Lectures on the Book of Revelation

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Preface and Introduction

(The Translation by W. Kelly of the Revelation of John is included as the file revtrans.doc. Search for ‘revelation / 2/ john’.)

Preface.

The Lectures here presented to the reader were taken in shorthand, and printed in 1858-9 in a periodical form, with additions or retrenchments throughout. In 1861 a new and corrected edition appeared, preceded in 1860 by a critical edition of the Greek text with a close English translation and a full statement of the authorities (MSS., versions, and early citations) and various readings in the notes. In 1868 a new edition in the periodical form was issued, and the following year again in the collected form.

I trust that, in spite of many hindrances to such a revision as one might desire, the present edition will be found not only enlarged, but more accurate, though few are likely to be so sensible of its defects as myself. May the gracious Lord, who deigned to use it for the good of souls, even when certainly encumbered with greater drawbacks, bless its fresh circulation to the refreshment of His own and the warning of the careless or even the scornful among such as know Him not!

Introduction.

That the day in which we live is serious and fraught with change of the gravest character is doubted by no thoughtful mind. A sage of this world has issued his Latter-day Pamphlets. For near a century the air has

been full of revolution. Men take pleasure, especially in experimental science, which has yielded not a few brilliant results, and some of them eminently practical in facilitating the intercourse of men and minds. Hence a tendency to glorify success, especially in material things, and to look more than ever for progress in the future. The past is either slighted utterly or condoned patronisingly and with pity. All things are made matters of question. The age prepares to put the most venerable authority on its trial speculatively as it will in fact ere long. But it essays a more audacious flight; it already counts itself wiser than God's word, and will soon accept a man as God Himself in His temple.

Has the Holy Spirit wrought after no special sort in presence of Satan's activity and new wiles? As it is according to God to work invariably for His own glory but in ways admirably adapted to the dangers and wants of His own, so has He proved in our day. He has recalled His children far and wide to Christ's person and work, to the Spirit and His presence, to their own forgotten privileges as Christians and the church now, as well as to the hope of His coming shortly.

Hence if on one side the world's restless love of change has imperilled the solid hold of what is good and of God, on the other side grace has disabused many of prejudices, detected faulty or imperfect views, and opened hearts to truths stored in scripture but in vain till the Holy Ghost made them living. To this the powerful conviction that the Lord is at hand contributed largely, as it raised in hearts and consciences the solemn question of the church's state and of our own as individuals.

Thus for good as for evil it does not satisfy to cite the ways and thoughts of men in the last few centuries. Some doubtless drench themselves with the dregs of the dark ages; others go back to the impressions of the first four centuries after Christ, and think they have done much when they find themselves coinciding with the Greek or Latin ecclesiastics of those days. But not a few there are, I thank the God and Father of the Lord Jesus, who have been taught of Him to confide only in the scriptures by the Spirit — not in testimony since the apostles, but in their divinely-inspired writings.

If the spirit of revolution or of superstition slight the work which God effected by the labours of the reformers, faith values indeed and gives God thanks for what He did then, but goes straight up to the fresh fountains of revealed truth, and owns these to be the needed, sweet, and sure resource of divine grace for an hour when evil men and seducers wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

It appears to me then that, while it is wanton to reject the work of the Lord’s servants either at the Reformation or in days before or since, it is not the wisdom which befits the believer at any time, least of all in face of our increasing snares and perils, to stop short of the sources which are as accessible to us as to those who originally received them, which only unbelief prompted men to forsake, to the grief of the Spirit and their own irreparable loss. It is good to respect Luther, Calvin, Bucer, Cranmer, Jewell; it is better — yea, a bounden duty to test what these said and others, respectable indeed but inferior to them, to test their thoughts by the living and abiding word of God. Why swear to the words of an earthly master, or of a school

which sprung later from his words, when God has vouchsafed His own, and given us the Spirit who abides in us for ever?

Rationalism can find not a little material and an apparent sanction for its own bolder impiety from the unguarded words of the greatest of reformers. Pious Protestants cherish the memory of their works, and ban, on their words as articles of faith and hope. But there is no need for the Christian to be a Protestant, no excuse for becoming a rationalist. Why not take the whole written word and trust the Holy Spirit to give us all the truth suited to the exigencies of today, as He was pleased to strengthen others yesterday? The word of God as such claims our homage as the sole rule, and this too as a whole, not that measure only which was blessed to and in others who have passed before us. The Reformation is not Christianity, nor are Luther and his fellows the apostle Paul and the other apostles.

I am thoroughly convinced that the admirable men of the Reformation, though greatly beyond those who followed in the or seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, were no more spiritually fit to traverse safely the field of prophecy than their descendants at the present time. It is a thing as unknown among Protestants as among Romanists to meet with souls consciously dead to sin and law, standing fast in the liberty wherewith Christ makes free. Still less do they apprehend aright the union of saints with Christ by the Spirit, and the character of the assembly of God as the body of Christ or even as the house of God. Unacquainted with these truths, as little emancipated individually from every hindrance and bond as their systems are from the Popish leaven of a consecrated caste with its efficacious rites, they

habitually gravitate toward Judaism, and this in a prophetic scheme quite as much as in doctrine and walk.

The grounds of this judgment the reader may find too abundantly, if otherwise he himself knows it not, in these lectures. It is useless, save for party purposes, to meet the charge by peremptory denial and haughty contempt. I am sure I love the reformers with a hearty affection in the Lord, as I do those who adopt their views as a standard in our day; but I believe that it is no disparagement to either if we, profiting it may be by their footsteps, seek to go on to know the word of the Lord more fully.

The reader will see that there is frequent reference in these pages to Mr. E. B. Elliott's Horae Apocalypticae. I meant this as an act of sincere respect to him and his elaborate commentary, the best representative of the Protestant school. It is with regret that one observes a ruffled tone in his notice of my criticisms.1 His answers I shall here review in the hope that he may be convinced of oversight at least in some important details, if not in grave first principles.

And first I must say that it is not fairly put (i.p. 18) to assert that 1, whom he is pleased to classify "on the Futurist side," have distinctly renounced many of the chief dogmas of the original "Futurist school." I might have let this pass, though in my opinion likely to produce the erroneous impression that I had put forth futurism once and since "renounced" many of its chief dogmas; but taken alone, with his still stronger language in the same direction (iv. p. 644), it seemed due both to Mr. Elliott and to his readers to correct the error. "In fine (says he), we may, I think, safely conclude to receive

Mr. W. Kelly's judgment, so far as it goes, in favour of the Protestant Historical view of the Apocalyptic prophecy, as that forced upon a person originally altogether prejudiced against it." Mr. E. has not the least warrant for these last words. I am sorry to occupy space about a personal matter. It is more important to state that, years before the first edition of the Horae Apocalypticae appeared in 1844, there were Christians who waited for Christ and looked for the personal Antichrist, with the many momentous consequences of both views, yet held the general application of the Apocalypse to the saints and the world since the time of St. John, as stated in my lectures. Nor ought Mr. Elliott to have forgotten this (as I doubt not he did); for I have so told him orally and given him a work by a friend of mine to that effect, which was published in 1839. He should not therefore have spoken of "renouncing" futurist dogmas once entertained, any more than of "a person originally altogether opposed to the Protestant view."

On another point too I am surprised that such a man should so gravely misunderstand. He contrasts with Mr. Barker's vague and indefinite views my writing "distinctly and expressly, and moreover in a certain way authoritatively, as if speaking as the organ of a not unimportant party in the Christian Church" — this because of my using the word "we" sufficiently often to leave this impression. (e.g. Introd. p. ix.) Let me say in few words that I am simply comparing the thoughts of such as like myself admit a partial application of the Revelation to the past, but believe that the errand and close fulfilment of its central prophetic visions — Rev. 6 to Rev. 16 — will be after the translation of those set

forth by the elders or glorified saints, and in order to their appearing with Christ in glory. I am not alone in these convictions, which are shared by many intelligent persons, both Anglican and Nonconformist, besides those who like myself refuse to take a sectarian place in the present chaos of Christendom. Whatever of "authoritativeness" was in my words is due solely to my firm conviction of the divine word, not in the least to being the organ of a party important or not, a thing as far from the fact as foreign to my own feeling and judgment of what is due to the Lord and the church.

The first and main difference which severs Mr. E. and myself as interpreting the book is his denial of that which to me is certain, that the epistles to the seven Asiatic churches were intended to give more than the actual state in St. John's day, and to figure successively the most characteristic phases of the church from apostolic times to the consummation. Mr. E. in a periodical long since defunct had urged some objections to the late Mr. Trotter's statement of similar convictions in his well-known Plain Papers. It seemed to Mr. E. inconsistent with the analogy of scripture prophecy and with plain fact.2 My answer was that it is in vain to appeal to Dan. 2, 7, 11, or other such prophecies, which have no analogy with the addresses of the Lord Jesus to these Christian assemblies. These are manifestly sui generis and have no connection with the fortunes of the world, or the successive rising and setting of its powers. Supposing such quasi-prophetic sketches to have been intended of God, the intermingling of the chief changes of civil government among men would be to my mind an incongruous mixture, instead of being a necessary element of consistency.

Next it is said to be contrary to plain fact; because in more than one of the epistles the prominent characteristics of the church addressed disagree utterly from the state of the Christian church at the assigned era. So, for example, very specially in that to Thyatira, where nothing less than an unintentional3 mutilation is charged on the effort to make out a case at all plausible for applying it to the dominion of Popery in the dark ages, the eye being fixed on the exception Jezebel, not on the church in Thyatira. Whereas, instead of prevalent irreligion and the almost complete extinction of testimony for Christ, the epistle depicts a high state of piety in the general professing body there: and with the power in their hands, which it was their grand fault not duly to exercise, of interdicting and stopping the teaching of the woman Jezebel.

Such is a full statement of this objection; but it has no real force. For it must be borne in mind that our [i.e. Mr. T.'s and my] hypothesis assumes a twofold application, and therefore necessarily shuts out a rigid facsimile, which supposes a single set of circumstances wherein it can be verified. The churches are addressed as such, that is, as standing on the footing on which Christ had set the church, though the evils that were come or coming in are notified to those churches as thus responsible. The address is not to Balaam or Jezebel, but to assemblies where the germs of those symbolic forms of iniquity were found, and therein to those who had the consciousness of the Christian profession. Plainly therefore it is the character, not necessarily the extent, of the evil (or of the state, whatever it might be), which is or could be noticed here. If it was general deadness, such is the state indicated, and that in a particular

order; if the seductions of false teachers were aimed at, this is also found; but in no case is there an attempt to define the extent of the sphere which might be thus leavened.

Hence I do not see in Thyatira a broken centre in the array of evidence, but rather an unmistakably strong and conspicuous front. The solemn principle that appears in it is that even there the church was then the birthplace of children born to Jezebel in adultery. The point is not the number of her children; but that, up to the Lord's warning, the saints accepted this condition of things. There might be ever so abundant works and service, faith and love. Still the evil of Jezebel was allowed. The good was no doubt far more prominent in the primitive Christian assembly, the evil no longer an exception winked at, but infinitely more developed and systematized in mediaeval Christendom; though I am far from thinking that, in these dark ages, there may not have been an amount of loving though unintelligent devotedness, of which it becomes not men of the present hour to speak too lightly. In short the epistle applied literally to Thyatira in St. John's days, while for him who has ears to hear there is much to intimate a further reference to a time when Jezebel and her children might have the upper hand, a faithful remnant be defined most strikingly, and faith called to look onward to the Lord's coming as the only solace.

It is quite the mistake of Mr. E. that this view implies that Protestants are "the synagogue of Satan." For I agree with many, living as well as dead, that Protestantism is set forth by Sardis. The other most sweeping sentence of the Holy Ghost prefigured those who insist on a traditional religion of sacramentalism

and succession, the modern Judaizers, who have put forth such painfully successful efforts to revive a system of doctrine and rites, which, nipped in the bud by apostolic vigilance, especially by St. Paul, afterwards expanded into gigantic proportions in the catholic days of early Christendom, even before the empire had renounced Paganism, and of course long before the full-blown Popery of Rome. (Compare Rev. 2:9 with Rev. 3:9) Can anything more exactly describe them, though good men, like a Barnabas of old, may be ensnared in it for a while?

The argument drawn from the agreement or from the discord of commentators, Mr. E. probably knows I do not consider entitled to much attention. But, from the days of Abbot Joachim at least till our own, it is impossible to deny that some of the most godly and thoughtful students of the book have embraced the view of a. prophetic is well as historical sense of these epistles. Brightman, Forbes, Mede, More, Gill, Sir I. Newton, Vitringa, and Cunninghame, are among the names of departed writers, who might well claim respectful attention, especially from their companions of the Protestant school. Shades of difference there are between these and others; but all agree in the common principle of a continuous and periodistic force appertaining to the seven epistles. And so far is this from being a peculiarity of those who look for a future personal Antichrist, that, on the contrary mere futurism is opposed to it as decidedly as praeterism.

In short I do not affirm that the seven epistles to the Asiatic churches are strictly prophetic, like “the things which must be after these,” which are the prophecies of the book. But I do hold that, just as Daniel 3 - 6 gives us

historical facts divinely selected, “is ever the case with inspiration, and in strict keeping as prophetic types with the formal visions of the prophet, so is it with the mystery of the seven golden candlesticks. They had, like the incidents recorded of the kings in Babylon, a bearing deeper than the history, and like them also they pave the way for the predictions which follow. As with all types or parables, it is only a cavil to insist on a technical minuteness of application in order to throw overboard the profound lessons of truth they convey to the circumcised ear. The objection of Mr. E. is the less reasonable in the instance of Thyatira, because in types every one familiar with them knows that the woman typically represents a given slate, good or evil, the man rather activity in good or evil. On the other hand, it was important to guard against the notion that God sanctioned so frightful a state of Popery, which was but an enormous falling away from the truth, the real witnesses in His eyes being now “the rest” or “remnant,” who were then first defined in this typico-historic sketch of Christendom. For myself, though I may fail to convince those who are strongly committed to a denial of the protracted view of “the things that are,” I cannot see how, if the Spirit had designed such a view, the elements for it could have been otherwise so admirably disposed to that end without destroying its past use. What Mr. E. taunts as “a most curious double view” is really characteristic of scripture in general; and of all the inspired writers, he who is at once the deepest and the most sober is the one who most frequently initiates us into this use of Old Testament facts and persons. That it should be employed in a more orderly method and a more complete measure in the Revelation than in preceding books of prophecy is exactly in

harmony with what is true in all other respects of that book as compared with the prophets who went before St. John, Why should deep-reaching perfectness be incredible in his eyes? Ample reasons have been given for so interpreting these epistles, besides answering his objections in a way satisfactory to many unbiassed men.

Nor does Mr. E. attempt fairly to grapple with the vision of the twenty-four crowned elders in Rev. 4, 5, corroborated by their position throughout the book, as proving the translation of the saints after the seven churches are closed and before the proper prophetic action begins. “A. double view truly marvellous!” (p. 648) is a feeble reply to a plain fact which I urge afresh on Mr. E., and which neither he nor any other historicalist has ever fairly faced. There is scarce more difficulty in the mode of the twofold application here than in the ordinary difference of the type and its antitype (p. 644). Such a difference is credible to Mr. E. in the high priest literally and typically; nor is there a whit more of particularity in the Apocalypse than in Leviticus. The order and accuracy in detail are divinely perfect throughout Scripture, though Dr. Fairbairn in his Typology is as slow to believe in the figures of the law as Mr. E. in those of the Apocalypse. I am sure that “my more intelligent readers” will agree with me that this is little to the credit of two men who have undertaken a task to which they prove themselves somewhat unequal, and that such reasoning and pleasantry, or whatever it may be best designated, will be acceptable to such only as feebly know the scriptures and the power of God.

Thus was the case put in my former Introduction: “In passing it may here be asked, What satisfactory reason can historicalists offer for the occurrence of such scenes

[as Rev. 4, 5] at this point? It is easy to make remarks on the heavenly company and the Apocalyptic scenery; that is, particular points in the vision; but why and how have we such a vision here at all? There is no serious attempt that I know of to account for the disappearance of churches on earth thenceforward, nor for the fact that the full company of the royal priesthood, or at least the representative heads of all the courses, are then seen in heaven. What event was there in Mr. E.'s view, immediately before the reign of Nerva, which could call out the special joy and worship of heaven, or the new action with which God and the Lamb begin to occupy themselves? If that wondrous change, the removal to heaven of the saints now glorified, be supposed to have taken place, all is explained. A turning point is reached in the application of the ways of God, who, having gathered to Himself His heavenly redeemed from the beginning to that epoch, then proceeds to reveal the process of His providence for accomplishing His earthly purposes to His own glory and that of Christ; that is, His future dealings not as now with the one body wherein is neither Jew nor Gentile, but expressly with Israel and the nations, remnants of whom will be raised up to bear a testimony to the plans which God will have in hand. Not that He will not have His saints and witnesses among them both; but they are so foreshown in the character of their experiences Godward and manward, and the attitude of God Himself toward them and men generally is so described, as to evince a condition essentially different from that which subsists now; and all most confirmatory of the idea that the rapture of the saints will then be an accomplished fact. Nothing simpler, if the church state, 'the things which are,' continue no longer, the risen saints be gone to meet the

Lord in the air, and the eve of the great crisis of the earth come. Not a hint is dropped that the crowned and enthroned elders are disembodied spirits, but the contrary is implied in all that is said of them. When souls are meant, they are so specified, as in Rev. 6 and 20. Moreover the elders are a complete symbol. Whatever the special portion in glory assigned to subsequent sufferers, the elders remain a definite company from Rev. 4 to 19, and receive no addition to their number. Their complement is made up from the first presentation above, and that figure only vanishes when the marriage of the Lamb is come, and a new symbol is needed to convey the new circumstances of the saints already transfigured and taken to heaven.

“On the protracted Protestant scheme, which I believe to have a certain measure of truth, the vision may be regarded vaguely as a sort of pictured pledge, or perhaps anticipation, of the church’s heavenly glory, while the providential actings of God toward the world are afterwards unfolded. But when we raise the question of exact and full interpretation, I see no reason to doubt that these chapters reveal the position of the glorified saints above, after churches are no longer spoken of on earth, and before the Lord and His armies emerge from heaven for the war with the beast and the reign over the earth. It is properly a scene in heaven after the actual ecclesiastical state is closed, and before the millennium commences — a scene which inaugurates the very momentous interval between the two, when it becomes a question of judicial inflictions from God, and new classes of saints, invested with a testimony most appreciably distinct from the church, are called to glorify Him in the midst of the fires.”

If Mr. E. thinks he has truth, and cares for many who believe him utterly wrong as to this which I am convinced is the key to the just and full understanding of the Apocalypse, he would do well to put forth all he can in meeting the brief statement now repeated with the detailed proofs which are continually referred to as evidence presents itself through my lectures on the Revelation. If I am right, the closer his examination the less he will have to regret it; if he can show me wrong, I trust I shall be truly grateful for his serving the Lord in correcting me and those swayed by my statements In his tabular scheme given of the Apocalyptic plan according to my thoughts (p. 645), I have only to remark that it is the coming Roman prince who breaks covenant with the Jews, very likely in concert with the Antichrist or wilful king in the holy land; that is, the beast from the sea in all probability along with the second beast (from the earth or land), if we speak in the symbolic language of Rev. 13. As they are thus of one mind and policy, the confusion of these two practically is of little moment. Not so if (as I understand Mr. E.'s vi.) he makes me teach that the Assyrian is the last head of the reunited Roman empire. The Assyrian may be identified, as I judge, with the king of the north (Dan. 11), but he is certainly not the Apocalyptic beast from the abyss, any more than he is the king in the holy land with whom he wages war at the time of the end. I wonder that an intelligent man like the author of H. A. could so misconstrue some of the main points of my book, whereon I have strongly objected to the muddle of ancients and moderns. Here Mr. E. seems to make me just like the rest where I stand firmly opposed. So again I do not understand his representing my thought thus at the close of all -

”Great white Throne.

1000 days.”

Can any reader divine? It crossed me that he perhaps meant 1000 years; but he knows well that I consider his putting the great white throne before, instead of after, the thousand years and the short space that follows, a blunder of the greatest magnitude, though he is not quite alone: two writers at least had preceded him in so flagrant a perversion of the chapter. But 1000 days or years are alike wrongly imputed to me; for I judge that eternity (the new heaven and earth in the most absolute sense) is the one and only thing that follows the resurrection and judgment of the wicked dead, who have their portion in the lake of fire.

In his “Addendum” (pp. 644-653) Mr. E. complains of sundry strong animadversions of mine on certain points of his Apocalyptic Exposition “by no means altogether in that spirit of fairness and candour which might have been anticipated from the courteous notice of myself and my Commentary in his Introduction.” He has certainly overrated the careful study I had given to the H. A., though it is true that I bore in review the book as a whole in revising the reports of my lectures for the press. These he arranges under two heads as follows: — 1st, Mr. E.’s asserted errors in the adoption of certain wrong readings of the Apocalyptic Greek Text, as readings of quite insufficient authority; 2ndly asserted errors in certain of his renderings of the Greek, and of his historical applications of the prophecy. “1. Asserted erroneous readings of the Greek text preferred in the Horae.” Of these Mr. E. selects four, which he seems to think most important.

“1. In Apoc. xi. 8, Mr. E. repeatedly but incorrectly, of course through oversight, represents the reading in the critical editions [he says now] επι της πλατειας της πολεως της μεγαλης (contradistinctively, I presume, to πλ. πολ. της μεγ., without the της). So Mr. K., p. 198.” The reader will be surprised, and I doubt not Mr. E. himself, to hear that I do noting of the kind; and that Mr. E. not only misunderstood but, misquotes me is the whole point of the matter. What I really say is, “Were the reading such as Mr. E. repeatedly represents it (of course through oversight), πλατειᾳ της π. της μ. (H. A., [4th ed.] vol. ii. p. 396, note 4, and yet more incorrectly in vol. iv. p. 543, note 2), there had been no room for this rendering [‘the great street of the city’], which some very competent judges prefer.”

Really it is beyond measure careless to add a fresh series of blunders now. The fact is, though it was always in my eyes a point of no moment, Mr. E. misquoted the Greek text from the New Testament in his fourth edition, and misquotes me in his fifth, and has evidently not seen that all this is exclusively and inexcusably his own mistake, which strongly illustrates my accusation of the great want of critical knowledge and tact, not only a conspicuous feature in a man of his general ability and acquirements, but most injurious to a commentator on a book which from its wretched state in the received text demands these qualities more than any other in the New Testament.

Here then I reiterate to the letter my statement, which Mr. E. must see., if instead of trying to defend himself from a charge of nothing more than oversight, he will kindly compare the two references to his fourth edition according to my note. I did not object to the τῆς, for it is

my own reading, as it is that of every critical editor of the Revelation, save Griesbach and Scholz. But in that fourth edition he misquoted πλατειᾳ for πλατείας, the unquestionable reading of all MSS.; but on the second occasion referred to he says εν τῃ πλατειᾳ της πολεως της μεγαλης, which differs in the first three words from every known copy and edition. Had Mr E. taken the trouble to read his own quotations with my remarks, comparing both with any Greek Testament whatever (not to speak of a critical edition), he would have seen that I was simply correcting two misquotations of his, the last much the worst, which last is repeated once more with its three first words quite wrong in the 5th edition, iv. 579, note l — not p. 580, which contains no such reference. What Mr. E. deduces at the end of the paragraph of course therefore falls to the ground. The whole case is no bad example of the extreme looseness of citation in the H. A. Had he looked into my Greek text, he would have seen that I read as all save the two already named, who seem to have neglected entirely their own evidence, as well as much since better known. Bishop Middleton is quite right in what he says that the article is required before πόλεως. Even the Complutensian edition is correct, and though Erasmus introduced the error into the first published edition and all those which followed, it is now known that it was his own error, not the bad reading of his manuscript; for Codex Reuchlini exhibits ἐπὶ τῆς πλ. τῆς π.

2. At page 203 Mr. X. animadverts on my preferring the reading ηνοιγη ὁ ναος του Θεου εν τῳ ουρανῳ, in Apoc. xi. 19, to ηνοιγη ὁ ναος του Θ. ὁ εν τῳ ουρ., which he regards as that of best MS. authority. In reply to which charge I have to say that what I prefer is the reading of

Griesbach, Scholz, Heinrichs, Tregelles, Alford; Wordsworth alone of the critical editors by me preferring the other reading."

