bilde: Wo bis jetzt kein Weg war, wird ein Jahveweg gebahnt, bereitet die neue Zeit sich wunderbar vor."

But Isa. xl. 1-3 may contain a reminiscence of Hos. ii. 16. If so, the wilderness does not signify merely a pathless waste, a region of utter desolation, but certain definite associations cluster about it, derived from the earlier prophecy.

³ "Ganz so wie Hos. 2: 16 und vielleicht nicht ohne Erinnerung an diese ältere Weissagung" (Delitzsch, *Commentar über den Propheten Jesaia*, 1866) see Stier, *Jesaias, nicht Pseudo-Jesaias*, 1851). "Ganz im selben Zusammenhang Hos. 2: 16, wo der Herr wieder um die Liebe seines Volkes wirbt" (von Orelli, *Die Propheten Jesaia und Jeremia*, 1887). "How beautifully the promise [in Hosea's prophecy] anticipates the great promise of Israel's restoration, which opens, remarkably enough, with the very phrase used by Hosea, 'Speak ye to the heart of Jerusalem'" (Cheyne, *Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges: Hosea*, 1889).

shameful dalliance with heathen deities God would bring faithless Israel into the wilderness, and would speak to her heart, and open for her thence a door of hope, and bring her back to her home and her God (Hos. ii. 16 f).⁴ Even so, in the later prophecy, God comes to the people with "a promise of deliverance from exile,"⁵ saying, Speak ye to the heart of Jerusalem, and say unto her that her warfare is accomplished and her iniquity pardoned; and forthwith the voice of the herald is heard, crying, In the wilderness prepare ye the way of the Lord (who is coming to save) and his glory shall be revealed. The situation is the same in the two prophecies. The people of God, in punishment for their shameful infidelity to Jehovah, have lost their possession of the promised land, and the bulk of them are scattered among the nations. Israel is indeed in the wilderness, as it is called by Hosea; living, as pictured in Deuteronomy, a life of want in contrast to the abundance of Canaan (Deut. xxviii. 47 f). In the promise to Jerusalem of the deliverance of her exiles, a voice cries, In the wilderness prepare ye the way of the Lord. If the later prophet has the earlier prophecy of Hosea in mind, and the similarity in the situation lends probability to the opinion that he has, then it is natural to conclude that he too means by wilderness the world of the nations.

The wording employed in both prophecies strengthens the evidence afforded by the similarity of situation. The expression "speak comfortably" (literally, to the heart), is a form of words used with some frequency elsewhere, but not again in these last twenty-seven chapters of the book of Isaiah. Though the purpose of the prophet in these chapters is to offer comfort, and the idea of comfort is expressed in words not less than fourteen times, yet the expression "speak to the heart" is employed in the introductory discourse only. Why? Probably because the prophecy of

⁴ English 14 f; note "cause to go" and "thence"; comp. iii. 2-5.

⁵ "The book . . . opened with a promise of deliverance from exile" (Alexander, *The Later Prophecies of Isaiah*, p. 152); exile, but not exclusively the exile of the Jews in Babylonia (comp. p. 1).

Hosea gives shape to his thought, even as an early event in Israel's history may have influenced Hosea's mind. In early days, soon after the settlement of Israel in Canaan, a Levite's concubine proved unfaithful to him, and went away from him; and her husband went after her to speak to her heart and bring her again (Judg. xix. 1-3; referred to in Hos. ix. 9, x. 9). And Israel of the north, like a faithless wife, as the prophet points out, has been untrue to Jehovah her lord, and he will make her go into the wilderness; but he will speak to her heart there, and bring her thence, and restore her to the blessings she had formerly enjoyed (Hos. ii. 16-22). And now not Israel of the north only, but Judah as well, have proved unfaithful (Isa. i. 21, lvii. 3, 7-9), and have been banished, sent into exile; but at length the voice of God is heard, saying, Speak ye to the heart of Jerusalem, and say to her that her iniquity is pardoned and her restoration is at hand. The prophet seems to have the words of his predecessor Hosea in mind. Language and situation are the same in the two prophecies. It is reasonable to conclude their kinship, and that the later prophet uses wilderness in a sense similar to, though wider than, that of his predecessor, to denote the world of nations, the region to which God in judgment has brought his unfaithful people for discipline before he speaks words of comfort to them; a desert that surrounded the land of Israel, and at times broke across the border and spread its desolation over the promised inheritance (comp. Isa. v. 4-6).

