

*THE FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. PETER AND THE  
BOOK OF ENOCH.*

SEVERAL articles by Prof. Rendel Harris on the relation of the First Epistle of St. Peter to the Book of Enoch have appeared in recent numbers of the EXPOSITOR. In the last of these (April, 1902, p. 320), he asks me, in my future treatment of the "larger hope" to omit the passage in 1 Peter which speaks of the spirits in prison. If I were dealing with the question again from the dogmatic point of view, I should naturally adopt this counsel, and should also leave the meaning of the *descendit ad inferna* of the Creed entirely alone, for I thoroughly agree with Prof. Rendel Harris that the larger hope can safely be left to take care of itself, and is neither to be accepted on the authority of the New Testament nor of the Creed.

Neither have I, on the contrary, as Mr. Van Loon surmises (in the *Theologisch Tijdschrift*, 1902, p. 255, etc.), wished to save the *descendit*, and with it the whole Creed. I only believed that the article originally contained that doctrine, and must be historically understood as referring to it. I drew the inference from the passage in 1 Peter iii., which I certainly cannot explain as Prof. Harris does. And for that reason I must once more return to the question, especially as Prof. Harris himself at the close of his second article (Nov. 1901, p. 349) admitted that "There are still some serious difficulties to be faced, and the explanation of the whole passage requires to be taken up again and argued in detail."

First, however, we must consider another passage, which Prof. Harris uses in support of his exegesis of the "spirits in prison."

That passage is 1 Peter i. 12: "οἷς (sc. τοῖς προφήταις) ἀπεκαλύφθη, ὅτι οὐχ ἑαυτοῖς, ὑμῶν δὲ δηκόνουν αὐτὰ, ἀ νῦν

ἀνηγγέλη ὑμῖν”—“to whom (i.e. to the prophets) it was revealed that not unto themselves but unto you did they minister these things which have now been announced unto you.” Prof. Harris sees in this verse a quotation from the beginning of the Book of Enoch i. 2, which he sets out as follows :—καὶ οὐκ εἰς τὴν νῦν γενεὰν διανοοῦμεν, ἀλλ’ ἐπὶ πόρρω οὖσαν ἐγὼ λαλῶ”—“and not for the present generation was I contemplating, but I speak for a generation afar off.”

The idea is indeed the same in both instances, but a direct connexion between the two passages could only be established if we might read with Prof. Harris διανοοῦντο for διηκόνουν in the First Epistle of Peter. This seems to me to be neither necessary nor possible, because

(1) διηκόνουν is not at all perplexing, but can be easily explained from the preceding passage, v. 10, etc. : “περὶ ἧς σωτηρίας ἐξεζήτησαν καὶ ἐξηραύνησάν προφήται... ἐραυνῶντες,” etc.—“the salvation concerning which the prophets sought and searched diligently.”

(2) The continuation in v. 13 : “διὸ ἀναξωσάμενοι τὰς ὀσφύας τῆς διανοίας ὑμῶν”—“wherefore gird up the loins of your minds”—is quite intelligible without a preceding διανοοῦντο : indeed if the τῆς διανοίας ὑμῶν is to be set against the διανοεῖσθαι of the prophets, ὑμῶν would have to be sharply emphasized.

It might be granted, however, that 1 Peter i. 12, if not exactly an extract from Enoch, still presented a close coincidence with it, if the idea there expressed were to be found in that passage and nowhere else. This, however, is not the case ; on the contrary, this was the view of prophecy which prevailed at the time. We know this from the Jewish Apocalypses, which the authors did not publish under their own names, but put into the mouths of famous men of the past, often introducing exact calculations with regard to the end.

Thus Dan. ix. 24, etc., resting on Jer. xxv. 11, xxix. 10, reckons the time from the beginning of the Exile to the end as seventy weeks of years, or 490 years. The Book of Enoch also (ch. lxxxix.) reckons that seventy shepherds or people's angels shall oppress Israel one after the other, and in chap. xciii, xci. 12-17, announces that ten weeks will elapse before the judgment. The view is therefore justified that the prophets searched what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify; but, as it is expressed elsewhere, we cannot maintain that 1 Peter i. 10, etc., was derived from one particular source. Still less have we a right to assert that the author of the Epistle elsewhere makes use of or quotes from Enoch, although it is not impossible that he may have done so.