What I do say in my page 203 makes Mr. E.'s present statement just cited more serious than the former one, and is to my mind unaccountable in a careful scholar. "The true reading is probably ὁ ἐν τῳ οὐρανῳ (i.e. which is in heaven). At any rate, so the Alexandrian and the Paris rescript, the Leicester, L Vatican cursive (579), the Middlehill, the Montfort, and one of the Parham (17) manuscripts say, not to speak of the Cod. Coislin. of Andreas and Victorinus. Mr. E. is also quite wrong in saying that 'according to Tregelles this is a mistake.' It is true that in his first edition, he omits this various reading though long before noted by Walton, Bengel (Wetstein probably [I now add certainly]), and even adopted without question in the text, not of Wordsworth only, but of Lachmann and Tischendorf, as it appears to be by Tregelles, judging from the new edition of 1859 [which gave the English only, not the Greek]. How it was that Mr. E. did not End it in the critical editions of Griesbach and of Scholz, it is not for me to say; but there it unquestionably may be found by any who examine them. In Hahn's manual one could not rightly expect such a thing." Such was my notice of Mr. E.'s note 5, page 478, vol. ii., fourth edition, where he had the temerity to say "Wordsworth reads ὁ ναος του Θεου ὁ εν τῳ ουρανῳ, with the article ὁ: as if in A and C. [!!] But according to Tregelles this is a mistake. Nor do I find it in any of the critical editions, whether Griesbach, Scholz, Hahn, Tregelles, or Heinrichs. And in the parallel passage, Apoc. xv. 5, Wordsworth, as well as all the others, read ηνοιγη ὁ ναος.... εν τῳ ουρανῳ." Now it

must be evident to any candid mind that my fault with E. was not the question of adopting ὁ, for I myself bracketed it in my Greek text, and therefore doubted it more than the greatest of modern critics, and only used the word “probably” in the note before Mr. E. What I charged him with was the extraordinary tissue of errors, which he now, one is sorry to see, evades by an argument about the reading He distinctly affirmed in his fourth edition that when W. read the disputed ὁ as if in A and C, this was a, mistake according to Tregelles. I denied both the mistake and that T. says anything of the sort. Dr. T. knows the readings of the Revelation far too well to be guilty of an assertion so monstrous in the eyes of any one acquainted with such matters. He never said so. He omitted this various reading in his first edition — a rare fault with him; for the book was. in most respects very well done and abounded in sound information. But T.’s omission (which the most careful may fall into sometimes) is no warrant for using his name to deny ὁ to be the reading of A and C, as it certainly is. And I corroborated this by referring to Tregelles’s new edition (English) of 1859, in which he gives the clause, “And the temple of God4 which is in heaven was opened.” This can leave no doubt how utterly mistaken Mr. E. was. Further, though not adopted in the text of Griesbach or Scholz, the reading is given with the authorities then ascertained.

I must add too that the changes in the new note seem to show that Mr. E. was aware in measure that his statement in the fourth edition could not be justified. For he has materially modified the matter in his fifth edition (ii. 489, note 5): “Wordsworth comments on this, as if ὁ ναος του Θεου ὁ εν τῳ ουρανῳ, with the article ὁ, were

the true reading. But such is not the case. I do not find it in any of the critical editions, whether of Griesbach, Scholz, Hahn, Tregelles, Heinrichs, or Wordsworth himself. Moreover, in the parallel," etc. It is some satisfaction to me that, if Mr. E. defends himself so bravely in vol iv. when he is criticising me, it is very plain that he silently used the correction afforded as to some Of the chief points here which disappear from the fifth edition as compared with the fourth. It is odd to class Hahn and Heinrichs with the principal critics, and to leave out several which have cleared the ground or advanced the frontiers since Griesbach and Scholz. I presume the reason why Mr. E. could not find the reading ὁ in the critical editions is that he uses mere manuals, not their real editions wherein they present the various readings whether adopted or not. But the question here with Mr. E. was not the reading but the facts which were altogether misstated in ed. 4, and only in part stated rightly in ed. 5. It is a province, as I have always judged, in which Mr. E. is not at home; and the self-defence, he may be assured, will only fix it more by calling attention to the facts among all who are competent to form a solid opinion on the subject.

Lastly Mr. E. states what is absolutely contrary to fact when he says in his zeal that "Mr. Kelly, indeed, would here too [Apoc. xv. 5] read ὁ εν τῳ ουρανῳ: for he gives as the English, 'the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened;' not 'was opened in heaven.' But altogether, so far as I know, without authority. And why? It seems to be only because of its suiting his peculiar interpretation of the passage, and of the Apocalyptic scenery; the very fault he has so often and wrongly ascribed to me."

The simple answer to all this is that I do not read

ὁ in Rev. 15:5, as Mr. E. may see in the Greek text published the year before the edition of the lectures he cites, which is there translated as nearly as possible in the order of the Greek, “there was opened the testimony of the tabernacle in heaven.” Further it is not the fact that in giving the words as he says in the lecture I make the smallest use of them in the way he imputes as a motive to me. The whole of this remark therefore is due to imagination, and certainly not of a noble or amiable kind.

“3rdly comes my adoption in the fourth seal (H. A., vol. i. p. 189, 4th ed., or in this 5th ed., p. 201) of a reading correspondent with Jerome’s well known Latin translation in the Vulgate, super quatuor partes terrae, ‘on the four parts of the earth;’ instead of that found in our Greek MSS. all but [is it not altogether?] universally, επι το τεταρτον της γης, ‘on the fourth part of the earth.’“ Here the case is simple enough. There are five uncial MSS. of the Revelation, and upwards of a hundred cursives, in not one of which has there been found the smallest ground for justifying Jerome’s “quatuor partes.” Two or three later Latins who used the Vulgate (not always without discrepancy) give the same very naturally; but neither Greek ecclesiastical writer nor Oriental, nor any version save the Vulgate, countenances the change. In my judgment it is critically discreditable and doctrinally dangerous to adopt such a change on such a precarious footing. Nothing like it can be produced from the entire New Testament. Why should it be here? How much better to leave the difficulty unsolved than to adopt a resource so desperate? Mr. E. refers to my own principle of using internal evidence.

Certainly I do to decide between readings with good external support on both sides, never where all the direct witnesses are on one side, and you have hear-say evidence of one type on the other side. The rest of Mr. E.'s reasons and remarks as to this I can happily leave with a brief answer. That there should be difficulty according to the historical scheme in finding a precise fulfilment of "the fourth part" I can well believe; but this is in perfect harmony with my view, which supposes vagueness in that application and precision only in the future. In itself the fourth part is thoroughly plain and intelligible. That it cannot be readily adjusted to history is an obstacle to Mr. E., not to me.

4. There is noticed by Mr. K. 'the flagrant proof of my proneness to prefer a manifestly spurious reading where my hypothesis requires' in my preference of επι το θηριον το και το θηρ. in Apoc. 17:16. So W. K., p. 304. And no doubt the evidence of Greek MSS. is very strong in favour of the και. Moreover, I have in the course of this last revision of my book found that I was mistaken in supposing that the early Hippolytus read επι, in common with the early Latin Father Tertullian, and also probably with Jerome; being misled by the Latin translation of Hippolytus'. 'De Christo of Antichristo.' Hence my confidence in decidedly preferring the επι is less strong than before." As Mr. E. speaks thus moderately of the point raised, I do not feel it needful to swell this introduction with an answer to his stout defence of the Protestant scheme and assault on futurism, supposing kaiv to be the true reading, as I am satisfied it is. Any one who knows Mr. E.'s system will be able to judge, spite of his arguments, whether his system can sustain the shock given to it by the inspired

prediction that the beast and the ten horns unite their fury against Rome, first in rendering it contemptible, next in enriching themselves with its substance, and lastly in its destruction. The effort to bring in the beast joining the Goths and Vandals to destroy the old heathen city is more worthy of Bossuet than of Mr. E.; and the rather is the phrase of the Spirit is most precise. It is the whore, not the woman merely; that is, it is the corrupt religious state, not Rome viewed simply as a city. Further, it is a state of final revulsion after the beast had carried her in ease and honour and influence, and just before the war of the beast and the kings with the Lamb. Any spiritual man can judge whether this suits the Protestant scheme of the prophecy.

"1. Says Mr. Kelly, 'Mr. E. contends for the strangest possible version of εις, as= after, or at the expiration of the aggregated period, of the hour, day, month, and year in Apoc. ix. 15.' So p. 150. When Mr. K. has shown that the same Greek preposition placed before a time, times, and half a time in Dan. 12, as well as before the 1335 days in a verse immediately following, does not mean before [it should be after], or at the expiration of, those aggregated periods, he will be in a better position for so expressing himself about my rendering of the clause in Apoc. 9:15. But, though he had these parallel passages before his eyes in my Commentary, as very mainly my justification in the rendering of Apoc. ix. 15, Mr. K. makes no allusion to them."

Mr. E. should have understood better my motive for silence. The two passages "very mainly" rested on for justification are not parallel. The first certainly cannot bear the smallest approach to the meaning he would put on them. Indeed Mr. E. gives the Greek according to the

received punctuation (not as he says of the Septuagint copies, but) of Theodotion's version, and then translates without regard to that punctuation; for he clearly should put at least a comma at the end of the clause, the effect of which would be nearly what he gives with a period in his foot-note. But, to avoid the smallest charge of forcing anything, I shall cite Sir L. C. L. Brenton's version, "that it should be for a time of times5 and half a time: when the dispersion is ended, they shall know these things." Now if this be so, this witness must disappear.

But Mr. E. is very confident as to verse 12, where however Sir C. B. equally fails him, for he translates it thus, "Blessed is he that waits and comes to the thousand three hundred and thirty-five days." This latest and most exact rendering of the Greek Bible is then opposed to the desired issue.

But I must go farther, while allowing of course that there are cases where εἰς may mean for the space, or to the amount of, as εἰς ἐνιαυτόν "for a year," that is, not till it begins merely, but for that term. Such I believe is the true sense of the last case, not after or at the expiration of, which even, if true in fact for the blessed person, is in no way the sense of the word either here or anywhere else. But the important point which every scholar must see is that the structure of the clause in Revelation has nothing akin to that in Daniel, on which depends the precise shade of meaning intended and legitimate. Mr. E.'s notions are most vague and uncritical, as I have often had occasion to notice with regret; and he is mistaken if he thinks that the examples adduced could not be multiplied. Thus he reasons at length on the possible difference of ἀποκτείνωσιν, as if it might be taken either as the present or as the aorist subj.;

whereas the real turning point is the connection with ἡτοιμασμένοι, as well as with the purpose expressed in the last clause. Now I affirm, without fear of contradiction from any unbiassed man competent to deal with these questions, that the sense of such a phrase is and can only be “prepared for, or as we say idiomatically against, the hour,” etc. No doubt those are wrong who confound the perfect participle with either the present or the aorist. It is neither the course of preparation nor the simple historical fact that they were prepared, but the present result of a past preparation, as usual in such forms. But this does not touch the true force of εις, any more than the question whether the slaying the third of men be a continuous action, or one viewed as summed up in its conclusion. The nearest and a true parallel that I observe in the New Testament is John 12:7, εἰς τὴν ἡμέραν τοῦ ἐνταφιασμοῦ μου τετήρηκεν αὐτό. Here it is the finite verb, not the participle; but this does not affect the question. Indeed the sense is beyond controversy. It was for or against the day of Christ’s burial she had kept the unguent, certainly not after or at its expiration, whatever others may have done. It is just the same with the phrase in the Revelation, though the nature of the case may forbid the absurdity of after being so conspicuous. Had it been said in Dan. 12, “Blessed is he that comes to the 1260 days,” or even to the 1290 days, I could understand Mr. E.’s argument, though even so it would seem to me invalid. But the period is one which overlaps these times of horror and destruction, and, as I believe, goes up to the day of settling Judah and Israel in the land, though the millennial age may not be in its full character till the 1335 days. We can readily see then that he who arrives at these days is blessed indeed. And the Hebrew confirms this as the true meaning. But in

Rev. 9 it is an aggregated period which must elapse before the end of the slaying. To begin the work of slaughter at the end of that period is contrary to all analogy of dates, and untenable according to the true force of the phrase employed. If εἰς can mean after, it can as truly mean before, and language would dissolve into a linguistic chaos. It appears therefore that Mr. E. by his bold challenge only secures the exposure of his erroneous criticism; and with all the respect that I retain for excellent points in the book, it appears to me plain enough that critical acumen in the Greek tongue is as weak a point in the Horae Apoc. as acquaintance with the sources of the text and the comparative value of readings.

"2. I utterly reject Mr. E. Is statement that 'at one and the same time' is the true rendering of the Greek phrase in Apoc. 17 of μιαν ὡραν μετα τού θηριου. It should be, he says, for the same time, marking duration, not epoch or occasion. So Mr. K., p. 300. But as in the preceding case, so here let me say, when Mr. K. has succeeded in setting aside the parallels of John 4:52, Acts 10:3, and Rev. 3:3, adduced by me in loc., where the accusative of time is unquestionably in the sense of epoch at which, it will be time enough to reply to him further on this point."

How others may regard such an answer it is not for me to say. But I avow that to me the effort to escape the regular rule in the use of the accusative and the dative of time seems far beneath a Christian of less reputation than the author of H. A. For there is not the remotest resemblance between these three exceptional instances culled out of the New Testament and the ordinary construction under which falls Rev. 17:12. This I pointed

out at some length in the note to which the citation refers. There is no rule whatever without an exception. What can one think of the judgment which musters a few exceptions against the plainest examples of a plain principle of the Greek language? The true scholar would rather seek to understand what lay secretly under the three irregularities, and thus to account for them, instead of perverting them to set aside instances where no such modifying influences wrought.

Thus, to take the first, any scholar ought to observe that the reason why the accusative is found is not because it can ever in itself mean the point at which a given fact occurred. This is the force of the temporal dative, though it properly requires the preposition ἐν to define it. The accusative here is due solely to the context. The courtier enquired from his servant τὴν ὥραν in which his son got better. And they said to him, Yesterday ὥραν ἑβδόμην the fever left him. It is the former clause which thus influences the latter. But this mould not justify the conclusion that, when such a disturbing cause did not interfere, the accusative could have been employed per se. Hence in the very next verse, when it does not operate, the grammar returns to its ordinary conditions. The father knew therefore that it was ἐν τῃ ὥρᾳ ἐν ᾗ κ.τ.λ.

As to the second, Mr. E. is not entitled to cite it, because the very best manuscripts, the Sinai, Alexandrian, Vatican, Palimpsest of Paris, and the Laudian of Oxford, with more than twenty cursives and other authorities, give ὡσεὶ περὶ ὥραν ἑνάτην, and so it is edited by Alford, Lachmann, Tregelles, as well as Tischendorf in his most recent (8th) edition.

There remains only Rev. 3:4, which is strange indeed either to misunderstand in itself or to compare with the phrase in debate. The reason for the accusative is even more obvious and closer than in John 4:52, though similar in principle. It depends on the γνῳς just before · οὐ μὴ γνῳς ποίαν ὥραν ἥξω ἐπὶ σέ. If the construction were filled up, it would be τὴν ὥραν ποίᾳ ὥρᾳ. As far as grammar is concerned therefore, it was open to omit either the accusative or the dative, as both would be cumbrous and uncalled for. So in Matt. 24:42 we have οὐκ οἴδατε ποίᾳ ὥρᾳ, in our passage we have γνῳς ποίαν ὥραν. But to infer from this that, where no such reason occurs for a compendious mixed construction, the accusative can be used for a point of time or the dative for duration, or that the radical difference does not always really abide underneath such an ellipse, is contrary to every just thought of language.6 We are not at liberty to reason from these peculiar instances to others wholly different; it is as illogical as can be.

I have in my lectures shown the importance of the true force of the accusative in Rev. 17:12. Like “at,” it supposes the same starting-point for the beast and the ten horns; but it adds the other, and this the main and intended, information that they receive authority as kin” for one hour with the beast: not the Roman empire as once without the kings, nor the kings as afterwards without the empire, but both together, the revived empire in its place, the kings in theirs, enduring for the same space till they all perish together at the appearing of Jesus.

3. It is the question of the seven thunders; but inasmuch as Mr. E. adds nothing, we can dismiss it without farther notice.

4. Here, as Mr. E. admits that the rendering of Rev. 11:9 in his former editions was unsatisfactory, I am happy to say little. It seems to me plain, however, from the context, that the sense is not merely that their testimony was perfected but finished when the beast slays them.

In 5 and 6 we have the questions whether the

ναός includes the court sometimes, and whether toads and frogs are interchangeable, both of which Mr. E. answers affirmatively, which I doubt.

His 7 calls for a fuller notice. “At p. 246 Mr. K. insists on the right translation of ενεστηκεν in 2 Thess. 2:2 being ‘is present;’ not as in our English authorized version, and as in the Horae, ‘is at hand.’ At p. 92 of my vol. iii., in this edition, my readers will find the point more fully argued out than before; and the latter rendering of the word, I may unhesitatingly say, on the grounds of Greek criticism, fully justified. Let me only here ask Mr. X. the question how he supposes the Thessalonian Christians could have believed that the day of the Lord was then actually present, when putting together the two facts — first, that they knew from St. Paul’s former epistles that the primary event of the day of the Lord would be the gathering of Christ’s saints, both the dead and the living, to meet Christ in the air; secondly, that neither themselves nor even St. Paul had thus far been made the subjects of that promised blessed rapture? Will Mr. K. be agitated by the idea of the day of Christ having begun, so long as he is conscious that neither on himself nor on any of his most honoured Christian friends has any change taken place?”

The reader will find in the text and note, pp. 299-304, a tolerably complete refutation of what I judge to be

mistaken in Mr. E.’s. argument. He starts with the common error7 of confounding the presence of the Lord to gather His saints with the day of the Lord to execute judgment on His enemies. This necessarily vitiates all that follows, as it misses wholly the force and even sense of the apostle’s opening entreaty. For where would be the wisdom of entreating them for the sake of the same thing as that in respect of which he was going to disabuse their mind? The apostle is guilty of no such slip or paralogism. He begs them by reason, or for the sake, of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto Him that they be not soon shaken in mind [or literally “from their mind,” though it is hardly English]..... as that the day of the Lord is present. This to my thinking is not only intelligible but plain and conclusive for the object in hand when we distinguish according to the light given in 1 Thess. 4 and 5, where these two things, the presence and the day of the Lord, are both discussed and distinguished as here. It was the false teachers who brought in confusion, and, instead of holding up the bright hope of Christ’s coming to receive His own to Himself as the apostle did and does everywhere, sought to fill and alarm them with the terrors of the day of the Lord — that term of solemn judicial dealing which abounds in Old Testament prophecy. It is well known that it has there an incipient application to such a frightful judgment as befell Babylon, Egypt, or other earthly states. In some such way the misleaders at Thessalonica seem to have interpreted the trouble through which, we can see from the first epistle, the saints there were then passing. They pretended, like many since their time, that the dread day was come, pretending to the Spirit’s revelation of it, teaching it, and even led on by the

enemy to allege a letter purporting to be from the apostle to that effect. If they so misunderstood the first epistle, as Jerome throws out and E. doubts not, it is certainly not the meaning of δἰ ἐπιστολῆς ὡς δἰ ἡμῶν. I know what Paley says; but, pace tanti viri, the apostle here means a suppositious letter falsely bearing his name, not his own epistle: yet this is the only basis they have for the thought.

Mr. E. contends (ii. 92) for “partly” some forged words or letter ascribed to St. Paul, and “partly too” misconstruction of words which he had really written in his first epistle about Christ’s coming again to gather to Himself His saints both quick and dead. But this is utterly baseless. There is but one clause for the inference, and the Greek phrase cannot possibly mean both. It is only laxity of mind or negligence which could seriously think of extracting partly the one thing and partly the other from words which can bear but one unequivocal meaning. Had the apostle intended his own epistle, he would have so expressed it. He might have said (as he does later in this very chapter, where such is his intention) δἰ ἐπιστολῆς ἡμῶν, or rather, as he would in that case have referred to his previously existing letter, διὰ τῆς ἐπιστολῆς, with or without ἡμῶν. But to convey such an idea, he could not have written as he does at δἰ ἐπιστολῆς ὡς δἰ ἡμῶν, which can only signify a letter falsely professing to come through the apostle and his companions. Hence says Theodoret, μήτε εἰ προσποιοῖντο χρησμωδεῖν καὶ προφητεύειν;

τοῦτο γὰρ λὲγει, Μήτε διὰ πνεύματος· μήτε εἰ πλασάμενοι ὡς ἐξ αὐτοῦ γραφεῖσαν ἐπιστολὴν προφέροιεν, μήτε εἰ ἀγράφως αὐτὸν εἰρηκέναι λέγοιεν. (Opera, iii. 532, ed. Schulze.)8 If they claimed the

apostle's authority for their affirmation in writing or in word, it was spurious, as far as the apostle informs us and we therefore have ground to believe; not a question of misunderstanding either his oral teaching or his first epistle. Of this there can be no doubt for such as fairly judge the words with a competent knowledge of the Greek tongue, or pay due heed to any right translation of the words. For in no language whatever is Mr. E.'s inference well founded or defensible.

I have already perhaps sufficiently anticipated the answer to Mr. E.'s questions without delaying to notice the mistake which treats the gathering of the saints as an event, primary or not, of the day of the Lord (which scripture never does); but I reply that, though the Thessalonians had been set right as to the dead saints by the first epistle, the second proves that they were liable to go astray as to the living saints, and needed therefore fresh instruction. They already knew the fact, that the Lord would come to translate the saints, deceased or alive, and that His day is to fall with swift destruction on the world; but the mutual relation of these two things they clearly did not know, and hence were open to those who pretended that the day was arrived with its dangers and troubles before the presence of the Lord to gather them home on high. The heresiarchs at Thessalonica probably taught a quasi-spiritual day of the Lord, as others went so far later as to teach similarly that the resurrection had taken place already. There is not the least force therefore in what Mr. E. urges, particularly as 1 Thess. does not unfold the relative order of the two events, the presence and the day of the Lord, in such a way as to preclude the false rumour which is refuted in 2 Thess. We know now that

such a notion must be unfounded; but how this could have been known before the second epistle was written is, I believe, beyond Mr. E.'s power to prove.

The reader has before him the substance of Mr. E.'s critique on my criticism. He has left many remarks without notice, in which I consider him wrong: how far he has defended himself to purpose in those he selected for a reply, it is for others to judge rather than for me to say more. It must be plain what my opinion is. Were it the object to give a complete review of the Horae Apocalypticae, faults and defects especially in the intelligent criticism of the text could be enormously increased from the first chapter to the last. From the first I have ever felt that this was one of the chief drawbacks; and a singular sight it is to me that, with a great deal of interesting history and ingenious applications of antiquities, such a book should give continual evidence of the want of an average amount and exactitude of knowledge in what ought to be the groundwork — the best readings and their evidence. I also think that the version preferred is too often vulnerable. The grand desideratum of all however is of another sort: I need not rehearse it here, having often pressed it in the lectures and the notes. There is an absence throughout of truth as to the heavenly relations of Christ and the church; and hence failure in discriminating between the proper Christian hope and prophecy. This in such a book must needs be ruinous if true, as I firmly believe it to be. Of course it is to me matter of regret that Mr E. should say or think that my criticisms on his book were wanting in fairness and candour; but the reader will have perceived that the reason was in part or wholly due to the fact that he has

not even understood many errors already pointed out. I have always considered the H. A. peculiarly defective in this, that the author did not first diligently ascertain, according to his best judgment or that of the ablest critical inquirers, the true text, and then seek to expound it. I can honestly say that such has been my own course; whereas his book constantly gives the impression of one who up to its fifth edition is not. yet in possession of the full grounds for a sound judgment, of a mind either unused or not adapted to the resolution of such questions, and consequently choosing, as his system seemed to require, such readings as suited, not those which command the acceptance of the most competent judges on the broadest basis. I believe I could make good this opinion of Mr. E.'s book throughout every chapter, if it were called for; and the attentive reader of my lectures will have seen many more instances than the author has sought to defend. But I will take as an example. the first and last chapters, with one in the middle of the book, which Mr. E. professes to give as corrected by critical authority.

(1.) Rev. 1:2 presents an instance of extreme carelessness. How could any one, unless barely reprinting the received text or the Authorised Version, intelligently keep τε in the Greek text or the last "and" in English? The best MSS. and versions are unanimous; and so are all careful editors. The erroneous addition falsifies the sense; for it makes of John's visions a third division of his testimony, instead of representing them as qualifying the word of God and the testimony of Jesus which he testified. (2.) His neglect of the present form of the participle τῳ ἀγαπῶντι is a glaring fault in verse 5; but I have dwelt so much on its force in its proper place

in the following pages, that I need say no more. The external authority is overwhelming in its favour and against the vulgar aorist which E. continues without remark. (3.) The καί with ἀδελφός in verse 9 is contrary to the best authorities, and even to Erasmus' Cod. Reuchlini, though he (not the Complut.) inserted it in his text. It is a manifest clog to the sense. In the same verse should be a still more needed restoration of the right reading by striking out ἐν τῃ, "in the," before kingdom, which mars the sense. I say nothing of two disputed questions in the same verse; but Mr. E. is as silent about the two certain and necessary changes as he is about the points which may be considered still sub judice. (4.) Mr. E. properly omits the ill-attested clauses in verse 11, but does not bring out the distinctive force of ἐλάλει as supplanting the common ἐλάλησε in verse 12. (5.) In verse 14 he gives the Authorised Version where it differs from the received text as much as from that approved by all judicious critics and required by the best witnesses. It should be "white as white wool, as snow." (6.) Verses 17, 18, he fails to represent according to any good text. It should be, "I am the first and the last, and the living one [or "he that liveth"]; and I was [or became] dead," etc. (7.) He omits the beautiful and emphatic οὖν of the best authorities in verse 19: "Write therefore," etc. Minor points are omitted, but such errors as these are found too commonly to allow the claim of the H. A. to take rank as a critical work up to the fair requirements of earnest and intelligent students in our days. The favourable opinion of an English judge or of an Edinburgh reviewer will not affect the judgment of any competent to pronounce on questions in which one could not fairly expect such persons to be at home. The first requisite in a comment surely is that it be founded

on a correct text. Is it so with the H. A.? I believe it is not.