To the eye of the prophet this wilderness extends to earth's remotest bounds. Hosea had foreseen the enforced migration of the northern Israelites from their homes, their scattering among the towns of Egypt and Assyria (Hos. ix. 3, 6, x. 6, xi. 5, 11), and their wandering among the nations (ix. 17). Isaiah the son of Amoz had foretold the captivity of Judah (Isa. iii. 24, v. 13, 26-30, vi. 11 f); he had spoken in the presence of king Hezekiah of exile in Babylonia (Isa. xxxix. 5-7); and his range of vision, in a

prophecy much misunderstood,⁶ extended beyond Egypt, Assyria, and Babylonia, far beyond the remotest communities of exiled Israelites at any period before the great days of Rome. He foresaw exiles in all parts of the world, even at the ends of the earth, on the shores of the world ocean (Isa. xi, 11-16). In the book of Deuteronomy, also, at chapter xxviii. 64, a passage which is commonly held by criticism both conservative and radical to antedate Isa. xl-lxvi, the people of Israel are forewarned that if they are disobedient, Jehovah will scatter them "among all peoples, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth." In the last twenty-seven chapters of the book of Isaiah the prophet has this wide view. He speaks of the exiles in Babylonia indeed, explicitly however only in the first nine of these chapters, and he foretells their return. But his gaze sweeps the world. And that, too, at the very beginning, in these first nine chapters; for while he looks upon Israel and sees them despoiled because they have sinned against Jehovah, he also beholds them redeemed, and hears Jehovah's promise that he will be with them, and the deep waters through which they must pass shall not overflow them neither shall the fire kindle upon them; for he, Jehovah their saviour, is with them, and will recover their offspring and gather them from the north and the south and the east and the west, even from afar, from the end of the earth (Isa. xlii. 23-xliii. 7). The deliverance from Babylon is but the first streak of day in the eastern sky. It betokens the dawn of the great day of ingathering, the "day of salvation," when from all parts of the world the sons and daughters of Zion, every one that is called by Jehovah's name, redeemed of the Lord, shall come with singing unto Zion (Isa. xliii. 5, xlix. 8, 12, 22, comp. verses 14-26, lx. 4, 9, lxvi. 19, 20).

The herald is heard, calling his summons to prepare in the wilderness a highway for Jehovah. The herald's cry means more than that the advent of the Lord is at hand.

⁶ See this REVIEW, 1916, p. 666.

It is the king's command to prepare the road. It is imperative, it brooks neither neglect nor refusal to obey. The road whithersoever the Lord will come must be put in order without fail. It is fitting that it should be, and it is required to be. Every hindrance and all that is unsightly must be removed. Every spiritual obstacle in the hearts and lives of his people must be taken away, what is crooked in conduct must be made straight, what is unclean, must be put away. The highway shall be called the way of holiness (Isa. xxxv. 8). And are we not right in understanding that this is the herald's voice as he starts on his mission? The stages of a royal journey, it seems, are marked in this prophetic drama, unfolded in chapter xl. 1-11. First, the herald's voice is heard, summoning men to prepare a way in the wilderness for Jehovah; and at last from the mountain tops of the holy land men of faith behold God their king within their borders and marching onward to assume his throne in Zion. The starting point is the wilderness, and as Jehovah moves onward in redemption, according to invariable custom the herald goes before, and his call is heard all along the route in advance of the king (Gen xli. 43, Esth. vi. 11). In the drama unfolded in these verses the herald leaves the stage, indeed, and his cry is not heard there again; but the audience of the prophet understands: as Jehovah moves forward in his triumphal progress, the herald goes before his king with the summons to prepare the way. His call is heard in the desert where the royal progress begins; it will be heard ever before him as the Lord advances, as he draws nigh Jerusalem, as he enters the temple, his dwelling place, the house of the kingdom (Mal. iii. 1). And if the day of redemption is long and the king's progress slow, at the several stages of the journey herald may be replaced by herald and a new voice be heard uttering the old familiar cry.

The day of redemption dawned with the return from Babylon. A splendor all its own burst forth when the Lord came to his temple. The king has not now an official resi-

dence on earth, whither the tribes go up. But the need ceases for Zion's children to migrate to Palestine in order to be within the borders of the kingdom; for, according to the promise, he shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River unto the ends of the earth (Ps. lxxii. 8, Zech. ix. 10, Rev. xi. 15). The kingdom becomes world-wide, and the wilderness disappears.

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