As a matter of fact 1 Peter iii. 19 has been often explained by reference to the Book of Enoch, for example by Spitta and Cramer. The latter believes that the passage was originally a marginal reference and that it should read: "Ἐνώχ τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν πορευθεὶς ἐκήρυξεν," etc., but he does not attempt to explain how this gloss originated. The proposal of Prof. Harris and Mr. James to read in the text itself "ἐν ᾧ καὶ Ἐνώχ τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν πορευθεὶς ἐκήρυξεν," etc., is decidedly preferable; but it also is surrounded by so many difficulties that we cannot see our way to adopting it.

The difficulty which Prof. Harris suggests (November, 1901, p. 349), viz., that Enoch could hardly have preached in the days of Noah, is in truth no difficulty at all, for, according to Enoch cvi. 1, etc., he survived until the birth of Noah, and indeed, according to the Samaritan text of Genesis v. 21, he lived 180 years after Noah's birth. There is, however, no truth in the idea that Enoch preached in the days of Noah; he preached to the spirits who in the days of Noah did not believe. This is the right translation, and these words afford a primary piece of evidence

against the whole interpretation which would apply the verse to the preaching of Enoch. Other proofs are not lacking to support it.

1. Although the *πνεύματα ἐν φυλακῇ* might be the angels who, according to Enoch i. 4, etc., were cast into prison, what follows would not be very applicable to them: “*ἀπειθήσασιν ποτε, ὅτε ἀπεξεδέχετο ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ μακροθυμία ἐν ἡμέραις Νῶε κατασκευαζομένης κιβωτοῦ.* For the building of the ark, in which, according to later tradition, the angels took part, ought not to have led the sons of God to repentance, but only men (as is pre-supposed in St. Matt. xxiv. 38, etc., and Heb. xi. 7). Especially the closing words, “*εἰς ἣν ὀλίγοι, τουτέστιν ὀκτὼ ψυχαὶ διεσώθησαν δι’ ὕδατος,*” which plainly throw light upon the unbelief of those *πνεύματα*, seem to prove without room for a shadow of doubt that the reference is to the souls of dead men only and not to angelic beings. The word *ποτέ* would also be incomprehensible on this assumption, as if Enoch had preached to the angels not long after the Flood; still less is it anywhere told of him that he preached in Hades to the souls of the unbelieving contemporaries of Noah. The exegesis of our passage put forward by Prof. Harris is here also untenable.

2. Even if *πνεύματα* could refer to the fallen angels, *ἐκήρυξεν* could not allude to that proclamation of judgment which is attributed to the patriarch in Enoch xii. For wherever *κηρύττειν* is used absolutely the reference is to the preaching of salvation; such a message, however—as we may gather from the passage quoted by Prof. Harris himself (November, 1901, p. 349)—Enoch did *not* deliver to the fallen angels.

3. Let me, however, assume for a moment that *ἐκήρυξεν* refers to the proclamation of doom and *πνεύματα* to the fallen angels. How in the world, I ask, can we explain the fact that the author of the First Epistle of Peter

happens to write in this place of the preaching of Enoch to the angels? In *v.* 17 he has declared that it is better to suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing, and in *v.* 18 he has given as an example the dying of Christ for our sins. Is it likely that he would pass on at once to speak of a proclamation of judgment delivered by Enoch to the angels? That would have neither rhyme nor reason and would open the way to the conjecture that *v.* 19, etc., are out of place. If, on the other hand, we cannot explain how these verses come to occupy their present position some other exegesis is required.

In my book, *Niedergefahren zu den Toten*, I have examined the subject, and I need not recapitulate my conclusions. I trust, however, that I have made it clear that Prof. Harris's exegesis of 1 Peter iii. 19, etc., and the alteration which he wishes to adopt in i. 12 are alike inadmissible.

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