Let us now review the last chapter similarly. (1.) In the first verse Mr. E. gives, without the least warrant, “the” river of the water of life. It should be of course “a river of water of life.” All agree in omitting the καθαρόν of the received text. (2.) In verse 3 there is a needless departure from the regular sense of the καί. On the disputed reading in verse 5 I say nothing; but (3.) verse 8 is as loosely given in the Horae as the Authorised Version. F, or surely it must be, “And I John am [or was] he that heard and saw these things;” and in this order, spite of and some cursives. (4.) In verse 12 the true reading I believe to be ἐστίν “is” as in, A, and two cursives in the Vatican. Still, as the Rescript of Paris and the Porphyrian uncial are here deficient and the Basilian Vatican with the other cursives opposed, I would say no more than that an exact commentator ought to have noticed a good reading, which is far more energetic than the common one, even if he adhered to the received text, ἔσται, “shall be.” (5.) In verse 13 I suppose there can be no doubt Mr. E. is wrong in adhering to the order of the common text, contrary to the critics who follow the ancient MSS. (6.) In verse 14, though agreeing with Mr. E. in adopting πλύνοντες τ. στολὰς

αὐτῶν on the authority of, A, 7, 38 against all other known manuscripts, I cannot accept his connecting this verse with Rev. 7:9, 13, 14; as if the one were the anticipation, the other the realization, but rather as a similar blessing possessed by two distinct classes of saints. (7.) “For” (δέ) in verse 15 is absent from the best MSS. and editions. Its insertion in H. A. spoils the contrast intended. (8.) The readings in verse 16 may be

considered doubtful; but there need be no hesitation in striking out καί from the received text before ὁ θέλων, which Mr. E. keeps in. Again, it is wrong to say as he does, “of the waters of life.” “Of the fountain of the water of life” is all right in Rev. 21:6; here it is simply “life’s water,” without a various reading.

I will finally take a central portion (Rev. 11), with a view to a similar test. (1.) Mr. E. is far too reluctant in accepting the critical correction of the received text in verse 1; and the difficulty of construction is due to not seeing the Hebraism of the style. (Compare Rev. 4:1; Rev. 14:6, 7; Rev. 19:7.) The Sinaitic and Porphyrian uncials confirm the Alexandrian and upwards of thirty cursives, with most of the ancient versions, against the reading of the Basilian Vatican, and ten cursives, with the later Syriac and the Armenian; which is indeed an evident gloss to get rid of the seemingly harsh phrase in the original text. The Sinaitic alone reads λέγει for λέγων; but this is of no moment, especially in the Revelation, where slips of the kind are more than usually common. (2.) On E.’s version of τελέσωσι in the sense of perfected, to avoid its natural meaning, “completed,” I will not here delay further than to express dissent. (3.) Surely “in that hour” is the right rendering of ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῃ ὥρᾳ, rather than “at that same time.” It is a fair question as to ἤκουσα or ἤκουσαν, the latter having decidedly the best ancient evidence in its favour, as well as the more modern copies from which the received text was drawn; but the former has good authority, uncial and cursive, supported by most of the ancient versions, and the general analogy of the phrase in the book. (4.) καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος is rejected by the Sinaitic, the Porphyrian, the Basilian Vatican (B 2066), as well as A

and C, and the mass of cursives; also by the Complut. and even by Erasmus' Cod. Reuchl., though he boldly inserted it (probably out of deference to the Vulgate, not knowing that its best copies, Amiat. Fuld. Demidov. and Harl., reject the clause). Mr. E. might have been therefore a little bolder, had he known the facts more fully. (5.) I have elsewhere discussed the question of ὁ ἐν τῳ οὐρανῳ, so that I need say no more here. What Mr. E. remarks on it is incorrect; but I do not say that it is "the true reading." In 1860 I bracketed the article before ejn as doubtful; I should be disposed to do the same in 1871.

This will serve as a sample of the H. A., examined at the beginning, middle and end, in order to test its critical accuracy as to the text, which is evidently the most fundamental of all questions for the commentator who aims at precision on a solid footing.

1 Thus his note 3 to p. 643 is a great exaggeration of anything I expected, which was, not that he would abandon his general scheme (no such exorbitant thought being ever anticipated), but that he might see how incorrect were some of his positions,. not only in detailed points, but even in the structural division of Rev. 21.

2 I cite the substance of the remarks that follow from the Introduction of the same edition, pp. iv.-vi.

3 In the H.A., iv. 642, note, Mr. E. says "Not 'intentional' mutilation; as Mr. W. K. very unwarrantably represents me as saying. I had, and have, too much regard for Mr. T. to entertain such an idea." This somewhat startled me, as I had certainly written as Mr. E. said unintentional; and so it was in all the copies of my book that I could see. Accordingly I wrote to Mr. E. asking

whether it was the fact that his copy of my book made me represent him as saying “intentional” where I had really written the precise reverse, as he said himself. It was possible of course that in his particular copy the printer might, by some singular accident if not intention, have thrown out the important prefix “un” which had led him to so strong and rash a charge against me, who certainly would not on any account misrepresent any man. Mr. E. wrote immediately a private acknowledgement that it was his mistake, not my misrepresentation. I understood from him that he had been troubled before he wrote his critique with an attack of a complaint which often leads men to see things in a wrong light. Any one is liable to a mistake, particularly if he writes a rejoinder, when it is not a case of the “double sight” he imputes metaphorically to me in the same page, but under the influence of such a malady (not morally, but physically) not quite passed away. But I humbly think that he owed it to the Lord, his readers, and himself, to have publicly corrected so gross and groundless an insinuation, instead of leaving it to me now nine years after it was disseminated to all the world.

4 In his explanation of marks used Dr., T, says, “An asterisk () is inserted whenever the ancient text differs from the modern.”

5 So it is in Holmes and Parsons’ text,

εἰς καιρὸν καιρῶν καὶ ἥη καιροῦ. Many MSS. and editions however give καιρούς for καιρῶν.

6 Such his always been my conviction, as any one can see in the earliest edition. But I thought it might be more satisfactory to others, perhaps to Mr. E., if I

submitted the point of grammar to the learned author of the latest and most elaborate work of the kind which has emanated from Oxford. The following is the reply: — “I have no doubt but that in the two passages, John 4:52, Rev. 3:3, the accusative depends upon the verb. In the latter the full construction would be ποία ἦν ὥρα ἐν ᾗ, or more briefly and simply ὥραν ἐν ᾗ (or ᾗ alone)

κ.τ.λ.; and the relative is attracted to the accusative and prefixed to it, just like ὃν τρόπον, ὃν χρόνον, etc. In the former (John 4:53) this full construction does occur, the attraction being prevented by the insertion of ἐν before the relative. In Acts 10:3, the accusative is used, just as it would be with a περί for an indefinite and general notion of time; and I have no doubt but that the writer followed the analogy of περί, though he chose to express the notion by ὡσεί [that is, even according to the common text, without περί]. Moreover, where time is indefinitely expressed, it is in reality a space of time and not a point, and its construction would follow the analogy of the expression for a space of time (accusative) rather than that of the expression for a point of time (dative). When you say, ‘about three o’clock,’ there is no definite point presented to the mind, but a space extending (say) from ten minutes before to ten minutes after. This seems to be the philosophy of the accusative after περί in such expressions. To my mind then neither of the three passages justify the taking μίαν ὥραν (Rev. 17:12) as a point of time. I am happy to say that I have no theological or mystical bias one way or the other; I really do not know which of the various Apocalyptical parties I am favouring when I say that to my mind, looking at it grammatically, the words can only mean ‘one and the same space of time with the beast,’

not ‘one and the same point of time.’ My answer would have been sent sooner, had I not been from home, so that the letter was some time in reaching me. I am, dear sir, yours faithfully, W. E. Jelf.”

7 The want of light that prevails among commentators in general on the subject of prophecy affects their criticism seriously. Thus assuming, as they almost all do with excessive vagueness, that the coming of the Lord to gather His saints is the theme about which the apostle is about to give instruction in the verses which follow, many were influenced to translate ὑπέρ here as nearly equivalent to περί whereas this is hardly the case with verbs of prayer, beseeching, etc., like ἐρωτάω. Each has its own appropriated force, as any intelligent man can verify with a Greek Concordance. Had these writers seen that he entreats the saints on account of their own bright hope not to be alarmed by the false rumour that the day of the world’s judgment was arrived, they would have avoided an error singularly gross and grave, not so much lexically, though certainly phraseologically (for ἐρωτάω ὑπέρ means, “I beg, not concerning or with regard to, but on account of, by reason of, by or for the sake of”), but mainly because of the contextual fact that he urges the one as a motive of comfort against the uneasiness inspired by the mistake as to the other, instead of treating of one and the same thing throughout. Dan. 2:18; Rom. 9:27; 2 Cor. 5:12, 2 Cor. 7:4, 2 Cor. 8:23, 2 Cor. 9:3; Phil. 1:7; 2 Thess. 1:4, on which Mr. E. leans with Rosenmüller, Macknight, Whitby, etc., are beside the mark; they none of them follow a verb of entreaty. It is true that both ὑπέρ and may often be translated “for,” and ὑπέρ sometimes even “concerning;” but there are limits to such

approximations of meaning as a scholar knows, instead of vaguely catching at a possible sense and applying it to suit a purpose. Words of entreaty, as far as I have noticed, exclude such a sense when joined with ὑπέρ and require περί. It is absurd to identify them at random.

8 I understand Chrysostom to be of the same mind (Opera, iv. 231, 232, ed. and the ablest of modem German expositors, as well as Ellicott and Alford.

Revelation 1

Every Christian of spiritual intelligence must have felt more or less fully the peculiar character of the book on the study of which we now enter. It is a “revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave him.” It is evident that the Lord Jesus is viewed here, not in His place of intimacy as the only begotten Son in the bosom of the Father, but in one of comparative distance. It is His revelation, but, moreover, the revelation which God gave Him. Somewhat similar is the remarkable expression which has perplexed so many in the Gospel of Mark (Mark 13:32), “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man: no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.” He is the servant Son of God all through that Gospel; and it is the perfection of a servant not to know what his lord does — to know, if we may so say, only what he is told. Here Christ receives a revelation from God; for, however exalted, it is the position He took as man which comes out conspicuously in the Revelation. And what makes this the more striking is that, of all the inspired writers of the New Testament, none dwells with such fulness upon His supreme and divine glory as John in his Gospel. In the Revelation, on the other hand, it is the same John who brings out with the greatest detail His human glory, but without hiding that He is God.

In keeping with this, the Revelation is “to show his servants things which must shortly come to pass.” How very different is the tone of John 15:15 “Henceforth I call you not servants;” and also of John 16 speaking of the Spirit, “He shall glorify me, for He shall receive of

mine and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I that He shall take of mine and shall show it unto you." So we see through the Gospel from first to last, that the design of the Spirit is to give the disciples the title and consciousness of their sonship with and through Jesus, the Son of God in the highest sense. Thus in John 1:11, 12, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the children of God." And again, after His death and resurrection, the Lord says, John 20, "Go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father; and to my God and your God." Of course they were servants also, and there is not a shade of incongruity. Still the difference of the relationships is immense, and the Revelation clearly is addressed to the lower of these relations. The reason, I presume, is, partly because God is therein making known a certain course of earthly events with which the lower position is most in harmony (the higher one of sons being more suitable to communion with the Father and with His Son); and partly because God seems here to prepare the way for dealing with His people in the latter day, when their position as His servants will be more or less manifested, but not the enjoyment of nearness as sons — I allude to the interval after the removal of the church.

The next words greatly confirm this; for the Lord." sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John." That is, the prophetic communication is made, not directly, but through the intervention of an angel; and John is no longer spoken of as "the disciple whom Jesus loved, which also leaned upon his breast at supper," but as "his servant," "who testified the word of God, and the

testimony of Jesus Christ, whatever things he saw."' It has to be remarked here, that the last If and" ought to disappear, which makes no small difference in the sense. For whatever things he saw" must not be regarded as a third and additional division, but rather as explaining or limiting the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. The visions of John compose "the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" here intended. How many have slighted them! Let them learn how they are characterised by the Lord here, and tremble lest their blind depreciation come into collision with His sentence. It is the word of God who gives the revelation; it is the testimony of Jesus (not to but of Jesus) who testified the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, whatever things he saw. (Compare Rev. 22:8.)

Very different indeed is the revelation of God here, and the testimony which Jesus bears in this book, from what we find in John's Gospel. The Word of God there is the Lord Jesus Himself, who in the beginning was with God and was God; the full and personal expression of God, and that not merely as the Creator of all things, but in perfect grace. "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory (the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth." In the Revelation, on the contrary, even when He is spoken of as the Word of God, it is as the expression of divine judgment, because the whole book is eminently judicial. "He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood; and his name is called the Word of God." (Rev. 19:13.) So too in the Gospel the testimony that Jesus Christ renders is to the Father, as it is throughout the Father's joy to bear witness of the Son. Indeed the Son Himself, towards the

close of His ministry, sums up the pith and character of the testimony there in these few words: “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” (John 14:9.)

All this makes the distinctive features of the Revelation to stand out in broader contrast. For throughout the book the very name of the Father occurs but rarely, and even where it does, the object is in no way the revelation of His love as Father to His family. In Rev. 1:1, Rev. 3:21, and Rev. 14:2, He is spoken of as such in relation to Jesus only, The grand subject is God manifested in His judgments, as well as the beneficent power of His kingdom here below at the appearing of the Lord Jesus, “King of kings and Lord of lords.” Even when the churches are in question, it is even about them to another, not to themselves directly.

“Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy and keep the things therein written: for the time is at hand.” What a serious mistake in the face of such words as these for Christians to think that this book or any part of it is unprofitable, and that it may be safely set aside either as too difficult to understand, or, if understood, as having no practical bearing upon the soul! It is remarkable indeed with what special care the Lord has commended it, not only here at the commencement but at the close, where we read, “These sayings are faithful and true; and the Lord God of the spirits of the prophets sent his angel to show his servants the things which must shortly come to pass. Behold, I come quickly; blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book.” It would seem that the Lord’s prescient eye anticipated in such warnings the neglect with which the Apocalypse would be treated by His servants, and that He was thus solemnly

guarding them against it by commending the book emphatically to their study and use. It is a little remarkable, by the way, that a somewhat similar admonition occurs in the close of 1 Thessalonians, which was the first of Paul's epistles, and the one which above all others develops the grand truth of the coming of the Lord. In Rev. 1:3 the Lord takes pains to encourage every possible class of people who might come in contact with the book. Not only the individual who reads is pronounced blessed, but those who hear its words and keep (or observe) what is written therein. And certain I all! that the Lord does not fail to encourage His saints who count on His assured faithfulness and blessing. He has never turned aside from using it for good, and especially in times of danger, spite of all contempt or perversion.

The objection to the study of prophecy arises from a root of unbelief, sometimes deeply hidden, which supposes all blessing to depend on the measure in which a subject bears immediately on one's self or one's circumstances. Thus when some cry out, That is not essential, I would ask, Essential to what? If they mean essential to salvation, we agree. But then on what a ground do such objectors stand! The anxiety to examine only what they deem indispensable to salvation shows that they have no consciousness of salvation themselves, and that this need of their souls is the only thing they are alive to. Now all hold that not prophecy but the gospel should be put before the unconverted. The coming of Christ in glory, which is the centre of unfulfilled prophecy, ought to be terror to their hearts, instead of a mere question for interesting discussion. To the believer indeed His coming is "that blessed hope." We wait for the Son of

God from heaven, and we await Him not only without anxiety but with joy, because we know Him to be “Jesus which delivered us from the wrath to come.” But for any man, who has not, peace by faith in Him dead and risen, to occupy his mind either with this, the church’s hope, or with the events of which prophecy treats, is but a diversion of which the enemy can make fearful use, if it be not a proof of litter deadness of conscience as to his own condition before God, — though I am far from saying, that God may not make use of that truth to arouse it. On the other hand prophecy is essential to our due appreciation of Christ’s glory and of the glory that is to be revealed. To slight prophecy therefore is to despise unwittingly that glory and the grace which has made it known to us. It is the plainest evidence of the selfishness of our hearts, which wants every word of God to be directly about ourselves.

God takes for granted that His children love to hear whatever will exalt the Lord Jesus. The result too is striking and serious: where Christ is the object of our hearts, all is peace; where our own happiness is the first thought, there is wont to be disappointment and uncertainty.

Another form in which this egotism works, and must be watched against, even among those who do hear the words of this prophecy, is the assumption that its visions are about the church — that the seals, trumpets, and vials, for instance, are of chief value and interest, because they concern ourselves (i.e., the church) either in the past or in the future. But this is a fundamental mistake, as we may gather from the very words of the verse before us. The divine ground alleged for the importance of taking heed to this book lies not in the

time being come or our being in the circumstances described, but in their being near; “for the time is at hand.” How far it contemplates those on Christian or church ground, when we see a wholly different state come in before this age closes, then in the millennium and finally in eternity, is a question for investigation as we proceed in the study of the book. But even from the opening it seems clearly as unfounded to assume from our possession of the book that we must be in the predicted circumstances, as to reason from God’s confidential announcement to Abraham, that he necessarily in his own person was concerned in the doomed cities of the plain. The principle is erroneous, overlooks the grace in which the Christian stands, and ignores the fact that there are to be in the latter day servants of God in a different position from ours, and more immediately mixed up with its horrors, though warned and saved, as just Lot was in time to escape the worst. If nevertheless the book in the apostle’s days could profit saints of God who were not personally concerned in the judgments, equally at least may it avail for us. The Lord grant that we may increasingly value the place in which He has set us, peacefully “knowing these things before.”

Ver. 1-6. “John to the seven churches which are in Asia.”9 Even the three verses already looked at give us a certain measure of insight into the peculiar features of this book, which are obviously distinct from the other parts of the New Testament. God reverts a great deal to the principles on which He had acted in Old Testament times. One can see that the positive edification of the church is not the subject, nor the unfolding of God’s special dealings in mercy. We have here to do with His

judgment of evil, whether in the churches or in the world. In perfect harmony with this, God introduces Himself to His people by a style and title that differs from the rest of the apostolic addresses. “Grace to you and peace from him that is, and that was, and that is to come.” It is generally what answers in the New Testament to Jehovah in the Old. There is this peculiarity, that He is here revealed as first He that is in His absolute ever-present being, then He that was, and He that is to come. The “I am” takes precedence, but He was before, and is the coming One. God of old revealed Himself to Israel as the unchangeable One, “the same yesterday, today, and for ever.” But now He speaks in the language of the Gentiles, and by these words — “Him that is, and that was, and that is to come,” translates as it were that name of Jehovah, never before so communicated to them. He is going to return to His ancient people Israel; but before He does so, there must necessarily be a sweeping judgment upon the professing mass that calls itself by the name of the church. Thus, when God has set Christendom aside, He will bring in Israel again — no longer on the ground of law but of grace. The law executed death on sinful man, but the grace of God substituted the person of the Son of God, as in Heb. 2:9 it is written, “that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.” But God, in the death of the Lord Jesus, also gave a stronger expression of His hatred of sin than in any other dealing. So in witness of, and as an answer to, His death does grace now flow out to the very worst. In that day Israel will know this for themselves; but they will know better what Jehovah means. And of what mighty import it will prove to them that His personal name in the government of this world is the precious token given to them nationally the title of

relationship in which they have Him revealed as their God! This book then is the transition from a morally judged Christendom to “that day.”

Again, the style in which the Holy Ghost is here introduced is as strikingly characteristic of the book as what we have just traced; and so too is the way in which the Lord Jesus Himself is spoken of after that. “Grace be to you and peace…. from the seven Spirits who are before his throne.” Of course, the same Holy Ghost, known as the “One Spirit” in the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians, is here mentioned as “the seven Spirits which are before his throne.” He is spoken of as the “One Spirit,” where it is a question of the one body, the church, as in Eph. 4:4. But here it is the “seven Spirits;” because, when God shall have finished His present work in the church, He will infallibly exit off the faithless (Jewish or Gentile), and will no longer gather Jews and Gentiles into one body on the earth. On the contrary, in the millennial kingdom on earth, Israel is to be put above the Gentiles. (Compare Isaiah 2:2-4, 11, 12, 24, 35, 49, 54, 55, 59, 65, and the prophets generally.) It will be a different state of things altogether; and the Holy Ghost therefore is regarded in His various fulness of operations (as He is in connection with Messiah in Isaiah 11), and not in His heavenly unity. It is added, “who are before his throne,” because the main subject of this book is the government of God; first providentially and preparatorily in the seals trumpets and vials; next personally at our Lord’s appearing till the kingdom be given up and God be all in all.

In general, when we have “grace be to you and peace,” it is from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.” But in this place the order is as different as the

style: first it is “from him that is, and that was, and that is to come,” i.e., from Jehovah; then “from the seven Spirits,” etc.; and lastly “from Jesus Christ.” I think this departure from the usual order is because Jesus is here spoken of, not so much as related to the believer nor in His divine glory as Son of God, but in special reference to the earth and His rightful claims over the world.

The Lord is first viewed as “the faithful witness.” All other witnesses Lad more or less failed. He alone had been the faithful witness of God and for God on the earth. But this was at all cost to Himself. But though put to death, it was the defeat of this world’s prince, not of Christ; and hence in resurrection He stands “the first-begotten of the dead.” He is the first who entered into resurrection-life in this wondrous may which defied corruption to touch it. “Being raised from the dead, he dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.” But much more than this is conveyed. He is the heir and chief of the new estate, according to divine righteousness and counsels, of man beyond death and the grave, Lord not only of the living but of the dead, and this proved and displayed in the power of His resurrection. This He is, as faithful witness He was. So moreover He will prove to be at His coming in glory “the Prince of the kings of the earth,” when it is a question of the government of the world. All these things are connected with what He was, is, and will be, as man. It is Jesus viewed in His earthly connections, or at least without speaking of what He is in heaven. His intermediate relation to the church (as its Head, and as the “great High-priest”) disappears, as not falling in with the design of the divine government here.

But mark the beauty of what follows. The moment Jesus is presented to the churches, and announced as “the faithful witness, the first-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth,” the answer of joy and praise can be withheld no longer. The saints interrupt, if one may so say, the message of John, and break forth into a song of thanksgiving — “To him that loveth us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us a kingdom 10 — priests to his God and Father.” He satisfies the affections by His love, He has cleared the conscience by His blood, and has put us in such glorious relationships as He stands in Himself to God and the Father. Yet even here it is not the distinctively Christian relationship. It is not sonship known by the Spirit of His Son in our hearts, nor is it our membership of Christ’s body. It is blessed to have access as priests, glorious to reign with Him; but in both we share with the Apocalyptic sufferers at the end of the age. (See Rev. 5:10, and especially Rev. 20:4.) What is common will be true for all; but this does not hinder distinction of privilege.

There is a little alteration that should be made on excellent authority in this verse, which greatly adds to its sweetness and force. In the correct text it is “To him that loveth us,” not “that loved us.” It is quite true that “Christ loved the church and gave himself for it.” Eph. 5 shows us this; — equally true, that He “loved me and gave himself for me,” as in Gal. 2. But the first of Revelation shows us the present love of Jesus. It is not that He is always washing us from our sins: He washed us with His own blood once for all, and does not require so to wash us again. There is however the practical cleansing day by day — the washing of water by the

word; but this is not what is spoken of here, but in His blood, a finished work, and one that lasts all through to His praise. But how blessed it is to know, while listening to the very book which most unfolds the ways and means by which God is about to put aside unfaithful Christendom, and to judge the evil of the world, that in presence of all this we can look up in the full confidence of His present abiding love, and say — “To him that loveth us, and washed11 us from our sins in his blood… to him be the glory and the might unto the ages of the ages. Amen.”

After the salutation, “Grace be to you and peace,” etc., we had an interruption. It was the voice of the heavenly saints breaking forth into a strain of praise. Now we have (verse 7) those solemn but blessed words, “Behold, he cometh with the clouds; and every eye see him, and those who pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so (or “Yea”), Amen.” This is not a part of the song, but a testimony quite distinct from it. And we often find these two things: that which forms the communion of a saint of God, and then that which is or should be his testimony.

The communion with each other is a great element of Christian happiness. Now it is the presentation of Christ and the knowledge of Him and of our portion in Him which produces the sense of fellowship and calls out worship. Besides this, the believer is acquainted by God with what is coming upon the world. And this is a part of our testimony, but not the theme with which the heart should be most filled. With a person who merely dwells on prophecy you may find interesting and grave topics, but not much fellowship of heart. For, however true may be his judgment of passing events, however sound his

expectation of the future, grace in Christ alone leads to communion. It would be quite wrong to despise prophecy, and he who does will be sure to fall into some snare or other. But if the Christian is always occupied with the details of prophecy, there never will be power for heavenly worship; nor does it necessarily deliver a man from the ways of the world. A person may have impressions correct enough about the Jews, the judgments on Babylon and the beast, etc., who may not yet walk in separation from the world. But when the heart is set upon Christ, and these predicted things come in as a sort of background then they all find their level. The Holy Spirit leads us into all the truth, glorifying Christ, and also showing us “things to come.”

So in 2 Peter 1:19 it is said, speaking of the word of prophecy, “whereunto ye do well that ye take heed.” It is important that I should see what is coming and that I should not indulge myself in an easy path here below. To know that the Lord is coming to judge the habitable world ought never to be a comfort to those who are swimming with its current. But there is something else that may well be the delight of the soul — day-dawning and the day-star arising in the heart. Peter does not here speak of the day arriving for the world, but affirms that the word of prophecy is an admirable lamp until you get heavenly light, and the day-star arises in your heart. It is the heart awakening to better hopes than Israel’s, and of Christ Himself coming for us as its own proper portion. How many still as then, and naturally most of all among Jewish Christians, do not rise above a hope, formed by Old Testament prophecy, which is true and important, but not the heavenly hope given to us? This is never presented in scripture as a bare prophetic event. Christ

waited for and known as One who may come at any time to gather us together to Himself — such is the form taken by our blessed hope. It is the apostle Paul who, while fully presenting the appearing and the kingdom, specially brings out the hope of the church. John too looks at Christ as the Bridegroom, at what He is for the heart, after he has closed the general testimony of the Revelation to His judicial dealings and government.

When the Lord comes to receive us, He is not said to come “with the clouds.” When He ascended, a cloud received Him. Even so will it be with us: we shall be caught up together in clouds to meet Him. But here He is manifested for judgment of the world, and especially of the Jews. “Behold, he cometh with the clouds.” This is a revelation known and testified by the heavenly saints, who cannot but love His appearing as that which will break the yoke of evil for the world, and secure God’s glory and blessing to all creation here below; but it is not their own peculiar joy in communion. “Even so, Amen.”

In Colossians the association of the saints with Christ is very fully brought out in Colossians 2, 3. He is my life, and I am identified with Him. Thus, inasmuch as Christ my Saviour is dead to the world, with Him I also have died to the world. Hence not only is my treasure there, but the very religion of the world is judged, because Christ was cast out by the world’s religion. And when He our life shall be manifested, then shall we too be manifested with Him in glory. So here, when He comes with the clouds, every eye shall see Him. But this will not be the case when He comes to gather His own to Himself on high. (2 Thess. 2: l.) God is gathering the friends of Christ round the name of Christ now. The

church is a body that is called while Christ is not seen, and the Christian, having his portion in Him now, is hidden with Him. “Your life is hid with Christ, in God.” Next we are caught up to meet Him. After that (how lone, after we may seek to learn) God brings us with Him at His revelation from heaven. Not now chosen witnesses, but “every eye” shall see Him then, and especially the Jews, characterized as having pierced Him (compare Zech. 12:10 with John 19:37), and all the tribes of the earth shall wail because of Him. The words will equally bear the sense of “the land;” in which case the clause would take in not the Jews only but the whole δωδεκάφυλον or twelve-tribed nationality of Israel. Let the reader judge which best suits the context, as well as the enumeration of the verse. It is certainly not the twelve tribes in those who pierced Him, but of Israel distinguished from the more direct guilt of Judah, unless it be still wider.

In this verse then it is not the Lord coming to meet His own and gather them to Himself in the air; but “every eye shall see him..... and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.” When the Lord comes to translate the church, it will be far otherwise. God has joined us even now by the Spirit to Christ in heaven, according to all the efficacy of His death and resurrection. As far as the spirit is concerned this is true nosy, and it will be true of the body itself when Christ comes. The resurrection of Christ calls me to live thoroughly to God, as the death of Christ makes me as truly dead in principle to the world as if I were already buried. In practice, alas! we have to own sad falling short. Still, says the apostle, “your life is hid,” etc. It is the life of Christ you have received. As long as Christ is hidden,

you are hidden also. But the time is at hand when this will no longer be the case. “When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” When Christ comes to receive the church, no eye will see Him but those for whom Christ comes. When the world sees Christ, it will be when He comes in glory, bringing His saints with Him — revealed from heaven with the angels of His power, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God (the Gentiles), and on them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (the Jews). If the world were to see Christ coming alone in glory before the church is caught up to Him, the inseparable association of which the apostle Paul made so much to the Colossians, would cease to be true. But scripture cannot be broken. The world can never see Christ, coming to receive the saints, because then they must have seen Him without them and before them; whereas the same moment of His appearing is to be the epoch of our appearing with Him. He will come for us; and we subsequently come along with Him. And this does not merely rest on a word here and there: it is the doctrine of the whole passage. The same truth is shown and confirmed by other proofs throughout the New Testament.

With Christ, by His death we are dead to the world; united to Him risen we are risen, and are therefore to have our hearts set upon heavenly things before we see them. And more than that: Christ, is not always to be hidden. He is about to be manifested; and when He is, we too shall be manifested along with Him. It is plain that Christ and the church must have been together before they are manifested to the world, if they are to appear together. In Rev. 19:11 we have this taught

beyond all doubt. “I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True..... And the armies that are in heaven followed him upon white horses, clad in fine linen, white, pure.” The horse is an emblem of aggressive power; the white horse, of this power prospering or victorious. Here it is the Lord Jesus coming in judgment, substantially the same time when He comes with the clouds. These armies that were seen in the prophetic vision following Him out of heaven, clad in fine linen, are not angels. The text says that the fine linen (βύσσινον) is the righteousnesses of saints. Now it is to be remarked that, although angels are described in Revelation 15 as being “clad in pure bright linen,” a different word (λίνον) is used. Thus the heavenly saints are those described in Revelation 19 as the armies of heaven, etc. They were in heaven therefore before the way was opened for Christ to come out in judgment; they had been caught up to meet Him before; and now they follow Him from heaven when He comes. I doubt not that angels are in His train also, as appears from other texts; but they do not seem spoken of here.

There are thus two important and different stages of the Lord’s second coming. First of all He will come to receive His people to Himself, and the church ought always to be waiting for this. In the next place He will come to judge the world, when He has already taken up the heavenly saints, and wickedness rises to its head apace. Then suddenly the heavens will open, and the Lord Jesus Christ will come and the church with Him, appearing together in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Is it asked how? Israel was not told how they were to be delivered out of Egypt. Jehovah was

going to deliver them; but He did not explain the method before it came to pass. And the Lord is going to take the church to heaven by His coming. Besides this, He will judge the wickedness of the world; but then the church will come along with Him from heaven.

Verse 8. Here, it seems to me, that we have God as such, though as always not to the exclusion of Christ,12 uttering the titles of His various but divine glory, as a sort of seal of the foregoing and an introductory basis for what follows: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, He that is, and that was, and that is to come, the Almighty.” The first (the ἄλφα and the ὦ) is evidently a name most suited to the book which so admirably closes the written communications of God. He is the God of Israel, the ever subsisting Eternal, who had sustained the fathers, and thus attests the truth, not of the solemn warning alone just given, but of all here revealed to the end of time. Assuredly all His names here announced, it would be wholesome for the saints to remember, whether for us before the trial, or for those who shall be called on to pass through it. It is to be observed however that the special revelation to the Christian is precisely what is omitted here. He does not call Himself our Father in this prophecy. This, and the reason for it, readers have too often forgotten. Our hope and prophecy differ, as heaven does from the earth.

Verse 9 is not quite correctly given in the ordinary text. “I John, your brother and companion in tribulation.” The word “also” is left out in the best copies. And what follows should be read thus: “your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience in Christ [Jesus].” The trouble, reign and patience all go together. He purposely speaks of himself, not as a

member of the body of Christ, but as their brother and companion in tribulation (perhaps because, after the church is taken away, there will still be saints on earth and our brethren, John puts himself along with them. The Holy Ghost loves us, whatever specialities of privilege may come in, as much as possible to take our place along with the saints of God at all times. The book of Revelation was written for the church, just when it was drifting into a state of ruin. In Rev. 6 we have some of these companions in tribulation; but what they say proves that they do not belong to the church. “How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood..... We find a proper Christian appeal to God in the case of Stephen — “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” The Christian is always called to suffer in the world. These Apocalyptic saints will understand that the Lord is about to judge, and they will ask Him to do so. It would be wrong now to ask this, for it is the day of grace still. Faith habitually takes its language from what God is doing, and He is dealing in race and not in judgment now. We are called to retire from the way of the world, and to attach our hearts simply to all that is glorious and heavenly, for this is the present object of Christ. The white robes given to these sufferers in Revelation 6 are an evident mark of God’s approbation. They were to rest till their brethren who should be killed as they were should be fulfilled. Judgment must then take its course.

“In the tribulation and kingdom and patience.” It will be the kingdom of Christ, in power when the tribulation and patience are all over. But now the circumstances of that kingdom involve tribulation. The kingdom of heaven as presented in the prophecy of Daniel is no mystery. It means the reign of heaven on (or over) the earth. But

Christ, instead of getting His rightful place as Messiah when He came, was rejected, and went up to heaven; and thus it is that the mysteries of the kingdom come in while He is there unseen, save to faith. Hence it is that there “lust now be suffering and endurance in the kingdom is it actually is for the Christian. When Christ appears in glory, all this will be at an end. Then will come the kingdom and power. (See Rev. 12) It is the kingdom and patience in Christ now. That word “patience,” or endurance, is to be weighed well. We have communion with Jesus in this patient expectation; we wait for what He waits. A man that is born anew now is not in the kingdom and power, but in the kingdom and patience in Christ. Hence suffering here below naturally follows. So here the apostle John was thrown into the isle of Patmos “for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus.” It was, I presume, for his faithful work as an apostle in the gospel and in the church, ministering Christ, in both. But he was inspired to speak of it in the tone of this book for reasons already suggested.

Thus the ground on which John addresses the churches is not expressly as an apostle, but as their brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience in Christ Jesus One remarkable trait which Christianity has brought out is, that God has opened to us another kingdom of an order differing from the earthly or Jewish one — a kingdom in which for the present there is tribulation, as far as our circumstances are concerned, and patient hope the corresponding and distinguishing grace; for Christ’s love has made us kings, and we shall reign with Him.

But the church has slipped out of its place of suffering and endurance; it has sought and taken the place of power in the world — the place that had belonged only to the Jews of right, and to the Gentile empires in divine sovereignty because of Israel's sins. In the presence of general failure it becomes no one to be high-minded; where there is real separation from evil, may there be humility! Wherever it is a question of ceasing to do evil, there is great need of looking to the Lord, lest one should say, "This is what I have done, and what others have not done." Say rather it is all the Lord's grace. But those Christians who desire to stand aloof from the evil around them are in evident danger of giving themselves somewhat of credit for doing something that others are not doing. In the presence of evil that we may have done and left, the effects of which we have still to judge in ourselves, it is not a time to indulge in high thoughts of ourselves.

When God executes His purposes towards the earth, His people will have fellowship with what He is doing, as of old in the land of Egypt, in the wilderness, and in Canaan. But when we look at Christianity, it is not a question of earthly purposes, but of Jesus crucified through weakness, and of power put forth to raise Him again from the dead. There will be again a most solemn dealing on God's part when Christ will judge not only the living but the dead. But for us the fire of God's wrath has fallen upon Christ; His judgment was borne in grace by His beloved Son. And now God is imprinting on the hearts of His people heavenly glory. He is forming their character by these two great facts which meet in Christ; the one is the cross, and the other is the glory into which He ascended. What God has thus done in Christ is

what He wants us to have communion with. As the Israelites had the law engraven on stones, so by the Spirit should Christ be written on our hearts and ways. The life of a creature may be lost, but what the believer has is the life of Christ; and can the life of Christ ever perish? Christ went through death in order that He might give a character of life which death could not touch. When the Lord God made man, He made him out of the dust of the field, but He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and therefore is it that the soul is immortal. Adam had this life direct from the breath of the Lord God. Sin, however, may touch it, and the second death — eternal misery in the lake of fire for soul and body. But that which Christ breathed after He rose from the dead John 20:22) was a life which death never could conquer, nor even assail more, over which nothing had a claim; and such is the life of every believer.

And yet there are those who fancy that the life of a believer may be lost! I can only say that God does not deal with those who so think according to their thoughts of Him. The life is as strong in the Arminian as in the Calvinist, because it is the life of Christ. When a man is conscious that he has gravely failed against God, he is in danger of yielding to the fear that his blessing is gone. But no; you have sinned against that life, and against Him who is the source of it; but the life itself is there still, and cannot be touched; it is eternal. Again, where a person is occupied in looking at the spiritual life within him, he will never have comfort. The proof that he is a Christian is that he has received the testimony of God’s love in Jesus.

Verse 10. “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day.” John does not merely intimate that he had the Spirit as every

Christian has, nor that he was filled with the Spirit as the Christian should be, but that he became as completely characterized by His power for the divine purpose of seeing and writing these visions, as he is for evil who is possessed of an unclean spirit. It was on the Lord's day or first day of the week. For the Lord's day" is not at all the same thing as the "day of the Lord (ἡμέρα Κυρίου)." The same expression (

κυριακός) was used with regard to the Lord's supper, because it was not a common meal, but a holy and divinely instituted memorial of the Lord. So the Lord's day is not a common day, but one specially set apart, not as a command, but as the expression of the highest privilege, for the worship of the Lord. The sabbath was the last day which Jehovah claimed out of man's week; the Lord's day is the first day of God's week, and in a sense, we may say, of His eternity. The Christian begins with the Lord's day, that this may as it were give a character to all the days of the week. In spirit the Christian is risen, and every day belongs to the Lord. Therefore is he to bring up the standard of each day that follows in the week to that blessed beginning — the Lord's day. To bring down the Lord's day to the level of another day only shows how gladly the heart drinks in anything that takes away somewhat from Christ. The man who only obeys Christ because he must do so has not the spirit of obedience at all. We are sanctified not only to the blood of sprinkling, but to the obedience of Jesus Christ — to the obedience of sons under grace, not to that of mere servants under law. The lawlessness which despises the Lord's day is hateful; but that is no reason why Christians should destroy its character by

confounding the Lord's day, the new creation-day, with the sabbath of nature or of the law.

On that day then, specially dear to the Christian, bright visions of glory passed before the prophet's eye. First, John tells us what he saw on that occasion: this is what we have in the rest of the first chapter (Rev. 1:12-20). It was the vision of the glory of Christ's person in the midst of the seven golden lampstands. "The things which are" (ver. 19) we have in Revelation 2, 3, which describe the condition of the churches at that time. The third division of the Revelation consists of "the things which shall be after these." The version "hereafter" is vague, for it might mean thousands of years after. "After these" expresses the sense of the phrase much better. It means what was about to happen immediately after "the things which are" now — i.e. after the church-condition. Those we have from Rev. 4 to the end of the book. The "things which are" continue still (in the most important application of the book). And what next? "What is about to happen after these things," when the church has ceased to subsist on earth.

Let us look a little at what the apostle saw. First of all, he hears behind him "a loud voice, as of a trumpet, saying,13 What thou seest write in a book (or roll), and send to the seven churches: unto Ephesus," etc. (ver. 11) "And I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And, being turned I saw seven "golden lamp-stands." These were evidently derived from the light of the tabernacle. Only in this case the lamp-stands were separate, so that the Lord could stand between them. They were golden, as in divine righteousness set here to give light. Such was their responsibility. But another object fixes the attention of the prophet: Christ was in

their midst as a judge. In the midst of the seven candlesticks he sees not exactly the Son of man, but "one like [the or a] Son of man." He is really God, but He is not so presented in the first instance here. From John 5 we may learn the force of this, and why it is in this instance Son of man, and not Son of God. As Son of God He is one who quickens, because He is a divine person; He quickens in communion with the Father. Thus giving life He is called the Son of God; but as Son of man He executes judgment, because God will have Him honoured in the very nature in which man outraged Him. This at once shows us the bearing of what we have in the Revelation. It is as Son of Man on the earth that Christ is here presented; and as such He is about to execute judgment upon the seven churches, as well as by and by upon the world. For thus it is He will inherit all things, though otherwise also.

The "garment down to the foot," with which He was clothed, indicates not activity of work, but rather dignified priestly judgment. "Gold," as here in the girdle, is the symbol of divine righteousness; linen is explained to be what is saintly and displayed before men. "His head and his hairs were white as white wool, as snow." Thus, besides being Son of man, and being seen in the garb and place of priestly discrimination there are the emblems too of divine glory, as appears by comparing this passage with Daniel 7. What is said of the Ancient of days by Daniel is applied to the Son of man by John,14 the Ancient of days being the eternal God. John sees here that the Son of man is Himself the Ancient of days; as indeed Daniel shows Him coming as such (7:22). The same who wrote "The Word was with God, and the Word was God," and "the Word was made flesh," beholds now

in prophetic vision the combination of humanity with the emblems they appropriated to Deity in the person of the Son of man. The head and hairs being “white as white wool, as snow,” show fulness of divine wisdom. There is no mitre as if He were acting as high priest in gracious intercession; He is judging. Still less do we see the crown or diadem. The time for His reign is not yet come. He is set down on the Father’s throne; not yet on His own.

“His eyes like a flame of fire” set forth the penetration that marked Him in judgment. “His feet like fine brass, 15 as if burned in a furnace” — they could not contract any defilement, and are unbending in judicial strength, as dealing with responsible man according to God. “His voice as the voice of many waters” expressed resistless power and majesty outside the control of men (verses 12-15). Such He is personally and relatively.

Official description follows in verse 16. “And he had in his right hand seven stars,” the emblem of the angels, or representative rulers, of the seven churches. “A sharp two-edged sword,” the word of judgment, not morally alone, but to death where needed, and this even against the apostles at the end, went out of His mouth; because in the Lord Jesus Christ to speak the word is at once to strike the blow. “He spake, and it was done.” “His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.” Supreme authority in government was His as man. Such He was officially. The churches angels were represented as “stars” only, as being of course subordinate to the Lord as instruments of heavenly light. Clearly then we have in the Lord sovereign authority, and universal in its range, as the stars are His administrative lights in the

churches, which He maintains by His power. He judges by His word those who have it or refuse it.

When John sees this wonderful vision of the Son of man, he falls at His feet as dead. But the Lord puts His right hand of sustaining power upon His servant who lay trembling, nay as dead, before Him, and says, “Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I became dead, and, behold, I am alive unto the ages of ages.”16 Here is no deprecating the more than homage of His servant, but the re-assuring him whose nature was as it were withered up before Him. He is Jehovah yet man; but if He had not died, we should not have known Him in the blessed character and energy of life that He has proved now — life more abundantly. Who then could say, “Fear not” as He? Christianity presents Christ as having passed through death, and as risen in triumph for God and His people. John is going to hear about judgments, and the wiles, power, and wrath of Satan beyond the previous experience of men; but the knowledge that the right hand of Him who was alive for evermore had been upon him, and the words of His mouth, would give him strength and courage for everything to come. And as this is the spirit in which the book was written, so it should be read.

“Behold, I am alive unto the ages of ages, and have the keys of death and of hades.” The succession of these words in the common text is a mistake. Hades follows death, and does not go before it. (Rev. 6) See also Rev. 20 where we have “death and hades” mentioned several times in their regular order. And so in the best authorities it is here. When the Lord says that He has the keys of death and of hades, He intimates that He is the absolute master of all that might threaten man

whether for the body or the soul. Satan's power in this respect is annulled; Christ has it all.

Accordingly also, in verse 19, there ought on the best authority to be read a little word which adds somewhat to the force and connection. "Write therefore what thou hast seen:" because I am risen from the dead and am alive for evermore, and the sole ruler of death and hades, write therefore. He who bade John write (verses 11, 19) was the Son of man, with the characteristics of the Ancient of days; but He was also the living victorious Lord, the security against terror and death, the strengthener of His servants in presence of glory. "Write therefore what thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which are about to be after these." Human nature might well be confounded by the sight; but He who was revealed to John characterised Himself both as God and as the man who had passed through death and destroyed Satan's title and held the power for His own. And this was to be written, this revelation of Jesus as seen of John, as well as the existing church-state, and the things which should follow (17-19).

Verse 20 explains the mystery of the stars and lamp-stands, as already indicated. It is the connecting link between the vision of Christ and the judgment of the church, or house of God on earth (Rev. 2, 3), as long as its existence there is recognized as the object of His government. After that it is the judgment of the world from God's throne in heaven, and Jews and Gentiles are variously dealt with, but churches never in that part of the book. All this, and the reasons for it, will appear more distinctly as we proceed.

It is plain, from Revelation 1:4, 11, and from what follows, that seven actually existing churches of provincial Asia were primarily meant. But while it is true that there were special reasons for addressing those particular churches, it does not to my own mind admit of a doubt, that they were selected with the further and larger design of presenting successive pictures of the church in general from the apostolic days to the close of its existence on earth. Hence it is that there were seven golden lamp-stands, seven being the well-known symbol of spiritual completeness. There might have been other churches as well or better known, and one of these seven had been already addressed formally by the great apostle of the Gentiles. But Ephesus is again taken up, and six other churches are associated, so as to make up a mystical and perfect sketch of the more important moral features which then existed, and which at the same time would successively be developed in the after history of the professing body upon the earth.17 Many things which might seem most important in the eyes of men and even of Christians are passed by, for the Lord sees not as man sees.

Another striking feature claims our notice and admiration. It might have seemed impossible to reconcile prophetic light, as to the successive phases the church might assume from the apostolic time as long as it is found here below, with the continual expectation of Christ. But divine wisdom solved the difficulty even here, as the same end is secured in the Gospels and Epistles. The Lord was pleased to address seven contemporaneous and actually existing assemblies; but, in dealing with existing facts, He knew how to select and shape His instruction, so as to suit the states which

should follow till He comes. What a comment on the Lord's answer to Peter's query, "Lord, what shall this man [John] do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me." In this part of the book mere literal time is excluded. It is not future but present, however protracted — "the things which are."

But it will be found, I think, that He has here given prominence to those features, whether good or bad, which should reappear, and most aptly set forth what He foresaw to be of the deepest moment for him who might have an ear to hear till He comes again. And this extensive application seems to be strongly confirmed by that clause of the threefold division in Revelation 1:19, which bears on these churches. They are characterized as "the things which are." No doubt they existed then in the time of John; but if they continued to exist, and if seeds that were then sown germinated yet more in after days, and thus imparted a graver significance to the words and warnings of our Lord, that subsisting state of the church on earth would still be fitly designated "the things which are."

Thus Ephesus is the first great sample of decline through a relaxation or abandonment of first love. But was not this the notorious fact in Christendom generally before the last apostle departed to be with the Lord? If in those days and yet more in the times much followed, there was a similar moral state, what more apt and natural than to treat the moral circumstances so as to convey the general lesson? Again, without questioning that the message to Smyrna fully applied at that time, it is easy to see that the great and repeated persecutions which broke out upon Christians from the heathen are

admirably set forth by it. So again the Balaam element would naturally come into neat distinctness, when the world patronised instead of persecuting. Then further Jezebel is an immense advance in evil; and though no doubt there was that which furnished occasion for these references at the time when the Apocalypse was given, can it be denied that the outline was filled up in a most striking way, after the throne of the world established Christianity by its edicts, and when at a later epoch still the professing church formed a guilty union with virtual heathenism and enmity to the truth of God This glance, rapid as it is, over Revelation 2, 3, will show, on the one hand, why I conceive that the Apocalyptic churches are to be viewed as having a real, if indirect, prophetic bearing upon the subsequent states of the church as they presented themselves to the Lord's all-searching judgment. On the other hand it is clear, that to have made this bearing so marked as to be apparent from the first — to have given a distinct chronological history, if one may so say — would have falsified the true posture of the church in habitually waiting for the Lord from heaven. For the Lord has nowhere else so spoken to or about the church as to keep it necessarily waiting for ages upon the earth. Of course the Lord knew that it would be so; but He revealed nothing that would interfere with the full enjoyment of the blessed hope of the Lord's return as an immediate thing. In the parables of the Gospels which set forth His return, while space is left for delay, room is left for His coming, if so it pleased God, in their lifetime whom He then addressed. And so it is here. Thou — in the seven churches the full course of the church on earth is comprised in such varying and at last concurrent phases as it seemed fit to the Lord to notice, He took care to found all on facts then present

before His divinely piercing gaze, so as to maintain the balance of truth undisturbed.

Some have taken advantage of this indistinctness to deny that these seven churches have the successive and protracted character which I have alluded to; but the evidence will appear more fully as we look at each church severally. Another consideration which ought to weigh much is, that after these two chapters (Rev. 2, 3) churches are nowhere referred to as existing longer on the earth. In the concluding remarks of the book (Rev. 22:16) the Lord says that he has sent His angel to testify these things in the churches. But throughout the entire course of the visions, and in all that is intimated of the condition of men here below, after Rev. 3 right onward, there is the most unaccountable silence as to the church on earth, if the church be really there; while nothing is more simple, if that state of things be closed. And this quite agrees with Revelation 1:19 The things which are, and the things which shall come to pass after these." After the churches are done with, and no longer seen as such upon the earth, the directly prophetic portion of the book begins to have its course.

Further it seems that the introduction of a new phase in the succession of the churches does not necessarily imply the disappearance of what had been before it. In a word, after the new condition appears, there may be still the co-existence of older ones, and each may run on in its own sphere. This appears to be distinctly true of the last four, being marked thenceforth by a distinct reference to the Lord's coming, as may be seen in Thyatira and the churches which follow.

Thus much may be said of the churches as a whole. Responsibility on earth is the question: not the privileges of the church or the saints in Christ, but the obligation of the churches to represent Him, and His estimate of their state. The lightbearers are formally under His scrutiny and judgment. Paul long before (1 Tim.) had shown the church of the living God to be the pillar and ground of the truth. Nowhere else in the world is the truth so inscribed and held up as in that house of God; but even he (2 Tim. 2) lets us see that such a privilege and responsibility would in no way preserve it from ruin; for in this his last epistle he described its condition as that of a great house with vessels not to honour only but to dishonour, from which last the godly man had to purge himself. John here sets before us the solemn fact of (not the church judging, but) the Lord morally judging the churches by His word. Alas! the church pretending to be a judge, and hence becoming a murderous false prophetess, is a part of the evil that is judged in the church at Thyatira, as we shall see in Revelation 2.

Thyatira has another distinctive mark, in that it first has the Lord's coming, not spiritually or providentially as in the message to Ephesus and Pergamos, but actually, and hence, while these may have passed away, goes down to the end, as do those states which follow — Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea, remarkable for being addressed by the Lord in characteristics either in part or wholly different from His appearance in the vision of Rev. 1, the characteristics of which last were uniformly employed in the addresses of the first three churches. And if we cannot but discern Popery in the Jezebel of Thyatira, not without the faithful remnant which in its

simplicity refused her abominations and bore up against her bloodiest policy, can we fail to see in Sardis the cold correctness of Protestantism verging toward the world, with whose doom it is threatened; in Philadelphia a testimony feeble but dependent on Christ, cleaving to His word and not denying His name, with “that blessed hope” full in view; and in Laodicea that finally nauseous state of self-complacent indifferentism which is more than ever rising up around us?

9 By Asia is meant not even Asia Minor, but that part of its western coast which constituted the Roman proconsular province. The kingdom of Pergamus had that title given to it, just as part of the Carthaginian territory was called the province of Libya or Africa. Some account for the absence of allusion to Colosse and Hierapolis by the circumstance that they were destroyed by an earthquake soon after St. Paul’s epistle to the former. If Eusebius and Tacitus refer to the same fact (for their dates differ), it seems that Laodicea, though involved in the catastrophe, was rebuilt before the reign of Domitian. But adopting the earlier date of the Roman historian (A.D. 61), how can this consist with the usual reference of the Colossian epistle to A.D. 64? May I also express my surprise that the strange notion of Theodoret, that St. Paul founded the churches of Colosse, Laodicea, and Hierapolis, should be held by any unbiassed person? I am aware of Lardner’s elaborate effort. But Col. 2, if rightly understood, includes the Colossians and Laodiceans among those who had not seen the apostle in the flesh.

10 It is a clear allusion to Exodus 19, and follows the Hebrew idiom in the true reading, not exactly kings and priests here, but “a kingdom, priests.” There is of course

this essential difference, that there it was but an offer conditional on Israel's legal obedience; here grace has given us the position, but the position itself is formulated Jewishly like all else, as the reader may have seen and may see yet more.

11 Another reading

λύσαντι, "loosed," is supported by the three best uncials A C, L few good cursives, the Syriac, some Slav. copies, and early writers. But ου might be easily merged in υ, and the idea of washing seems most in keeping with the style elsewhere. The common reading is supported by B P, the vast majority of the cursives, versions, and citations. Doctrinally the difference of sense is unimportant.

12 At the close of the book (Rev. 22:13) the Lord takes similar titles; for if He were the exalted man and is to come and to judge as such, He was much more, and no designation of the Eternal God could exceed the dignity of His person. But the words of the common text in verse 11 ("I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last and") are an interpolation there, and mar the symmetry of the context. All the best MSS., versions, etc. reject them, and require "God" in verse 8.

13 It is well known that the words in the common text here, "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, and" have no sufficient authority, and were evidently inserted by the mistake of some scribe. Admirable where God inserts them repeatedly in this book, they only mar the connection here when man added them wrongly.

14 The article is wanting in Greek — to indicate the character in which Christ was seen: "a son of man" therefore is too vague and not the sense. If the article

Lad been inserted, it would have conveyed the idea of Him as the known person whom John loved and followed on earth, rather than the character in which He appeared now.

15 The word

χαλκολβάνῳ seems compounded of

χαλκός, Copper, and laban, white — a compound of Greek and Hebrew, which has been conjectured to harmonize with the book. Compare in this chapter ναὶ ἀμήν, ver. 7; also Rev. 9:11; and perhaps elsewhere.

16 The “Amen,” though read by B and most of the cursives, seems due to the copyists making the phrase a doxology, either through unconscious habit, or designedly adding ἀμήν as a correction.

17 Every believer in the inspiration of the Apocalypse of course admits the ever-living application of the moral pictures set forth in Rev. 2, 3, as is true of the Acts in the New Testament, or of the histories in the Old Testament. But the idea that the seven churches represent all churches, or the general state and character in John’s day, appears to be mere confusion. The truth is, that each represents a distinct moral state, in which the professing body, wholly or in part, might he at some given time. In a word, that the local assemblies then exhibited the special features described is true; but they could not all characterise the then existing slate of the church in general, because they set forth different and even opposed moral conditions. If we admit then, as we must, an enlarged application, beyond that to the actual assemblies or to mere individual conduct, the natural reference is to successive phases of spiritual condition, good or bad, in the history of the Christian

profession. Perhaps the extreme partisans of the Protestant school of interpretation are not generally aware that their learned leader, Mede, thus expresses himself in his more mature “Short Observations on the Apocalypse” (Works, p. 905): — “If we consider their number being seven, which is a number of revolution of time, and therefore in this book the seals and trumpets and vials also are seven; and if we consider the choice of the Holy Ghost, in that He taketh neither all, no, nor the most famous church in the world, as Antioch, etc., and such no doubt had need of instruction, as well as those here named; — if these things be well considered, may it not seem that these seven churches, besides this literal respect, were intended to be as patterns and types of the several ages of the catholic church à principio ad finem, that so these seven churches should prophetically sample unto us a sevenfold successive temper and condition of the whole visible church, according to the several ages thereof, answering to the pattern of the seven churches here? And if this be granted, viz., that they were intended to be so many patterns of so many states of the church, succeeding in the like order the churches are named, then surely the first church (viz., the Ephesian state) must be first, and the last be the last,” etc.

Revelation 2

Ephesus.

We will now look at the first of the seven churches more particularly (verses 1-7). First., let us observe that John is told to write to the angel of the church in Ephesus. The address is no longer to “the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus.” Nor is it to the saints with the bishops and deacons, as the word was to the Philippian church. Why is this? The Lord’s ways are always full of grace; but they are righteous withal, and the church was a fallen and falling thing so that He could no longer address them in His familiar love as formerly. Thus there was departure of the most serious kind from Himself, and John is directed to address, not the church, but its angel or representative. The angels spoken of in these epistles were men, and must not be confounded with the class of spiritual beings called angels.18 The apostle John is employed by the Lord to send a message to them, and it would be contrary to all the ways of God to use man as a messenger to angels in the ordinary meaning of the word. Angels often acted between God and man, but not men between Him and angels.

But, further, there is no sufficient ground to affirm that the angel here addressed, though a man, is in such an official place necessarily as a bishop or elder.19 He might have such a charge, or he might not. “The angel” always gives the thought of representation. In the Old Testament we have the angel of Jehovah, of the covenant, etc., and in Daniel we read of angels who were identified with Israel or other powers. In the New

Testament we have the angels of the little children always beholding the face of their Father in heaven, which clearly means their representatives. So of Peter, in Acts 12, they said it was his angel. We may gather then that the angel here, though a man, is in some way or another the ideal responsible representative of an assembly. Hence, it could be said, “I will remove thy lamp-stand.” It would be extremely objectionable to make this a defined official place, as it would introduce not merely a novelty, but one that clashes with all that is elsewhere taught in scripture as to the assembly. But it will not be doubted that in assemblies we find, as a fact, a particular person whom the Lord specially links with the assembly as characterizing it: he is morally identified with it, and receives from the Lord either praise or condemnation according to the state of the assembly.

Here the angel is directly charged with the state of the assembly. The address being to him, and not to the assembly, put them as it were at, farther distance from the Lord. What a tale this tells of the dreadful condition into which the church had got! He could no longer address these assemblies immediately. He had spoken directly to the Corinthians even; for, guilty as they were, they had not so loved Him and then relaxed. But here the message is, “Thou hast left thy first love.” Yet, if the church were not faithful, He had a faithful servant at least in John; and he it is who in the first instance is addressed. And be it ever remembered that the church has never since recovered from that failure and place of comparative distance.20 The church, the house of God, is a complete ruin here below. And in ruin the first thing that becomes us is that we feel it before Him.

This in no way touches eternal salvation; but the certainty of salvation is abused when employed to lessen what is due to God. In fact there is never a real sense of sin before conversion; for if it could thus be, it would be accompanied with absolute despair. But after we have not conversion only but perfect peace, we can bear to look at our sin, and we can afford to judge it thoroughly. A holy angel does not know God as we ought to do — I do not say as we do, though that be true also. An angel enters into the wonders of God's power, "hearkening unto the voice of his word." But the depths of God come out, marvellous to say, about our sin, and in His Only-begotten, "seen of angels" indeed, but in living relationship with us.

Here the Lord presents Himself as the One "that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, that walketh in the midst of the seven golden lamp-stands" (verse 1). He speaks of Himself as having authority over all the representatives of the heavenly light, and going about among the vessels of His testimony. The representative is addressed; the assembly is none the less responsible and dealt with accordingly. He is come to investigate, to judge — not yet of course the ungodly world, but — the assembly in Ephesus. What a difference between such a sight as this, and the view we have of Him and of the church too in Ephesians 1, 2! There He is seated at God's right hand in the heavenly places, and there too God has made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Here He is walking in the midst of the candlesticks. His hand is needed; for none but He could meet the difficulties. But is it not solemn that He is so presented to that very church to which Paul had opened out the fulness of His heavenly grace, the fulness of

their own blessing in Him? But here He is obliged, as it were, to walk and vindicate His authority, not among those who know Him not, but where His love had once been well known — alas! now forgotten and dishonoured.

Observe the general character, as has been truly remarked, of this the first address throughout all its parts. Such is Christ's description; such too the sin; such the warning to the angel; and such the promise to the overcomer. The Lord's position is ecclesiastical generally, holding the seven stars and walking in the midst of the seven golden lamp-stands.

"I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men; and thou hast tried those that call themselves apostles and are not, and hast found them liars: and thou hast patience, and hast borne for my name's sake and art not wearied" (verses 2, 3).21 Thus there were many things to praise. There was patience, and this is the first if not the greatest, that Paul gives of his own apostleship. More than this, nothing is more ready to break down than patience, after it has stood many a trial. But here at Ephesus there was endurance. (Compare verses 2, 3.) Again, where there is patience, there might be the tendency to pass over evil, or at least evil men. But it was not so here. They had borne for His name's sake, but they could not bear evil persons; and they had tried those that pretended to the highest place — to be apostles, and had found them liars. And thus they had gone on and were not weary. How sweet of the Lord (in His sorrow and, if we may so say, His disappointed love) thus to begin with all that was good!

But though there was what He could praise, He had against them that they had left their first love. It is quite evident that this is nothing special, but the general spirit or principle of declension of the church at large. Indeed it is very broad: so the angels that left their first estate; so Adam; so Israel. Alas! we must add now the assembly of God, blessed and loved beyond them all. They had let slip the consciousness of the Lord's love to them, and hence the fresh energy of their own love to Him had waned. What produced love in them was their appreciation of the Lord's love.

Let me just remark that the word "somewhat," in verse 4, seems to weaken the sense. It might convey the idea that the Lord had but little against them whereas, in truth, He was exceedingly grieved. Not to feel His love, not to return it consequently, was no small failure, especially where that love had once been enjoyed. But now it was faded, and what would not follow in time? "Remember, therefore, whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works; or else I coming unto thee, and I will remove thy lamp-stand out of its place, except thou repent." Solemn announcement! Not only is an assembly liable to lose its place of holding up the holy light of God, but assured that so it must be if it depart from first love and repent not. It is a much easier thing to be zealous in doing than in repenting. But even this would not satisfy His heart, unless they got back to that first love which had produced their first works: otherwise the lamp-stand must be removed. The spring of grace is as gone.

I doubt, on grounds both external and internal, that "quickly" should be in ver. 5. For when He thus comes to judge the ways of His own people, can it be so said?

Doubtless, when He comes, whether to fight with the Nicolaitans, or to take us to Himself, it is quickly. (Rev. 2:16; Rev. 3:11; Rev. 22:7, 12, 20.) But the Lord gives space for repentance, even if it were to Jezebel; and how much more to His beloved Ephesians?

The removal of the lamp-stand does not imply that the church might not go on apparently as before; but that it lost its place as a trustworthy witness for the Lord. Here again all is general: it would suit the Christian everywhere. Nothing makes up for distance between His people (or between the soul) and Christ. And such was the case, not merely with the assembly in Ephesus, but with the church generally, I think we may say, even then. This to my mind confirms the successional aim of "the things which are." Outward testimony might go on, but that is not what the lord most values; though value it He does, as far as it is simple, genuine, and faithful. Still He cannot but prize most of all hearts devoted to Himself, the fruit of His own personal, self-sacrificing, perfect love. He has a spouse upon earth, whom He desires to see with no object but Himself, kept pure for Him from the world and its ways. God has called us for this... not only for salvation, and for a witness to Himself in godliness, though this is most true and important, but beyond all for Christ — a bride for His Son! Surely this should be our first and last and constant and dearest thought; for we are affianced to Christ. and He at least has proved the fulness and faithfulness of His love to us! But what of ours?

The effect of thus looking at Christ is that the Christian is kept in the dust, and yet always rejoicing in Him. For the sense of failure in ourselves and others would be oppressive, but that we are entitled to find our joy in

One who has never failed, and who notwithstanding loves us who have given such a feeble and faltering witness for Him. Hence if we but go to Him so known, even in sorrowful confession, He will not let us part without blessing and strength. It is due to Him to own and feel our sin; but to be occupied merely with failure never gives power: Christ. must have the glory. And assuredly He who has delivered us from the wrath to come, He who can save from hell, can keep or snatch from every ditch on earth. Only let the Christian confess his sin, cleaving to Jesus; this vindicates the name of Him who comes to his succour, and then the victory is sure.

But what a comfort and how reassuring to find that, after His censure, the Lord again speaks of what He can commend! “But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate” (verse 6). The essence of Nicolaitanism seems to have been the abuse of grace to the disregard of Christian or even moral practice. The Ephesian saints had failed in cleaving with fresh fervour to that which is good, but they had fellowship with the Lord, rejecting false pretensions, and abhorring what is evil. People often say, there is no such thing as a perfect church on earth. I would ask such what they mean by a perfect church. Will any Christian man tell me that we are not to aim at everything consistent with the holiness of God? I claim for the church just what must be allowed for every individual Christian. As there may be too many faults in the individual, so there may be in the church. But then there is this blessedness, that as there is One who dwells in the individual to guide and bless him, so the same Spirit dwells in the church, and Christ cleanses it

with the washing of water by the word. It is with the assembly as with the individual, that has both the Holy Ghost, who is the power of good, and the flesh which lusts against him. As in a man the soul may be said to pervade the whole body, animating it in every part; so does the Spirit act in the church of God. When persons maintain that unholiness way be tolerated because no man is free from sin, it is Antinomianism; and I believe it to be the very principle of the Nicolaitans. Each individual is bound to be ready to meet the Lord, having nothing left to be wound up when He comes. The Lord looks for the same thing from the assembly, because there is a divine power against evil in the church as in the saint.

Then comes the promise, with the word of admonition before it, but all general, like the danger and the threat. “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of my God” (verse 7).

As for the paradise of creation, man bid been put there anti tried by the simplest test of obedience in a single instance; but he fell. Now a new scene is opened. It is no longer the garden of Eden, but the paradise of God — “of my God,” says the Lord Jesus — not of God only, in contrast with man, but of “my God” as Jesus knew Him. Into this redemption brings us. And therein is no tree of responsibility that could bring in sorrow and death. The tree of life alone is there, which the glorified saint shall enjoy in peace. The church in Ephesus had fallen, it is true, from first love: but is anything too hard or good for the Lord? Did any feel deeply and aright the wrong that was done to His grace? If there was but one who

overcame (and overcoming must be by strong faith, not mere preservation of original blessing; it is overcoming inside the church too), to him was this promise given to comfort and cheer his soul. The Lord's (trace is just as full now. May there be no soul here who has not ears to hear: if there are any who have, may they hear and overcome!

It is all well to "hear the church" in discipline, confiding in Him who is in the midst. But when the church leaves its first love, and claims all the more loudly to be heard, taking the place of Christ or of the Spirit, pretending to teach, what then? "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches." Individual responsibility comes distinctly out now as a principle for the Christian, as in Matthew 13 for the disciple, after the proclamation in Matthew 12 of the judgment of Israel.

Smyrna.

In the message to Ephesus we have seen departure from first standing. The next state is a different one. We have the church at Smyrna in trouble; the saints of God are suffering. They may have thought the fiery trial some strange thing that had happened to them. But, on the contrary, it is more true that the Lord is grieved with a Christian when He leaves him without trouble for righteousness or for His name's sake. The Lord had Himself known tribulation to the utmost; but in Him it was only the trial of the good that was within, and the bringing out of His perfection. And poor as we are, we too may know trial apart from our evil. The Lord has two objects in view when He lays His hand upon a Christian in the way of chastening. it may come either because

there has been something wrong, or because he is in danger of it and this is little felt by him. When David was out of tribulation, he falls into a snare. When his circumstances were full of trouble, then it was that he (inspired, of course, by the Holy Ghost) poured out those sweet strains that we read with joy to this day. The desire to get out of trial is a perilous thing for the soul. The trial may be sent to show us what we really are, or, what is better, to prove what God is for us and to us: but it may be also sent to prevent us from falling into sin. The Lord in His love thus often averts the evil which He sees and we do not. I do not doubt that there is another and a deeper character of suffering, even fellowship with the sufferings of Christ, which must not be confounded with the Lord's faithful discipline, though sometimes it would seem the two things may be in a measure combined. In a certain sense all saints suffer row with Him, though all may not be called to suffer for Him.

In Smyrna the Lord appears to have been meeting the declension from first love that had set in, and in order to do this He sent tribulation. It is no uncommon case — thanks to His name, for He is good and faithful. In what capacity does He speak to them? "These things saith the first and the last, which was dead and is alive." His title, first of all, is that of a divine Person as against Satan. The Spirit claims for Jesus here, what Isaiah had before challenged for Jehovah. (Isaiah 41:4.) And what was there that could not be claimed for Him? He "which was dead and is alive." What a comfort for those who were in trial! Who is that speaks to them in their tribulation? The One who had been in the deepest of sorrow and had gone through death itself He who was the First and the

Last, and who had formed all — He was the One that had died and was alive again. And this is the very One that I have to flee to in my trial. You will see thereby what a connection there is between the quickening of the dead and the comfort of those who are in trial. (Compare 2 Cor. 1-5) Jesus was God, but He was man also. He was the suffering man, and He was the triumphant man; and as such He was able to comfort them in their tribulation. What had He not gone through Himself?

“I know [thy works and] tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich,) and the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan” (verse 9). The word “Jews” here is used symbolically It was a name given to the nation that was known as God’s people, above all others, in olden time; and these symbols were taken from the Old Testament. It seems to mean persons who, taking the place of being children of God, went back to hereditary religion. On the one hand, there was this outward trouble, which the Lord allowed for their blessing and, on the other, there were those who were insisting on Jewish principles. (Phil. 3:2.) But the Lord says, “Fear not those things which thou shalt suffer.” Do not mind what persons say, or things done against you. “Behold the devil shall cast from among you into prison, that ye may be tried.” Thus, by God’s grace, the enemy himself is used as an instrument for the good of God’s people in the persecutions which he stirs up against them. There is nothing, on the other hand, whereby Satan more effectually draws aside than through a sort of quiet, easy-going, half-and-half Christianity. God grant that His children may be preserved from having two faces or

characters — that the Christian may never be worldly with worldly people, and then put on the ways and words of a saint with his brethren.

It is no new thing for the Lord thus to allow the efforts and enmity of Satan for the blessing of His saints. In the case of Job we see the same thing: indeed the Lord probed his servant there far mere deeply. At each successive trial from Satan Job retained his integrity, and blessed the Lord, but the Lord showed Job himself — the very thing he needed for the full blessedness of turning away from self to the Lord. Then He showed him God, and Job's comfort at last was as deep as his self-abasement.

Job had no idea that he thought too much of himself; but this was just what God had to show him he did. He loved to recall the time when the fruits of godliness in him drew forth the respect and esteem of men. But God showed him how evil a thing it is to be occupied with the effects of grace in himself or on others. What the enemy of God and man could not do, Job's friends did. He could stand against the temptations of Satan, but he was provoked to folly by his friends coming to condole with him, and giving their misdirected opinions. When a person talks much about grace, not a little unjudged self is apt to be found there, we may be sure. Even Job had to be put in the furnace to find out that there was a great deal more besides grace in him. But though Satan might tempt without success, and his friends only provoke, when the Lord Himself comes in, then Job is soon thoroughly humbled. He sees himself in the light of the presence of God, and exclaims, "Mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." but the end of the Lord is as good at least as His

beginning. He is ever pitiful, and of tender mercy. When Job thinks nothing of himself in the presence of God, the true stream of grace flows out, and he prays for his friends. “And the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends.”

The case of Smyrna follows that of Ephesus. As already hinted, I should apply the church of Smyrna to the time when the church was called to pass through the tribulation that followed the era of the apostles — the persecutions that were inflicted on the Christians by the Roman emperors. But it is good to remember that all is measured of the Lord. “Behold, the devil shall cast [some] of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days” (verse 10). The sufferings, death for Christ’s sake, etc., of the Christians, were the few bright spots and manifestations of life in the second and beginning of the third centuries.

“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life” (ver. 10). The distinction of God’s servants in glory is an important doctrine. For while it is essential to maintain that the very same grace which pardoned the thief on the cross was needed to save Paul of Tarsus, yet it would be a grand mistake to suppose that the thief will have the same reward in glory. Nevertheless we must not be afraid when the Lord says to us, “I know thy works.” For though the vessels that are to contain the blessing may not be equally large, the little cup will be as full as the big one; and filled, if I may so say, with the same materials of joy and blessing. In a glorified state there will be no such thing, of course, as a person being tried — no question of being faithful or unfaithful then. Before we get there, spiritual differences exist; and when we are there, the distinctions of Christ’s kingdom

will answer to the character and measure of service here below. though the sovereignty of God must be maintained also. (Matt. 19, 20)

There follows this suited word of comfort to the faithful in Smyrna: “He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death” (verse 11). Do not fear the first death; it is only a servant to usher you into the presence of God: the second death will not injure you. The Lord is like that tree of old which was cast into the waters of Marah. He went into the bitterest waters of death, which have thus been changed into sweetness and refreshing for its.

Pergamos.

The Lord here announces Himself to the of the church in Pergamos as One armed with all-piercing power by the word of God, the two-edged sword that judges (verse 12). In the book of Revelation the sharp sword is at the command of the Lord Jesus as the instrument of judgment,. What the sword is in the hands of man, so is the word that reveals God searching out and cutting through all obstacles. This the Lord applies in power; it decides all questions that have to do with Him. There is always a great and beautiful connection between the way or title in which He presents Himself and the state of the church which He is addressing. It was because the word was no longer that which had living energy to judge in the church, that the Lord Jesus takes care to prove that it had never lost its power in His hands. As the first church shows us declension set in, even in the days of the apostle John, and Smyrna the time of persecution from the heathen, so here we have a totally different state of things. Pergamos is the scene of Satan’s flattering power or seduction, which was just

what he used after the violence of persecution had spent itself. It was a more dangerous device than the second; for when set on anything that is wrong, there is nothing that more shows a case far gone and desperate than God's giving one up to his own will without further remonstrance. "Ephraim is joined unto idols: let him alone." In the case of Smyrna we see the clean contrary of this: the Lord was intercepting the power of Satan through persecution from without, which was used of God to hinder the growing corruption within.

Afterwards the god of this world promised Christians every worldly advantage. The emperor himself offered to become a Christian, though he put off baptism till his death-bed. There was no plainer proof how completely the church had fallen through forgetfulness of the Lord's name, than when it accepted the emperor's terms and the patronage of the world. Even those who were saved had entirely lost sight of what the church was, as not belonging to the world, but of heaven. The Roman empire was essentially the world's power. The church had been called out to be the standing witness of these two things: first of the world's ruin; and secondly of God's love. But when we see the church shaking hands with the world all is gone, and the church slips down into the mind of this age. If the world gains in some respects, the church loses in everything; and no wonder, because it is at the cost of the will and glory of Christ.

Satan's "throne" is the sense: in presence of it, who does not see the propriety with which the Lord presents Himself, as armed with the sharp two-edged sword? It is the same word as is used for "seat" as well as "throne" in other parts of this very book; but here it is properly a "throne," because Satan is spoken of in respect of

authority. It is obvious that all this exactly describes the state of things in Constantine's time. Instead of being at the stake and suffering for Christ's sake, the church was now yoked with the world in a mere profession of Christianity; for as the world did not really rise to Christ. the church must sink to the world's level. No wonder the Lord says thereon, "Thou dwellest where Satan's throne is." Yet He allows all that He can, even where this miserable association was found — His assembly dwelling where Satan's throne was. They maintained still His name, and did not deny the faith which was given to the saints; but this was all. They held fast His personal glory, and did not deny that which was revealed of Him because of flesh and blood. They believed of Him what eye had not seen — His Deity. Against this Satan's wiles were directed, as of late he had sought to destroy those who confessed the truth. They had just come out of the great persecution in which Antipas was slain. But now the church at Pergamos, instead of suffering, was dwelling quietly in the world. Like Lot, they too had their righteous souls vexed with the ungodliness of those around.

The Lord accordingly brings forward the things of which He had to warn them. "Thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam" (verse 14). What was the leading feature we see in the son of Beor? He was led by his covetousness to try and serve the bad king of Moab by cursing the people of God. When God gave him an answer, he goes to God a second time, because his heart wanted its own way. And it is solemn to learn that if God gives you up you may get what you want. Balaam afterwards falls into even worse evil. He was indeed a man whose heart was not with God. He said some true

things, but his spirit was not in them He always speaks as it were from without, as a miserable man, afar from the blessing which he saw. “I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh,” etc. He goes on step by step, until he lends himself to be the corrupter through the world even of God’s chosen people.

And so it was with the church. Even the philosophers began to take up Christian truth, and in the writings of the fathers we find pretty much what we have here. What fornication is in moral things, such was their illicit commerce with the world in the things of God. There were, I doubt not, witnesses who were made very little account of, save in heaven; but one of the men who had the largest and most lasting influence of all, Augustine, was a true saint of God, and, though it may not mean much, the greatest light of the western church. He had held the name of Christ and had not denied his faith. All agree that these epistles applied primarily to the churches to which John wrote; but many do not see that they also apply to different stages of the church, and describe its various states successively.

The doctrine of the Nicolaitans22 seems an evil from within, as that of Balaam was rather from without. Such it was in principle and doctrine now. We read of their deeds in Ephesus, but this went farther and deeper. It was a corruption of grace, a turning it to licentiousness. Sanctity is the greatest snare if it be not real, yea, if it flows not from the truth; yet nothing more terrible than that grace, where it is known or at least talked of, should be abused. If we search our own hearts and ways, we shall find that it is the very thing we all tend to do. Grace has set us completely free through Him who died and rose again; and what claim has it not on our

hearts? Do we not often treat God's grace to us in the very same way that our children in their most hardened mood treat us? They then take all as a matter of right. Though creation has been brought under subjection to vanity on account of Adam's sin, yet there is no moral evil connected with its lower forms. But in man's case it is not so. Knowing the evil, he yet goes on in it. And even when we have got the certainty of deliverance, if the joy of it have passed away in a measure, we begin to use the Lord's grace just to serve ourselves. This, carried out without conscience, is Nicolaitanism.

God's grace was meant to bind us thoroughly to Himself. We might see a person fall into evil (and this, of course, is truly sorrowful in a Christian), but there is a great deal more of evil that others do not see. God gives us the opportunity of judging ourselves when no one else perhaps knows anything about it If we do not judge it, then the end here below is, that the very world may pronounce on it; and we may be sure what a vast amount of evil must have gone on in secret, when God allows one to fall so that the careless world judges one's course as evil. But we must not be discouraged. It is just where the truth is most preached and held that Satan will invariably try to bring in the worst conduct and heresies, in order to bring shame upon the testimony of God. When a man slips from a pinnacle or height, he must have a fall so much the more terrible; as also it will be much more manifest to the world than if he had merely upset on the plain.

The Lord does not say, "I will fight against thee with the sword of my mouth," but "against them" (ver. 16). The sword of judgment may, it is true, act in taking them away by death, as in the else of the Corinthian saints,

who were judged of the Lord here below that they might not afterwards be condemned with the world. Christian discipline does not mean putting away those who are not Christians from those who are; rather it contemplates the purging out of Christians who are walking wrongly, in order to maintain the honour and holiness of the Lord in their midst. Mercy is the great motive of discipline, next to the maintaining of Christ's character in the church. It is at the bottom of the Lord's ways with us, and surely it should be so for its with others.

The fact of the church's getting into the world isolated at once the faithful Christian. The church only became invisible sin. It was not God's intention, it is not according to His heart, that it should ever be so, though I believe that all was permitted and ordered wisely. God did not make a light to be hid, but to be set on its due stand. Such was the fact now: Catholicism reigned, if you take the protracted view, which soon paved the way for Popery. But if the word penetrated him who had an ear to hear, it gave secret fellowship with Christ when the public position had become settledly false. Hence to a true-hearted saint, amid all this ruin and confusion, He says, "I will give to eat of the hidden manna" (verse 17). The manna represents Christ Himself as He came down from heaven and took a place of abasement in the world. Those who were slipping away into the world are reminded of the place which Christ took down here. The "hidden manna" refers to the use which was made of the manna for the ark: a certain portion of it was taken into the holy place as a memorial before God. The faithful are to eat not of the manna only, but of the hidden manna.

It is not merely that we shall share in and enjoy with Christ all His glory as exalted on high and as displayed before the world, but God will give us special communion with Christ as He was here below. How sweet in glory it will be, that He who will have brought us into all the enjoyment and peace of heaven is the same One we have known in all His path of sorrow and rejection in this world, with whom we have shared it ever so feebly here, feeding on Him as our portion even now! The white stone was a mark of entire acquittal. May we be thus looking forward to Christ; and may God give us to taste His own delight in His Son as He was here below in His outcast position! Along with this goes the white stone, the portion of souls faithful to Christ in a state of things like that of Pergamos, when the church and the world were enjoying themselves together. When in heaven such will enjoy the same food that sustained them here. Christ will be there more than ever to enjoy on high; and such shall have the white stone, “and on the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth save he that receiveth it” (i.e., the expression of Christ’s own secret satisfaction in the way in which you have suffered for Him and served Him below). Assuredly the heart will most prize what Christ will give between Himself and it alone — what none will know but ourselves and Himself. The Lord grant that we may be separate from every allurement which Satan offers through the world, although none should know all but Himself now. Even in glory the joy of His secret approval will not be lost but known more profoundly than ever.

Change In The Structure Of The Apocalyptic Epistles.

There is an important change of arrangement that occurs in this chapter, beginning with the epistle to Thyatira. In the first three churches the warning word ("He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches") comes before the promise; but all the four concluding churches have the promise before the call to hear. These at least will be found to be the representatives of states of the church which go down to the end.

Now there must be a reason for such a change — a sufficient reason why the Holy Ghost should uniformly adopt one arrangement in the three earlier epistles, and as uniformly depart from this and adopt another arrangement in the four last. There is nothing haphazard in the word. As everything He has done in His dealings with man, as all that He has made even in creation has its purpose impressed by Him, so is it much more with that word which develops His ways and displays His moral glory. And this is of vast practical moment to us. For remember the secret of strength is in a Spirit-taught knowledge of God and His ways in Christ. To enter into and enjoy the thoughts and feelings of God, as manifested in what He does and says in His own revelation of Himself, is that which wins and keeps, purifies and strengthens the heart of the believer. Israel did not understand His ways, and therefore never knowing His heart, they erred in their own; as it is said, "they do always err in their heart, for they have not known my ways." Moses, on the other hand, did appreciate the heart of God, and accordingly of him it is

written, that “the Lord made known His ways unto Moses.”

In the first three churches, then, the call to hear is addressed formally to the whole assembly concerned; but in the last four the change of situation appears to mark greater reserve. It seems to be intimated by this, that none is expected to hear but he who overcomes. Therefore this class is thenceforth, in a manner, singled out from the rest.23 Evil has now set in over the professing body; so that the promise is not, and could no longer be, held out in the old indiscriminate way. From this distinction we gather a remnant begins to be more and more clearly indicated.

Something analogous to this appears elsewhere. Thus in the seven parables of Matt. 13 the last three were unquestionably marked off from their predecessors, and were addressed to a higher degree of spirituality. The first four were uttered outside to the multitude, the last three to the disciples only within the house. Wherever we find in the Bible a series of parables, prophetic visions, or the like, grouped together as these are, there is commonly, not to say invariably, some such line drawn between those which commence with a general bearing and those which become more special and narrow as we approach the goal. This is strikingly true of these Apocalyptic epistles, the last four of which sever the overcomer from the unfaithful surrounding mass. In short the formation of a faithful remnant, who were at first, I suppose, only morally separate from the mass which bore the Lord’s name (now alas! untruly), becomes increasingly distinct. In the case of Thyatira the Spirit of God seems to make the principle plain and patent, as will appear presently.

Thyatira.

The Lord Jesus introduces Himself here in His character of Son of God, followed by a description borrowed in the main from the vision which the apostle had seen in Rev. 1. “And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, These things saith the Son of God that hath his eyes as a flame of fire, and his feet [are] like fine brass” (verse 18).

If we trace what the scriptures say of the Lord Jesus viewed thus, two things more particularly are seen. As Son of God, He is the source and sovereign giver of life. (John 5) The life which we by faith derive (“for he that believeth hath everlasting life”) from the Lord Jesus Christ is life, in such power, that even the bodies of such as possess it in Him will rise from the graves to a life-resurrection; while others who have it not must rise to a judgment-resurrection. (John 5:28, 29.) In the resurrection of judgment none can be saved. No Christian will appear before the judgment-seat of Christ as a criminal to be tried. All Christians will appear before it (as must all men); but the result before the world will be, in spite of loss of reward in certain cases, their glorious manifestation as justified men. But if you or I had to appear to see whether we were righteous, and so could escape condemnation, could there be one ray of hope for us? Notwithstanding there never can be, or at least there never ought to be, a doubt as to the absolute salvation of those who have life in and from the Son of God. The judgment-seat of Christ will clearly display them as justified persons. But we need not and should not wait for the judgment-seat to know that we are justified; we are dishonouring God’s grace and His Son’s work not to know it now, “whereof the Holy Ghost

also is a witness to us." Faith is entitled by divine warrant to a full justification now and here below, according to the worth and acceptance of the Lord Jesus in God's sight.

And this leads us to the second of the privileges alluded to, as connected with the "Son of God." He gives liberty as well as life. "If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." (John 8:36.) These are the two great aspects of blessing which characterise Jesus as the Son of God. He imparts not only life but liberty too. Not that they have always or necessarily gone together. For a man might have spiritual life and yet be in grievous bondage, as one observes too often. This is also what we read of in Rom. 7. A person who is converted has life, but may be withal the most miserable of men is re his own experience. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" In Rom. 8 we have the answer of grace. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free [or delivered me] from the law of sin and death." Liberty now goes with the life of the Son of God, for He is the risen Lord who died for me and discharged me from all the claims of law, and of every other thing or one which might else arrest my blessing The servant does not abide ever in the house, he might have notice to quit; but there is no such thing as the son's leaving the house. And it is thus as sons God puts us in His house, in the place of full and holy liberty.

What a searching but blessed title this was for the Lord Jesus to take, especially if He were not only providing for the then need of the assembly in Thyatira, but picturing besides that state of departure from truth, and even the depths of Satan, which characterized the

middle ages! In Ephesus, when almost all the apostles had disappeared from the world, there was decay of first love; in Smyrna, persecution from the heathen powers; then in Pergamos, the allusion is plain to the era when Christianity gained the ascendant in the world, and when consequently the church consummated and sealed the loss of her sacred and heavenly separateness upon the earth. The power of the world never gained a greater victory than when it was externally vanquished by the cross; when, by merely professing Christ's name in baptism, all the Roman world was treated as born of God; in short, when apparently heathenism, but really Christianity, succumbed before the rising still of Christendom. In many respects it may have been a mercy for mankind, as it certainly was the greatest event in the government of the world since the flood; but who can estimate the loss for the saints, and the dishonour of their Lord, when the Christian body exchanged their place of suffering now in grace, hoping for glory with Christ at His coming, for present authority in, yea over, the world? In Thyatira we arrive at a period darker still — the natural consequences of those pleasures of sin for a season. When the empire professed the cross and arrayed it with gold, it was not only that God's children were favoured and caressed, instead of having to wander in sheep-skins and goat-skins, or to hide in dens and caves of the earth, but inevitably their enemies were attracted, and the Balaam-state became developed, and man ran greedily after error for reward. But the Jezebel-state is worse even than that, and most significant of the bloody and idolatrous prophetess who sought to be universal mistress in the so-called dark ages, and dark indeed

they were! Of this I believe the church in Thyatira to be the remarkable foreshadowing.

But the Lord loves to praise what He can, and it is in a dreary time that He is glad to be able to approve of the least good. Here in the growing darkness of the public state, there was growing devotedness among the real saints. “I know thy works, and love, and faith, and service,24 and thy patience, and thy last works [to be] more than the first” (verse 19). “And thy works” ought to be left out, and the clause following should be, “and thy last works,” etc., on ample authority. This the sense, I think, fully confirms to a spiritual mind. “But I have against thee that thou sufferest the woman [or, thy wife] Jezebel that calleth herself a prophetess; and she teacheth and deceiveth my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols.” Thus there was much energy and devoted service; but withal the greatest evil threatened them or even then was at work.

When Jezebel sat as a queen in Israel all was ruin and confusion; but the Lord did not fail to raise up a suited witness for Himself It was then that we find an Elijah and an Elisha, and even another where naturally one might least expect it — in the very house where evil was paramount. There was he who gave refuge and food to the persecuted prophets of the Lord. Just as in the New Testament we hear of saints chiefly to be saluted who were of Caesar’s household, so of old there was in Obadiah, who feared the Lord greatly, over the house of Ahab, “which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.” It was then too was found the remnant of 7000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal. I think the Lord would have

said of that remnant what we have in the epistle to Thyatira — “Thy last works more than the first.” The wickedness of those who surrounded them made their faithfulness more precious to the Lord; and He praises them more, perhaps we may add, than if they had lived in a day less trying; just as, on the other Lane], He cannot but deal most sternly with evil, which is done in a day of special light and mercy. How many Ananiases and Sapphiras have there been since Pentecostal times, who have not been visited in the same open and unsparing way as when great grace was upon all! This is an encouragement to us who know ourselves to be exposed, not indeed to a storm of persecution, but to a season far more perilous. There never was a time when man thought better of himself; and this is so much the graver sin, inasmuch as the testimony of God’s truth to the contrary has been widely spread abroad. I do not deny that it is a day of no small effort anion, Christians. But “to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams;” and never has there been less subjection to the will of God than at this moment. There is much association, which sounds well, — much taking counsel together; but confederacy is one thing, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit is another and widely different thing. But the Lord says, “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.” The matter of real weight is not getting Christians together, even if they were all Christians, but together in the Lord’s way, and for the Lord’s glory as their object — the “one thing” they have to do. If but two or three are thus gathered unto His name, we have his own assurance that His power and blessing will be there, spite of all appearances to the contrary. Had we two or three thousand together, but

not in immediate subjection to the Lord Jesus, we should have only shame and sorrow in the end, however it might look for awhile. If we are seeking to please men, so far we cannot be the servants of Christ.

It was then, it seems to me, when the Lord has before His eye the state of a church which might well prefigure the dark development of an after-day (when the saints should be in great bondage, and that which was altogether alien in the midst persecuting them, and His own authority null in practice), that He brings out His title of “Son of God,” whose eyes were as a flame of fire, and His feet like burnished brass. Peter of old had confessed Him to be the Christ, the Son of the living God; and thereon the Lord, immediately after pronouncing him blessed and emphatically naming him by the new name He had given, adds, “upon this rock I will build my church.” Now alas! the Lord anticipates that the professing church would lose its balance and set itself up virtually in His own place, giving out that she, the lady, “that calleth herself a prophetess,” was to be heard in matters of faith, not He, the Lord. Here then we have the assertion of His personal glory and the attributes of His all-searching and unbending judgment of men — a serious but comforting thought for His own people, who might be in the midst of this sad confusion, and the perfect provision of His wisdom to deliver them from what was setting or set in. They would need and enjoy the immutable foundation, the Son of God, and the assurance that His church built on that rock could not fail, when public appearances were against it as against Himself in Israel. They were worse than nothing in the eyes of their persecutors; they were precious in Christ. It was a severer trial than from Jews or heathens; but

the Son of God was no heedless spectator of all. So too His promise (26, 27) ought to guard them from seeking a present kingdom, a so-called spiritual millennium without Christ, where they should be either free to enjoy the world or entitled to govern it as yet.

In the church at Thyatira there were faithful and loving souls, earnest too, especially in good works; but there was this plague-spot also — the sufferance of "the woman25 Jezebel." Jezebel, as we are told here, was a false prophetess, who was teaching and deceiving Christ's servants to commit fornication and eat idolatrous sacrifices. This was worse than the iniquity of him who loved the wages of unrighteousness, a step farther even in Balaam's line. "And I gave her space to repent, and she is not willing to repent of her fornication. Behold, I cast her into a bed, and those that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of her works. And I will kill her children with death, and all the churches will know that I am he that searcheth the reins and hearts, and I will give to you, each one, according to your works" (verses 21-23).

What could be more shocking than the evil here foreshown! Jezebel, as all knew, was one who added violence to corruption, the counsellor of blood, the active hater of all God's witnesses, the patroness in private and public of the idolatrous priests and prophets of Baal. And now in Thyatira was found that which intimated to the Lord's eye the dark and cruel idolatry which was to be formally taught and imposed by a pretended infallible authority within the bosom of the professing church. Even now the actual germ could not be hid from Him whose eyes were as a flame of fire. Jezebel was there and "her children" too. It was a deep

and lasting source of evil. But the judgment of her and of all that sprang from her was severe, however it might seem to linger. The Lord discerns different degrees of connection; but none should go unpunished, let Christendom decide as they might that evil must be allowed under His adored name. Repentance was absolutely refused, though the Lord had given ample space for it. “Fornication” (for such is the figure used) was both taught and practised. Long patience on His part is the sure sign, both that the object to be judged was in a thoroughly evil condition (else He comes quickly in the jealous care of true love that counts on a true answer), and that when the judgment comes, it must be definitive and unsparing. “The woman,” it has been long-remarked, symbolizes the general state, as “the man” has the place of responsible activity.

The words “a few things,” in verse 20, must disappear. It was not a little complaint, but one of unusual gravity and communication. The phrase crept in, I conceive, from verse 14, as there is otherwise resemblance enough to suggest such an assimilation to a copyist. But on a closer inspection the difference, as we have seen, is great, especially if we are to read “thy wife26 Jezebel.” The sin of fornication or adultery here is symbolical of that wicked commerce with the world, which is in the same relation to the Christian or the church, as intermarriage with a Canaanite would have been to an Israelite. To eat idol-sacrifices sets forth communion with what had a direct link with the power of Satan; for “the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to devils, and not to God;” and it is an easy thing, little as men may think it or Christians may estimate aright its enormity, to have fellowship with devils.

Besides the leading corruptress and fountain-head of the mischief, we have two classes of persons mentioned who were guilty in a positive way. There were Christ's servants whom she deceived to illicit commerce with the world, and there were others who were the immediate offspring of Jezebel, "her children." With each one the Lord would deal according to his works. He was the righteous Judge, and man as such must be judged, and all, saints or sinners, must be manifested before His judgment-seat. Yet it is remarkable how the Lord avoids saying that the saints will be judged. "I will give," says He, to you, to each according to your works;" and so in Revelation 22:12, and many similar scriptures. On the one hand we are positively told that the believer shall not come into judgment (for John 5:24 means "judgment" and not "condemnation," however certainly this is the result of it). On the other hand we know from Rev. 20:12, 13, that the wicked are to stand before the throne, and to be judged, each one according to their works. Their resurrection is one of judgment (and in effect, of condemnation) contrasted with that of the righteous, which is a life-resurrection. Thus it is certain, that if put on my trial for salvation or perdition, according as my works deserve, I must be lost, for I have sinned and have sin; yet is it equally sure that the Lord is not unrighteous to forget the work and labour of love, and so He will give to each one according to his works. Christ Himself, Christ's love, is the only right motive for a Christian in anything; but there are rewards for those who have suffered for Christ and been cast out for righteousness' or for His name's sake.

The remnant comes out with great clearness in the next verse. "But to you I say, the rest (or "remnant;" omitting

the words “and unto,” which have no right to be here) in Thyatira” (verse 24). Here we have a faithful few, who are called “the rest,” distinguished from the mass in Thyatira. The Lord had been speaking of His servants who had been seduced to dally with the evil of Jezebel, and of her own children, for which last class there was to be no mercy from Him. Then another class is addressed, the remnant, or “you that remain.” The corrupt exterior body goes on, and there is a remnant that the Lord now hid specially in view. He supposes them to be ignorant of what Christendom then counted knowledge, and only says, “as many as have not this doctrine, who such as) have not known the depths of Satan (as they speak), I put upon you no other burden: but that which ye have hold fast till I come” (verses 24, 25). These “depths of Satan” they had not known. They valued no knowledge which undermined the call to holiness. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and this beginning at least they cherished; and they were right. It might seem but insignificant; but they had kept clear of a great evil, and holding their little fast, they would surely have their reward when the Lord comes. There were those who suffered much for Christ, who witnessed for Him in these dark ages. Such were (if not the Albigenses) the Waldenses and others. “You, the rest in Thyatira,” I take to refer to these persecuted companies, who held tenaciously what they had from God, mainly practical piety and religious ways. They did not know much, but they were a remnant separated in conscience and suffering from the evil around them, especially from Jezebel. Their comfort lies in no promise of amendment to the church, but in a hope outside all on earth, even the kingdom and coming of Christ in person.

Meanwhile they are called to overcome and keep Christ's works unto the end.

There could not be a more admirable sketch in a few words than what we have here. And it is not a little remarkable that the book of the Revelation was much prized by these saints. Indeed this has always been more or less the case in times of persecution: not that it is the best motive; for the book is valued most when the Lord leads His people to wait for His return. But His tenderness to His sufferers in a dark day is most sweet; and what a promise! — "And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth my works until the end, I will give him authority over the nations," etc. (verses 26, 27). What the mediaeval church arrogantly and wickedly sought, the saints then persecuted or despised are yet to possess in the coming and kingdom of their Lord, and these hopes accordingly are here brought in as their suited objects. The guilty church was not more cruel towards the true saints than ambitious of power over the world. Things ecclesiastical had got to their grossest point. But it is good to wait for the Lord's way and time: He is the same yesterday, today, and for ever. When the earthly power has been put aside and judged, those who have suffered with Christ shall reign with Him. But He adds more than authority over the nations, and ruling them with a rod of iron.... as Christ also received of His Father. "And I will give him the morning star" (verse 28). Is not this blessed? not merely association with Christ in the day of His power, when the stronghold of men shall be broken to shivers like the vessels of a potter, but "gathering together unto Him" before that day. The hope abides in all its fulness, and as fresh as at the first. Christ only could so speak and act.

The sun, when it rises, summons man to his busy toil, but the morning-star shines for those only who sleep not as do others — for those who watch as children of light and of the day. We shall be with Christ doubtless when the day of glory dawns upon the world; but the morning-star is before the day, and Christ not only says, I am.... the bright and morning star," but "I will give the morning-star." He will come and receive His heavenly ones before they appear with Him in glory. May we be true to Him in the refusal of present ease, and honour, and power! May we follow Him, taking up our cross and denying ourselves daily! He will not forget us in His day, and He will give us ere it comes the morning star.

I would here add, in closing this sketch of Rev. 2, that Thyatira has a sort of transitional place, being linked with the three preceding churches as on church-ground, whatever the corruption allowed which characterized its public state. On the other hand, it is connected with the three churches which follow on the ground of truth or testimony (not regularly ecclesiastical), both as being the first of those marked by the change of position in the call to hear, and as also expressly running down to the end. The others were transient phases. This begins the more permanent states in view of the Lord's advent. It may be noticed accordingly that the dealing after Thyatira, when threatened, falls on the angel: up to this it had been either on the candlestick, as in Ephesus, or on the evil-doers, as in Pergamos and Thyatira. Smyrna and Philadelphia have a special exemption, one in each of the two series. To the angel of the church in Sardis the word is, "I will come on thee as a thief;" when similar language was used in a former case, Christ said, "I will fight against them," etc.; "I will cast her" and "I

will kill her children," etc. In the latter series it is a question of a separated witness in Christendom, where fidelity is everything, as with the disciples in the Gospels. Judgment must fall on the whole, though not without distinguishing the true-hearted. In this new part (with a slight exception in Sardis, which is necessary and only proves the rule) the titles of Christ are distinct from those seen in the opening vision of Rev. 1, and point to His future reign. This is seen with special emphasis in Laodicea, so that "the things that are" may vanish away thenceforth, as in fact they do.

18 Origen and Andreas adopted the latter meaning, but Epiphanius and others expressly reject it. Many moderns suppose that the term is derived from the synagogue and that it answers to the שליח צי בור and חזן הכנסח. But if this be so, the angel of the church cannot mean even a presbyter, much less the president or chief of the presbyters, as Vitringa argues, but rather what is called clerk or sexton. The New Testament term for this chazan or angel of the synagogue seems to be ὑπηρέτης, who had the care of the books, etc. (Luke 4:20.) The ruler, or ἀρχισυνάγωγος, was quite distinct; and of these there were several. (Acts 13:15.) Compare Lightfoot. (Opp. ii. pp. 279, 310.) Some on the other hand supposed that envoys may have been sent from the churches in Asia to John, that hence they were called ἄγγελοι ἐκκλησιῶν (as John's disciples sent to the Lord were, Luke 7:24; others sent by the Lord Himself while here below, Luke 9:52, and the spies sent by Joshua, James 2:25), and that the Lord accordingly so addresses them in the messages which He commands to be written to the churches. But I prefer the idea of representatives, as most in keeping with the prophecy as a whole.

19 We know from Acts 20:17, 28, that in the church at Ephesus elders or bishops were duly appointed, as was usual at any rate in assemblies at all mature where an apostle or in apostolic delegate like Titus could visit them for the purpose. But we have no ground to believe that “angel” ever was an official title for a chief ruler. It is probable, however, that the misunderstanding of this very term may have suggested or confirmed the invention of episcopacy, which was at first congregational rather than diocesan. Ignatius so singularly harps on that dignitary even in the most reduced form of his few genuine epistles as to give the idea of one anxious to accredit a comparatively new institution. It is certain that scripture does not countenance it unless it be in this prophetic book of mysterious symbol — a precarious basis for a most important charge which is ignored in the scriptures devoted to questions of rule.

20 In this sense it is that we can understand how the churches, turning a deaf ear to these messages of Christ as they certainly did ere long, ceased to be recognized of God, and thus the strictly prophetic part, ἃ μέλλει γίνεσθαι μετὰ ταῦτα, a might apply in an inchoate or partial and protracted way ever since, while in a full and final sense there remains the absolute cutting off of the faithless Gentile profession, and the brief crisis of the latter when the prophetic portion is punctually carried out to the letter. This seems to be much confirmed by the mode employed to describe this abnormal ecclesiastical state, ἅ εἰσι, “the thing; which are,” which easily admit of indefinite prolongation. It is not the seven churches, nor the messages to them, but a phrase

easily applicable both to their then condition, and to the protracted state of ruin in which we are now.

21 The common text, followed by the Authorized version, is in some respects corrupted. Their toil was known, and endurance they were not only eminent for, but they had it still. They had proved intolerant of evil persons, and especially of such as falsely claimed high ecclesiastical authority, whilst they had manifested their willingness to bear wrongs or afflictions for Christ's sake, and in all this they were not weary. Such is the sense of the right readings and the true order. A few MSS. (16, 37, 38, 69), and versions drop οὐ before κεκοπίακας, perhaps to seem verbally consistent with κόπον in the verse before; but the evidence for what I have given seems overwhelming.

22 The true reading of verse 15 is "likewise," instead of "which thing I hate," which was probably copied from Rev. 2:6. The sense is, that there were such as held the Nicolaitan doctrine, as well as those who held that of Balaam.

23 It is a singular oversight that any thoughtful reader should meet the question, "To whom does the Spirit address these words?" by the answer, "To the angels of those churches," even supposing the angels to be their "bishops," which has been shown to be not only unfounded but contrary to the tone and object of the Revelation. It is a sorry thing to deduce either episcopacy or congregational ministry from a most solemn appeal to him that has ears to hear, when the church is being morally judged. The Spirit speaks to the churches, but the individual is made prominent even

here; and this, still more strikingly viewed as following the overcomer, from and after Thyatira.

24 This is the true order.

25 The Sinai and Porphyrian uncials lend their strong support to the Paris palimpsest, with many cursives and versions, against the insertion of σοῦ, as read in Codd. A. 2, and many cursives, etc., which would require the rendering of “thy wife.”

26 But see the preceding note.

Revelation 3

Sardis.

It may be assumed that any discerning reader will perceive that we are entering upon an entirely new order of things in this chapter, or, at least, a sort of fresh start. What was described in the vision of Christ walking in the midst of the candlesticks is not here as in Rev. 2, unless it be the “seven stars,” no longer, however, held in His right hand. It is quite true that what we have been looking at in the former chapter may still exist and be verified at the same time with new features as they are brought out here. Not only may there be points morally like what we have seen in Ephesus, Smyrna, or Pergamos, but a continuing public state like the evil depicted in the message to the angel of the assembly in Thyatira, which goes on to the end in a way that differs from its predecessors. We find in Sardis another condition, and one which answers to the general state of Protestantism after the Reformation. We have not so much open evil, like idolatry and the other horrors that have been described before; but now we have a more correct outward form and orthodox aspect of things. As the four churches in the second chapter follow on consecutively, and describe the state of things before the rise of Luther, etc., so Sardis describes what followed the Reformation, when the glow and fervour of truth and the first flush of blessing had passed away, and a cold formalism had set in.

The way in which the Lord presents Himself is wonderfully suitable. “These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars” (verse 1).

This is a new point of view in which to see Christ. In Revelation 1 “the seven Spirits” were distinct from His person and connected with the throne. The seven Spirits of God refer to the Holy Spirit of God, viewed in His various perfections and the ways in which He works; and this not so much in the church as towards the world. In Rev. 5, when the churches are done with, the Lord Jesus is described symbolically as a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth — the Holy Ghost as acting with a view to the government of the earth. It is not the Holy Ghost in all the fulness of the blessing into which He brought the church in its unity or dwelling there. It is the expression of the Spirit in fulness of quality and power to make good God’s will on earth.

But whatever might be the condition of the church, the Lord Jesus possesses the complete power of the Spirit of God, and at the same time fulness of spiritual authority. There were no two things more separated than these at the time of the Reformation. There was then a large body calling itself the church, which claimed the power of settling everything, as being the spouse of Christ. No wonder that the claim of infallibility was strongly advanced; for assuredly those who assume irresponsible authority as Christ’s vicar to settle the affairs of the church, to define doctrine, etc., ought to be infallible. This body had wrought for acres, gathering influence for itself; but at last the struggle came, and it was proved to be a mass of the greatest evil against God and His Son that had ever been congregated on the earth. There might have been true saints of God in it at the worst of times; and even from an early day some excellent men

had even helped to give the see of Rome a false and absurd authority. St. Bernard himself sanctioned the persecutions of the Waldenses.

But God can turn such lessons to our profit. For it is well to bear in mind that there cannot be a greater fallacy than to abide in what is wrong merely because we find true saints of God there. Indeed the great aim of Satan is to gain all by getting good people to do bad things. When at last the crisis arrived, and men rose up in a considerable part of the world against this frightful evil, there ensued a divorce between the two thoughts of ecclesiastical authority and spiritual power. Instead of its being a body that claimed both, in derogation and in spite of Christ's rights, everything ecclesiastical fell into disorder, and men fell back on the power of the world in order to gain freedom from the dominion of the Pope.

Thus Protestantism was always wrong ecclesiastically from the very beginning, because it looked up to the civil ruler as the one in whose hand ecclesiastical authority was vested; so that if the church had been under Popery the ruler of the world, the world now became in Protestantism the ruler of the church. It is not a question of church and state that politicians may discuss; which is a great deal too narrow and low a question for a Christian. There is but one thing satisfactory — to be in the path of Christ, giving honour to Him.

"I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." This describes the cold and formal ways of religion that were found after the Reformation among those that were not really Christians. The Lord Jesus shows what He disapproves of in Protestantism.

Why not be thoroughly Christians? It was a poor thing to boast of not being as bad as Jezebel; it was death if not abomination.

In Protestant lands there is ordinarily a measure of truth, as there is still more commonly liberty of conscience. But the object of God is not merely to deliver either from gross evils, or from mistake in detail, but that the soul should be right with God, and should allow the Lord to have His way and glory in the Christian assembly — liberty for the Lord to work by the Holy Ghost according to His will. When He is allowed His right place, there is the blessed fruit of it in love and holy liberty. It is not a human liberty derived from the power of the world that we want (though God forbid that we should speak a word against the powers that be in their sphere), but the liberty of the Holy Ghost. It is the sin of Christians to let the powers assume a false position in divine things. The Lord Jesus touches the root of the whole matter in the way in which He presents Himself to the church of Sardis. Whether it is spiritual power or the outward authority flowing from it, the Lord claims it all as belonging to Him. In Ephesus it was said that He held the seven stars in His night hand, and walked in the midst of the seven golden lamp-stands; but here are united the two things, inward spiritual power, and outward authority. he hath the Spirits of God and the stars. It is not said here that He holds the stars in His right hand, but only that they are His, as well as the fulness of spiritual competency; still less is He said to be walking in the midst of the lamp-stands. It is an assertion of His rights, not of their exercise.

In the great mass of Protestant churches they gave up, as it were, the regulation of the stars into the hands of the powers that be. On the other hand, the persons who revolted from that fell into the sad evil of suffering the church to have the stars in its own keeping. There is not such a doctrine in the whole scripture as either the world or the church having this kind of authority in its own hands. The Lord Jesus has still all under Himself. He has not given it up. Therefore let the church only own what He is, and He will act accordingly. When there is faith to look to Him in His place as Head of the church, He will assuredly supply every need. If He listens to the simplest cry of His lambs, does He not enter into the deep need of the church? Is it not an object near His heart and affecting His moral glory? He took His headship of the church only in heavenly glory, and He went on high not merely to be, but to act, as Head. What is the character of His functions in this respect? He exercises authority, having persons to act under Him here below. Thus the existence of rule and gift in the church of God is the result; and these are not touched by the ruin of the church. The Lord, anticipating the time when there would be a revolt from under the spurious authority of the body calling itself the church, and foreseeing all the confusion that would be the result, presents Himself as the One who is superior to it all. Whatever may be the condition of things here, strength is in Christ: and we can never find strength in looking at the condition of the church, but at Christ.

When the apostles were here below, they were empowered to act for Christ in a very special way; but when they were taken away, the real source of the power in which they had acted subordinately to Christ

was not dried up; the Lord Jesus has it all in His own keeping still. There was a name to live, but real death. He was speaking of their condition as a body, and not as individuals. “Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die: for I have not found thy works perfect [filled up] before my God.” Here we. have again a very striking feature of what took place in Protestantism. In the desire to escape from the abuse of works by the Romish system, it is evident that Christian practice lost its due place in the minds of many — its place for those who have been brought nigh to God. For God does look for a real separate and distinct path to be taken by His people; and He finds fault with Sardis because of their failure in this. The saints of God even in Thyatira were commended of God for their earnestness, in spite of all evil. Their last works27 were more than the first. Protestantism has weakened the idea of obedience, under the plea of “no perfection,” either in the church or in the individual. Thus there has been a lowering of the just criterion wherever Protestantism has prevailed: but our God looks for perfection as the standard His children should judge themselves by — I do not say attain. He has grace to meet failures; but it is quite another thing for persons to settle down in self-complacency, from not having the divine standard before their eyes. The Lord always goes back to this.

It is better, in seeking to have that standard before us, to fail in carrying it out, than to succeed ever so much, if we gave it up. For what does the Lord most value? The heart that wants to please Him. The child may come to its father and say, “See what a pretty thing I have been making;” but if the parent had told him to do something else, he would ask the child, “Is that what I desired you

to do?" The Lord has His own will, which meets us in our first need as sinners awakened, and is the source of our very salvation. But it is far from the natural thought of the heart, which dislikes subjection to another's will. It is but part of the lie of the enemy. The will of God, we know, was that which accomplished our sanctification, through Him who said, "Lo, I come to do thy will." In Rom. 10 the apostle puts our part of the matter in contrast with Jewish feeling. They thought, if they accomplished as much of the law as they could, that God was merciful and would make up the rest; but the apostle shows that subjection to the righteousness of God is salvation. God's will is the very spring. and power of our blessing, not only in the matter of forgiveness, but all the way through. Take God's ways in the church. These were subjects that were particularly neglected at the Reformation. Individual truth, such as justification by faith, was brought out forcibly and over a large field. But this was made the great point and aim of everything, and the consequence was that people never knew thoroughly they were justified. The moment one makes one's own blessing the one or chief object of research in the Bible, never can anything be known aright; but he who receives God's thoughts and objects is sure to know directly that he is saved and blessed indeed. He cannot look at the cross of Christ without seeing at the same time his utter ruin, and his complete deliverance in the resurrection. If a man hesitates whether he is so very bad as God declares, he has to wait before he enjoys the riches of His grace; but if he trust himself unhesitatingly in God's hands, there is not a blessing that does not flow abundantly. We find ourselves to be as bad or worse than Israel, and then we are brought inside a circle of

goodness and mercy superior to any thing they ever possessed.

At the Reformation all this was comparatively lost sight of; and, in escaping from the fearful net of popery, men fell into the sin of putting church power into the hands of the civil magistrate. Others again, who avoided this evil, made what they considered a true church to be the depository of this power; whereas it is Christ Himself still working by the Holy Ghost who maintains His own lordship, a truth which is taught at large in the epistles. Supposing a person labours as a pastor or a teacher, from what authority is he to act? Apostles or their envoys did choose those who had to do with local matters; yet wherever it was a question simply of ministry, in the word there was no appointment from the first. Even in the case of choosing a successor to the vacant seat of Judas, the apostles did not themselves elect, but threw it out of their own hands into those of the Lord. (Acts 1:24.) And when the Lord afterwards chose another apostle, we find “one Ananias” indeed sent to baptize him; but there was no idea of that disciple, or any one else, making him an apostle. In what we have afterwards (Acts 13), i.e. the case of hands being laid on the apostles Paul and Barnabas, it was not a bestowal of any orders or mission, for it was done by men inferior to themselves in point of spiritual gift and power; but was simply their brethren commending them to the Lord before they set out on a particular missionary tour to the Gentiles. We have a right to look for the Lord to maintain His authority in the church. In all ages we find Him helping His people in their need, and doing His work by His servants. If a person wants to preach, he naturally thinks he must have the warrant of

some authority; but if we seek an. authority at all, we should have a competent one. Although there may be more respectability in the world where these outward credentials are looked for, the question arises, Does the Lord require authority to validate a person's preaching the gospel? The apostles did appoint elders and deacons; but these might or they might not be preachers and teachers: their being deacons was another thing altogether. Philip was a preacher of the gospel, but this depended on his having a from Christ as the Head of the church, and not on his being one of "the seven." Men have slipped into habitual departure. from God's principles; and this is called "order," because it is the most prevalent custom now in the professing church. Yet when we thus give up true principles, we slip into wrong practice. The Lord attaches great importance to our owning Him as the One who has all power and authority in His own hands. The moment we recognise this it so much the more binds the conscience. If one knows a thing to be wrong, the conscience is held to it. One may not be able to see at once what is the right path to take; but to cease from what is evil is evidently the first step, and it is imperative.

The connection between the end of the second verse ("I have not found thy works perfect before God") and what follows ("Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard," etc.) is to be remarked. He recalls them to what they had received from God Himself at the first. No such thought is allowed as that because things are not as they were then, therefore every church has a right to form its own laws. If it would be downright rebellion to say, because the Queen does not live in Ireland, that therefore the Irish people were at liberty to make what

laws they pleased, it is as bad or worse if we think that because things are changed, the apostles gone, and confusion come into the church, men are left free to desert the word of Christ and do their own wills: the Lord has left us His. The very word of God which tells me what I once was, but that I am washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God, this same portion enters into all questions of the assembly, and the working of the Holy Ghost in it by whom He will. (1 Cor. 12) There may be no tongues, or gifts of miracles, and healings; but is the Holy Ghost here What He continues to do is according to the same principle and presence as at first, though in a very different measure of power: else we have no divine rule in these things.

Remark that the Lord's coming is spoken of just in the way it was threatened on the world. (See 1 Thess. 5) "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief" (verse 3). He would come upon them when they were not aware — suddenly and unwelcome. Had they not got into the world? Let them then beware of the portion of the world. If you have taken the world's ease, you must needs dread the world's judgment. Such is not the way in which the Lord speaks of His coming to the church. In reality and in all the extent of the words, it will be upon the professing mass, and not upon real believers, that the Lord will come as a thief.

"But thou hast a few names in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, he28 shall be clothed in white raiment" (verses 4, 5). The Lord brings in this suited comfort, that as some in Sardis had sought to act faithfully on earth, they should

walk with Him in white. As they had maintained real personal purity here below, they should appear in full justification of their ways before God above. But this is spoken of individually. The state of the church as a whole was beyond question worldly, and as such it should be judged.

The moment a person ascertains that his association is contrary to the word, he should feel how grave that fact is, and consider what is due to the Lord. It might seem incredible, if one did not know the fact, that there have been and are men of God, guides of the flock, who not only abide in evil which they know, but seek to find a palliative in the circumstances of a righteous Asa or a godly Jehoshaphat, who nevertheless did not remove the high places. Alas! that the solemn revelations of God should be thus perverted so as to serve the ends of the enemy, and that a repeated warning should be tortured into a justification of sin. “The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness.” It is not enough to correct thoughts, and rest there; but if the Lord has given a judgment, is it not in order that the walk may be correspondent? Satan contrives to make the path of the Lord appear dark and sad; as he colours a worldly course with the semblance of humility, order, and the like. But the word makes all plain now, as power will by and by even to the world.

May we walk with the Lord now, and surely we shall walk with Him in white hereafter! Instead of a blotted name, ours He will confess before His Father and the holy angels.

Philadelphia

The tone of the epistle to Philadelphia must, I think, confirm the idea presented as to Sardis, that in this portion (Rev. 3) we have not so much the early church, or that of the middle ages, but what is found, or is developed, in modern times, Sardis is the beginning of this: a state of things not marked by flagrant evil, but by one sad and fatal characteristic — it is negative. Any fair persons, who have thought deeply on what is called Protestantism, must know that this is the sorrowful thing which we, who have been Protestants and thus share its shame, have to acknowledge. Men stand up too much, at least too self-complacently, for certain controversial points, which hide in a great measure their own wants and failures; they pride themselves on keeping apart from certain evils, such as the supremacy of the Pope, the infallible authority of the church, the worship of the Virgin, saints, and angels, the doctrine of the mass, purgatory, etc. Supposing the most rigid orthodoxy as to these, there might be a thousand evils of another character, yet, together with outward correctness, the heart be thoroughly away from the love and honour of the Lord. This is precisely what we saw in Sardis — a name to live, but yet dead. As in Israel when the Lord was on earth, the old idolatry had passed away, the unclean spirit had left the house, and had not returned; so the swept and garnished condition of the house answers to that which followed the Reformation. But we must distinguish between that and the work which God gave the Reformers to do. Let none speak disparagingly of these men, whether Luther or others. But while God was working in that great movement. it would have been better and holier if they had left

earthly governments to their own proper functions. No doubt their patrons spared them persecutions and secured them honours, which, instead of helping on God's work, proved a great hindrance. And so, when the fervour of first zeal had passed away, the state of things corresponds with Sardis.

In Philadelphia we have something totally different. The first thing that strikes us is not what the Lord does or has, but what the Lord is Himself. If there is anything that delivers from mere dogma, with all its chilling influences, it is, I apprehend, the person of the Lord appreciated in any special way. And this is seen in the epistle to Philadelphia. The Lord here presents Himself personally more than in any other of these epistles. It is true He is said to have the key of David; but before anything appears about this, He says that He is the Holy One and the True. In the other epistles we do not find the Lord characterised in the same moral point of view. This is, in my opinion, what grace has been making good in God's children during late years. The impulse given to evangelization by the spread of Bibles and missionary efforts has marked it outwardly; but inwardly the sense of ruin has been used of the Spirit to lead the saints to the word, and hence to a fuller appreciation of the person of Christ — the only object in which we can rest through the Holy Ghost, as He was God the Father's when He walked on earth.

There is something very beautiful in the way in which the grace of the Lord operates, after the epistle to Sardis, which was in a dead worldly state. Christ made Himself known; and He is the resurrection and the life. And what can give new life, put the church in its proper attitude, or bring a remnant to the walk and sentiments

which become a time of ruin, but the Lord presenting Himself personally? This is characteristic of John's Gospel; the person of Christ in His rights, not only humbling Himself to death, but baptizing with the Holy Ghost, in the activity of gracious power which is suitable to His glory. The first portion of it brings His person before us; the second, the other Comforter, whom the absent Lord was to send down from heaven. It is beautiful thus to see the place that John's Gospel has in the scriptures of God. It was written very late, the last of all the gospels, and suited to a day of declension. There is no question of Jerusalem or of the Jews, as the immediate object of God, even in the way of testimony. They are noticed as a people outside, whom God his nothing to do with for the time. Hence the Lord speaks of the passover as a "feast of the Jews," and so on. In Matthew, on the contrary, there is the recognition of Israel for the truth of God. The boar out of the wood may waste, and the beast devour, but it is Israel's land still; and Jerusalem is called the holy city, even in connection with Christ's death and resurrection. In John all that is at an end. Not only had Jerusalem and the Jews forfeited all claim upon God, having departed from Him as Jehovah, and the law and the prophets, but they had rejected Christ; yea, and when the Holy Ghost came, they rejected Him too, and would not listen to Him any more; so that there was no resource. God had manifested Himself in every possible way. No manifestation of God, where man was under law, could do any good. Individuals laid hold of God's grace all through, but the nation was under law. The Gospel of John starts from this point, that all was darkness, and there the True Light shines though the darkness

comprehends it not. In Him was life. This ever remains true, though He may deal judicially here.

But to return to these churches: there had been declension from first love, suffering from heathen power, Satan tempting through the power of the world, Jezebel seducing to idolatry, and, in short, every kind of evil commerce with the world, with persecution, but now we find a modern state — outward cleanness, but the heart given up to itself. (See 2 Tim. 3) Sardis gives us this picture: some walking purely, but there was no such thing as the heart thoroughly subjected to the Lord. But will He be content with this? The Lord must raise up a witness for Himself; and the only way whereby He makes a person an adequate witness for Himself is by presenting Himself to the affections. The moment we see the Lord Himself, there is strength to serve Him with gladness.

Here the Lord, disgusted with the state of Sardis, comes, as it were, saying, “I want to have the heart, and must have it.” He removes the veil brought in through the sin of the professing church. When they see that Blessed One, so to speak, a little nearer, there is a state that answers (but oh how feebly!) to His desires for their heart, which will be made good without fail, when we shall see Him as He is.

“Thou hast a little strength.” It is not the way of God to produce great strength at a time of general ruin. At the era of the return from the Babylonish captivity, the Lord wrought in great grace. There was no outward power; on the contrary, they were so apparently contemptible, that it was the taunt of their enemies that a fox could jump over their wall. But we find the same sort of spirit

as in Philadelphia. They build no fortification to keep out the Samaritans; the Lord was a wall of fire round about them; but the first thing they erect is an altar to Him. The Lord was the first object of their hearts. If He was their wall, they could afford to wait before building another. There was no such thing as the angel smiting the first-born, no miracle wrought on their behalf, not a word about plagues on their enemies; but “my Spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not.” Whenever Israel were afraid of their adversaries, they had no strength; but in looking to the Lord they forgot enemies.

When we lean on Him now, it strikes more terror into the hearts of those who are against Him than anything else. When the heart is true to the Lord, it tells upon the conscience of others. What joy that the Lord’s heart is toward His people! It is this which produces proper feelings toward Him and toward one another. The very name of this church is significant of the relationship which He had established; but it is also important to remember that it is a holy relationship we bear to one another. While it is certain that those who care for one another’s heavenly interest will not be careless otherwise, still the church is not a club, where men must be ready to help on each other, right or wrong. This would be Chartism or any thing rather than the brotherhood of the Lord.

The first words are the key. “He that is holy, he that is true” (verse 7). Look at the first Epistle of John. The expression is not often used about the Lord, but we find it there. In the second chapter of that epistle, speaking to the little ones of the family of God, it is written, “Ye have an unction from the HOLY ONE, and ye know all things.” He that is Holy, He that is true, has all for them.

There might be weakness, but He has the key of David. In the genealogy of our Lord in Matthew we find the expression, David “the king,” not Solomon the king or any other; because David is the person who first characterized royalty in Israel. He was the man according to God’s own heart. As long as David walked in faith, no difficulties could stand in his way. True, the type was imperfect: no type reaches the mark, because it is not Christ, though it may be a witness of Him. We see the failure of the man; but where the power of God wrought in David what was bright, and blessed, and good, we have the germ, as it were, of that which we see fully in the Lord. “The key of David” represents administrative power, the means of access to whatever he possessed. Thus it is said (Isa. 22), “the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut,” etc. This was the consequence; he who had it had all things under his hand; and it was his business to take care of everything.

The Lord presents Himself as having the key of David. Therefore they ought not to look to the power of the world, nor to man; for if He had the key, it was the very thing they wanted. The energy of man might be at work all around, Jezebel, false prophets, etc.; but there was this Blessed One, the Holy and the True; and so much the more needed, because they were weak. They had so little strength that, perhaps, they could not even open the door; but He says that He had opened it for them; He had brought them into a large place where there was no such thing as bondage or constraint. It is plain that the Lord is here marked according to what He is personally and morally; not only as the great source of holiness and truth, but as the Holy One and the True. We

find the latter also in the first Epistle of John. “We are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ;” but there he goes farther still, “This is the true God and eternal life.” Thus then we have the Lord’s person brought before them: it was what they coveted. They valued Christ. They wished to know more of Him; and He knew their heart. So it is said, “If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.” They were tried by a mere form of godliness; they knew it was as possible to be lost or to dishonour the Lord in orthodoxy as in the world. They turn to the Lord, and He presents Himself as the Holy One and the True; not as against them, but full of tenderness and grace, putting before them an open door, and giving them the certainty that no man could shut it.

“Thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name” (ver. 8). Here we have three expressions concerning them. They are in a state not marked by outward note or strength. Like Himself, they are unknown to the world, but they had kept His word; and more than this, they had not denied His name. Consider what it is to keep Christ’s word. It is evident there had been a departure from His word. It might have been circulated; but had it been cherished? Had it been loved and sought into, as for hid treasure? Was it for this thing that men met together to pray and read — that they might understand it better? What a movement in advance for the church, where the Lord’s person becomes more than ever the object, and the word as His word! It is not mere evangelization, blessed as that is in its place, and in its effect on the world. But here it is the inner circle of the saints, who love, serve, and adore Christ for Himself.

In this epistle we also find the great value of the name of the Lord Jesus. In 1 Cor. 1 the address is not to the Corinthians alone, but “to all who in every place call upon” that name. In other words, the first Epistle to the Corinthians is in no way, more than the second, of private application, but for all Christians everywhere. In fact the generalizing address is not put so strongly in any other; and this, perhaps, because the Spirit of God foresaw that, more than any other, it would be set aside. In these days, when there is no extraordinary manifestation of power, men might say, It is not for us, it belongs to a day that is bygone. True, it is of no use to talk of regulating tongues, if you have not got them. But we have the Holy Ghost, and, blessed be God! the church will never know the day when it will be without the Holy Ghost. Look at its darkest hour — the middle ages, Romanism, etc. The Holy Ghost was always there, not indeed justifying evil, or putting His seal upon disobedience, but He was there for the certainty of faith, according to the Lord’s word, “He shall abide with you for ever.” The idea of looking for the Holy Ghost to be poured out again on us is utterly wrong. Such is the Jewish hope. For the church to make such a petition is in effect to deny that it is the church. It may be well for us to throw ourselves down before the Lord, and own that we have acted as we had it not. But let us bless God that we have the Spirit, not only dwelling in individuals, but binding us together for an habitation of God. The manifestation of this is broken, it is true, but the fact remains; just as we say of a man whose circumstances are bad, that he is a ruined man, while the man still exists. This gives us ground for humbling ourselves the more; that the church had the Spirit and yet went wrong. Men might say, If we had a Pentecost now, and

the Holy Ghost sent down again, we should go right; but the fact is that, when they had the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, they declined and fell. What God calls upon us to do is, not now to wait for fresh gifts of power, but to humble ourselves before Him, because we have gone, even as Christians, in the saddest opposition to His will. Alas! though the Holy Ghost dwelt there, one golden calf after another has been set up, till there is as much sin as was in Israel. This is what the Lord calls us to feel. The sympathies of the Philadelphian saints were with Him.

Clearly then what the Spirit presents is a despised company, but the word of Christ specially prized, and the Lord's name maintained. We have learned that the church is never bound to go on in sin. "Let him that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity." There may be moral iniquity and worldly lusts; and what is there so bad as church iniquity, except that which is against the person of Christ Himself? If a man perseveres in violating the outward order of the church, it is evil, but not to be compared with sin against the Lord Jesus personally. This is the worst evil (2 John 7), and the test of souls. The first of all duties is that the heart should be true to Christ. God looks for it. The Father will have Him honoured Himself.

Here then we see Christ bringing Himself out personally to the church, and this not with a general expression of love, but manifesting a special attachment of His heart to them. Hence it is said, "I have loved thee." The Lord loves all His people, but it is equally true that He has special affections. There may be a peculiar link between Him and saints at particular times of danger and trial. His grace removes the hindrances and makes it to be

enjoyed in its strength. They know His place in glory, but that which touches their hearts is that He loves them in all that glory. His love is the great basis and spring of their love.

“Thou hast a little strength.” He knows they are weak; but they have “kept my word and not denied my name.” See here the personal links — “my word,” and “my name.” The name of Christ apprehended by the soul is salvation; but it is much more; it is all. When the heart is brought down to submit to God’s judgment of its sin, He Himself brings before that soul Christ’s name; when it finds that it has no name in which to stand before God, He says, Here is a name, My Son’s name. Faith supposes a man giving himself up as a good-for-nothing, and saying, “God has been good to me, when I was only bad for Him.” God has laid down this name as a foundation-stone for the poor sinner. It looks weak; it is called a “stumbling-stone,” as it is to unbelief; but I ought to believe in it. if I merely look at the gospel, I am lost, because then I reason about it; but if I believe it, I am saved. What did Abraham do? He did not reason; he considered not his own body which was dead, but he gave glory to God. If he had felt strong, he might have sought glory to himself. This is one practical aim that God effects, that we may know our own nothingness.

But is this the only use of Christ’s name? No: He assembles round Himself, Jesus is the great object and attractive point to which the Holy Ghost gathers. Suppose it were the question of a person coming in who holds what people call, Calvinistic views or Arminian, never having learnt fully the ruin of man; you may say, “We do not like to be troubled.” But the test is, what does the Lord say? Has He no power to judge that

question? Has He delegated it to our discretion? The Lord has named His name over that saint, and I am therefore to receive him. Another comes and says, “I hear you receive all Christians; but I do not believe that Christ was exempt from the fall, either in His nature or in His relation to God.” “No,” we reply, “you cannot use the name of Christian to dishonour Christ.” But wherever a man is found humbly confessing the name of the Lord (whether he be churchman or dissenter, that is not the point), we are bound to receive him. It is sorrowful that the church should have these names of variance: they will all be at an end by and by. But we must not gainsay the name of the Lord now. Wherever it is heard it becomes a passport all over the church. It is no question of joining us: he who is joined to Christ is indeed joined to us. True, the Lord has His servants; but we do not acknowledge any one as a centre in the church but Christ.

A further use of the name of the Lord is in discipline. What is the object of discipline? Not to keep up our character, but that His name should have its just place and honour, keeping it bright even where Satan’s throne is. In the very camp of the enemy there is a name that cannot be put down. The Holy Ghost is there, not merely to give us comfort, but, having delivered us from anxiety about our own sins, He leaves us free to care for Christ and to serve Him. The question in the maintenance of discipline is, Is there departure from iniquity? The Lord never acknowledges anything as the church where iniquity is sanctioned. There is a difference between sin detected there, and the sanction of sin when detected. Any iniquity may break out; it did in the apostolic churches. The man was put away at Corinth because he

was a Christian (as it is said, “that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus”). It might be thought, from the terrible nature of his sin, that he could not have been one. The Holy Ghost shows us thereby that if a Christian slips away from Christ, he is capable of anything except positive indifference to Christ Himself. From this I think the Holy Ghost would always keep; as in the case of Solomon’s judgment, the false woman was determined at all events to have her half of the child, while the real mother would rather yield it than let its life be touched. But a Christian may fall into a cold state of feeling about Christ, unnatural as this may seem; and when in this state, so as not to have a just sense of the name of the Lord, what good can be expected of him? It was not so with the Philadelphian saints. They did not deny His name; and the Lord uses the tenderest expressions of love towards them. All ecclesiastical pretension, it has been well said, was against them. They were quite despised by those who said they were Jews. But He says of them, “I will make them come. and worship before thy feet,” etc. (verse 9.) They were in the midst of a great deal of profession that was hollow. But the Lord promises to vindicate them by His own power. What comfort there is in not seeking to vindicate ourselves, but in going on with the Lord!

It is of the utmost importance to see that the name of the Lord will never oblige a man to choose between two evils; and this is, in my judgment, what God has been pressing of late. There is a path without evil. Not that the flesh of man may not bring in evil; but if a man persists in any sin, you say he is not walking as a Christian; he cannot be owned as a Christian, though we pray for him. Again, take a company of Christians. Evil

comes in. We cannot say, “These are not Christians.” No, but bring in the authority of the Lord’s name to put the evil away. He having absolute authority, it is ours to take the place of full subjection to Him. The church belongs to God. If it were ours, we might make our own rules; but woe be to the man that meddles with the church of God, bringing in his own regulations! This was, it would seem, what was felt by these Philadelphians. They valued the authority of the name of the Lord. They avowed that they were weak, but they knew that the power of Christ was strong enough to keep them. Why should they be afraid? When Christians own His name as a gathering centre, it is not said that evil will not come in; but looking to the power of the Lord Jesus and His Spirit, we do not mean to sanction evil. Let us only leave the door open for the Lord to come in. There may be much to try our patience; but what we have to do is to wait on the Lord. This is what the Lord seeks — that we should have confidence in what He is and has, taking the place of weakness and dependence in prayer, however much we may be tried.

It is of great interest to note here the re-appearance of the Catholic system at this point. It developed itself first in its fulness in the era of early heathen persecution under the fathers so called — the Smyrna period. (Compare Rev. 2:9.) Now it comes up again, the enemy’s counterfeit, the real antagonist of the testimony of God in our own day. But the Lord will compel them yet to recognise where the truth is, and where the Lord’s approving love rests especially. “Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie” (ver. 9). These claimed to be exclusively the covenant people; others (in particular

those meant by the assembly in Philadelphia) they regarded as outside, unworthy of a name save of contempt. For this it is which tries the saint, not persecution from open external enemies as also in Smyrna. The boasters in tradition, antiquity, priesthood, order, and ordinances, shall yet be forced to acknowledge those they despised as the beloved of the Lord. Fidelity to Him, however feeble, is precious in His eyes.

In Pergamos they kept His word: here they did more. “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will keep thee from the hour of temptation” (ver. 10). In these churches the Lord evidently looks forward to a state of things up to the very close. It is plain that, as the hour of temptation is still future, room is left for the application of this promise up to the end. This is not His word only, but of His patience. Christ is coming to receive His church, and afterwards to be the Judge of all the earth. But we are not looking for signs. God will graciously give signs to the Jews, but the church was never called to be guided in its thoughts by what it saw, like Thomas. “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” It was when the Lord was no longer seen that the church was born into the world; and since then the church is waiting but was never meant to depend on outward tokens. It was when He took His place above as Head that His body, the church, was formed; for there could not be a body except there were first a head. God would have the church waiting not for signs, but for Christ Himself. He will cause His voice to be heard, and the dead in Christ shall rise.... and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Christ is waiting for this patiently. As far as I have noticed, the Lord does not

speak about His coming as if there were any haste connected with it. He waits patiently for it. He lingers in His love, that there may be a lengthening of mercy to the world, and that souls may be brought to Him. The church knows that He is waiting, and is called to the same patience — to have fellowship with Him in His patience.

“I will keep thee from the hour of temptation” (verse 10). This is not the portion of the Jews. To them, when the time of trial comes, God says, “Come, my people, enter into thy chambers.” (Isaiah 26) Ours is the place of Abraham. He had not to fly to a little Zoar like Lot, who was saved indeed out of the judgment, but not much to his honour. The Lord had a heavenly-minded saint, as well as an earthly-minded one. Abraham was not in the sphere of that temptation at all. So the church will be kept from the coming hour. This is our confidence — not merely preserved in or through it, but “from” it. Take another figure — that of the deluge. Enoch had been translated to heaven before the flood, while Noah was carried through its waters. Thus God gives us blessed witnesses from the beginning of the two-fold preservation, like Enoch and Abraham in spirit on the one hand, and on the other like Noah and Lot. These last were in the circumstances of the trial; and this will be the case with the converted remnant of Israel during the time of the dreadful judgments. The Christian’s hope is to be with the Lord in heaven, and the church ought to be looking for it. Assuredly the cry is now going forth, “Behold the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.”

Let me ask, have you gone out? There were those who not only believed when they heard the cry, but went out. Have you left everything that is contrary to Him? —

what you know — not what I know — to be contrary to Him? Ask yourselves whether you are ready to meet Him: if so, you need not be afraid. Be assured that anything the will of man wants to keep is not worth the pains. It is gain to go out from all to meet Him; it is joy to be in the path of His sorrow. Has this reached your heart? Do not be content with saying, “I have got oil in my vessel, and it does not matter where I am.” What more selfish and unholy? The Lord grant that such may not be your feeling! He has saved me that I may think of Him. He wishes me to go out to meet Him — to value the precious hope of His coming. Are you then keeping His word? Do you not know? This is a question between your own conscience and the Lord. When you have kept what you do know, you will learn more and find it the truest liberty ever to serve Him.

“I am coming quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no one take thy crown” (verse 11). This is a precious word. The Lord spoke of coming like a thief even to Sardis, which had taken the world as its mistress, and allowed the unpurged to govern in place of the Lord. Here He comes as one that has a crown to give. The Lord Himself coming to meet us is the jewel He has given us to keep. May He grant us to hold it fast, that it be not taken from us!

We are indeed weak now, but the Lord says, “If you are content to be weak now, I will make you a pillar in the temple of my God.” A pillar is the emblem of strength (that which supported the temple) contrasted with weakness. It is a hard thing to be content to be weak. To flesh it is comfortable to feel the world’s strength under one. But if willing to appear what we are now, the Lord tells us what He will do for us then: “I will make you a

pillar in the temple of my God" (verse 12). As I have known my God, I will bring you into fellowship with me. You were content to wait for my coming, and none shall take your crown. For those who have thought of Christ now, Christ will provide all the joy He can give them then. The Lord grant that this may be our comfort while we wait for Him! We may for Christ be outside all that looks strong and orderly. In that day we shall go no more out, but enjoy the most intimate association with Christ, be a pillar in the temple of His God, and have the name of His God and of the city of His God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and His new name described on us.

Weak as these were they took the place of weakness; and as they had thought of His word and of His name, the Lord says, When I have you in my temple, I will write upon you "my new name," and will make you a pillar "in the temple of my God." He does not say the throne, which would be the expression of power, but the temple, which is another thought from the throne. The temple is the place of worship, where God is exalted in the beauty of holiness. Just so, when it was a question of the worship of God, David wears an ephod. His own wife despised him (she was looking at him as the son-in-law of her father Saul the king) because he did not come out in some robe suitable to royalty: but David had the thought of God before him, and in his eyes it was his greatest possible exaltation to wear the ephod, and so to serve Jehovah and rejoice in His goodness who deigned to be in their midst.

So the Philadelphians seem specially those who entered into worship, because they appreciated the person and character of the Lord Jesus. It is this that draws out the heart. Thus when Jesus revealed Himself after giving

sight (John 9), the blind man paid Him homage. Worship is little enjoyed in general even by real children of God. A man might receive favour from God, and give thanks heartily for it, and yet know little of worship. This is a higher step and nearer to Himself. it does not merely appreciate the favours that come down to us from God, but what the God is who gives them. Real worship is always this. The Father seeks worshippers, but it is to draw them back to the source from which the grace has flowed. Not that the word worship is used in the address to Philadelphia, except in verse 9, where it is in quite a different sense, merely signifying that the men, who were now scorners, would have to humble themselves and give honour to these whom they had despised. Worship is the drawing near to God in the appreciation not only of what He does but of Himself. There is this which always prepares the way for worship — the full and simple knowledge of our being brought near to God as well as of the work of Christ and its blessed results for us.

Laodicea.

We have already noticed the strong contrast between the state of Sardis and the previous order of things. Gross corruption, open evil, persecution, hatred of the holiness and truth of God, false prophets had reigned in Thyatira, though there was a remnant found there, and a faithful remnant. If Thyatira represents the dark ages, when the Lord had His faithful saints hidden away in nooks and corners of the world, in Sardis we have a correct appearance of things — a name to live, and death almost universal; yet even in Sardis there were those who had not defiled their garments. If there is so

marked a distinction between Sardis and Thyatira, there is an equally strong line of demarcation between Philadelphia and Laodicea.

“To the angel of the church in Laodicea,” not “of the Laodiceans.” (So, as to the first, it should be “the church in Ephesus.” Rev. 2: l.)

Let us look at the character that God gives of this church, and what He brings to light of its condition. If there are two churches that stand in more pointed contrast to one another, it is surely these last. The reason, I think, is this; that when God works in any special way, when He puts forth His grace in some new form and light, it always, since the slipping aside of Christendom, draws in its train a peculiarly dark shadow. So we saw in Philadelphia a bright picture. They were weak, but they were to depend on Him in peace; for the Lord had opened the door, and He would keep it so. Christ was all their confidence, in contrast with the pretentious religionists who appear at the same time claiming to be the people of God with no care for Christ. The church should have been by the Holy Spirit a real testimony to the new creation, of which Christ is both the only source and the bright exemplar. But it had wholly failed and never so much as in this last phase. For when we come to look at Laodicea, what a difference we find!

Does the Lord here speak of waiting upon their need, having the key of David, and presenting Himself as the object of their affections — as the holy and true One, in His moral grandeur, which called out all the heart to worship Him? Does He not now speak in another tone? “These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true

Witness, the beginning of the creation of God." The end of haughty profession was at hand. He was the "Amen," the only securer of divine promise, the solitary "faithful and true Witness," when all else had failed. This presentation of Himself supposes that those to whom He was writing were utterly faithless and had revived the old things which had been buried in the grave of Christ. Even a saint like Job was not in the presence of God when he was thinking so much about himself. ("When the ear heard me and the eye saw me," etc.) We may say he was in the presence of himself and not of God. It is always a poor sign if we see a man stop to look at himself, whether his good or his bad self. Even if converted, why should we thus dwell on the change in ourselves? This is not to forget the things that are behind (which does not mean, by the way, our sins, but our progress): if the Lord has given us to take a step forward, it is that we may get nearer to Himself, and increase in the knowledge of God. Along with this there will always be increase in the knowledge of ourselves, but never in the way of self-admiration. As belonging to Christ, He is the object that happily keeps us low. When Job was brought at the close really into the presence of God, he was in the dust. He did not know what it was to be thoroughly nothing before God till he was brought there, and his eye saw Him. Before, he had been looking more at what God had produced in him, but now he saw himself to be as dust. After this we find him even praying for his friends, and we have burnt-offerings. This was the spirit of intercession and worship too. It appears to me that such was the spirit into which the Philadelphian church had been brought. They understood worship, because they in their measure knew Him that was from the beginning. The Lord loves

us to be strong in Christ, growing up into Him in all things.

In Laodicea there was no such thought — nothing like an entrance into the riches of the Lord's grace. There is nothing we ought to feel our lack in so much as in worship, just because we do value it. It is spiritual feeling though feeble indeed, that makes us alive to our little power of worship. Be assured that the spirit of worship is our true power for service. Thus in John 10 the Lord says, "I am the door: by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." It is no longer the Jewish sheepfold and the bondage of the law, but perfect liberty, going in for worship and out for service, everywhere finding food and blessing. How sweet to think that the time is coming when we shall go in, never to come out more! It will be always service in immediate connection with the lord Himself — enjoyment of the presence of God and of the Lamb — eternal worship. And let me again ask, For whom would this be a welcome and happy promise? For those who had valued and enjoyed worship here below; as in Ps. 84, "They will be still praising thee." The place where the Lord dwelt was graven even in the hearts of those going there — "in whose heart are the ways." They felt that they must get where God was, and there they dwell.

The Lord does not reveal Himself in the same personal way, and still less ecclesiastically; but certain qualities and titles belonging to Him are taken up, which reach out from what He had been for God to that which links Him with the new scene in which He is about to be displayed as Head over all. This cannot fail. He was "the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the

creation of God." They had failed in everything, they had been unfaithful witnesses; but He as good as says to them, "You have not met a single thought of my heart. I will now present myself to you as all you should have been." He was also "the beginning of the creation of God" (verse 14). Christendom is at its beginning, certainly from apostolic days, a rejected witness. Christ is in relationship with the new creation.

"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot" (verse 15). This is latitudinarianism. It is not ignorance that works this deadly mischief, but the heart remaining indifferent to the truth, after it has been fully brought before it. Such an one does not want the truth, because he feels the sacrifice and the separation from the world which must ensue, if it be really followed. We ought to bear, wherever there is unwilling ignorance; but indifference to truth is quite another thing, and hateful in the sight of the Lord.

Thus latitudinarianism is never the condition of souls that are simple-hearted, but of those by whom the truth has been heard and who are not prepared for the cross. God's truth must put people's hearts to the test. It is not merely something I have to learn, but I am proved. If the sheep is in a healthy condition, it will hear the Shepherd's voice, and not even know the voice of strangers; but if the sheep strays after others, it becomes so confounded that it may cease to distinguish the well-known voice. This arises in Laodicea, and, as it would appear, from despising the testimony given in the former church. Laodicea is the fruit of the rejection of the special truth that formed Philadelphia. There He showed Himself, and assured each heart that received Him, that as His name was everything to us on earth, so

He will give us His new name in the time of glory. Every affection that has been spiritual, all that the Lord wrought in our hearts, shall come out more brightly in heaven. To Laodicea He says, “Thou art neither cold nor hot. They must have had some stimulant, as the cold was not absolute. They were not honest. Laodicea is the last state of decay, which the Lord could not allow to go on any longer — a time when persons have had a great deal of truth in a certain fashion, but their souls not touched by it. If the heart had been in ever so little a measure true, even though ignorant, it would have enjoyed all that came from the Lord. In 1 John 2 the persons who are said to have an unction from the Holy One; and to know all things, are not the “fathers” (who of course had been thus anointed also) but “the babes.” The ability to judge what is not of Christ depends on the heart being true to Him. Hence the youngest saint, if single-eyed, can discern with certainty, where the theologian is lost in endless genealogies.

Every spirit that confesses not but denies Christ (the Christ of God) is of antichrist. There were, there are now, many antichrists, and the place to look for them is where He has been named. If Christ had not been known, there could not have been an antichrist, which was the dark shadow that followed the truth. As surely as the Lord works in His gracious way, Satan is at work too. To be “lukewarm” was to be false with the pretension of the truth; and the Lord says, “I will spue thee out of my mouth.” There is not such a contemptuous expression used by Him anywhere else that I know. This is sensibly different from the dealing with Sardis, where the general judgment of Protestantism is given, — judged like the world, and the

Lord coming as a thief. Is this the way that we measure things? We should have said probably that Jezebel was to be felt most about; but would it have struck us that to be lukewarm was the worst of all? Yet this was what drew forth all the Lord's indignation, and He only is wise.

"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods," etc. (verse 16). Here is a plain proof that they had heard a great deal about the truth. They thought themselves rich. Learning and intellectualism in religion they counted a prize. If these grow (at least in extent, even though not in depth), what ground for satisfaction? The spread of the outward knowledge of God is what hastens on the last crisis — God's final judgment and setting aside of all that bears His name falsely and self-complacently. They had sought man and the world, which promise much to the eye. But this is no righteous judgment; for nature thus allowed in the church is so much loss, to the utter exclusion of what is divine and heavenly — the real and bitter impoverishment unto all true riches. This the Lord proceeds next to lay before the angel. Absence of discernment follows. "And knowest not that thou art the wretched, and the miserable, and poor, and blind" (ver. 17). This was because they had rejected the testimony of God. His testimony always produces the sense of being nothing but it never weakens confidence in Him. There may be tests, — the Epistles of John are full of them; but there never is such a thought as the Spirit leading a believer to doubt God's being for him. He may and surely will work in a soul that is slipping aside from the Lord to bring him back; He may make us feel our weakness; but it is not at all His way to produce a doubt of the truth;

and it is ever a sign of the flesh being at work, “lusting against the Spirit,” when we give way to distrust. The Spirit of God always, wherever He is, aims at making a man thoroughly humble himself, judging and renouncing the folly of the flesh. There is and must be reality and truthfulness in God’s presence.

Laodicea says, “I am rich, and am become rich, and have need of nothing.” But we have the Spirit of God pronouncing this to be carnal presumption, the heart knowing not its need, and refusing grace. There had been momentary warmth, which made it so hateful to God. But this is just what men are doing who talk about the church of the future. The early times they call the infancy of the church; afterwards the church became overgrown and haughty: and now they are looking for a church of the future, when it will be no longer subject, but will act for itself — will act like a man. Alas! where will not these aspirations end? For God will be left out of the so-called church, and His authority got rid of.

This is working now extensively. And are God’s children. lukewarm about it? about God’s truth being shut out? Remember what the Lord here says, “I will spue thee out of my mouth.” It would be a grave mistake to suppose that there were no good men among them. It is no question however of individuals, but of the assembly: as such the Lord said He would spue them out of His mouth. People cannot congregate in large masses without Laodiceanism as the result, if it be not also the spring. Popularity is one thing; quite another the Spirit of God gathering souls to Christ at the present time. The Lord be thanked if there are a few gathered out to His name! Let God’s children remember that they must answer to the Lord Jesus, whether they are represented

by Laodicea or not; whether they are living for Christ, or for what merely bears His name as a veil over indifferentism.

Yet the Lord does not give them up. He says, “I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire,” etc. (verse 18.) Gold is used as the symbol of intrinsic righteousness in God’s nature, or divine righteousness; and white raiment or linen stands for the righteousnesses of saints, as we see from Revelation 19.

Divine righteousness had slipped from their thoughts. They were neither appreciating the righteousness of God, which a Christian is made in Christ, nor the practical righteousness displayed before men, which the Spirit leads in. So He counsels them to buy of Him the true gold, and white raiment that there might be the holiness that became them before others. “Anoint thine eye with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.” There was the secret — the lack of unction from the Holy One. They did not see anything properly, not even their need of divine righteousness.

“As many as I love I rebuke and chasten; be zealous, therefore, and repent” (verse 19). Depend upon it that this is the Lord’s voice for the present moment. Here alas! it was what the Laodiceans needed. The Lord is dealing with His people; He constantly puts before them something to humble them in their thoughts of themselves: He does not tell them to do or try something new, but calls on them “to repent.” He does not ask them to stretch their wings for some greater flight in the future, but to see where they are, and to confess their failure. But this is irksome to the light self-complacent heart.

The call to repentance here, however, as in Sardis, differs greatly from that in the message to Ephesus and Pergamos, where all were thus urged on penalty of the Lord's solemn chastening, whether general or special. Thyatira had here too an intermediate place: "I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not." Hence the threat of judgment followed, and the vast change ensued in all its extent.

It is a far higher thing to suffer for Christ and with Christ than to be active in doing. When the Apostle once asked, "What shall I do?" the Lord answered, "I shall show thee what great things thou must suffer." This is what the Lord specially prizes — not mere sufferings as men, but sufferings for Christ. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him."

Here they were persons as sunken as they were proud, called upon to be zealous and repent, to humble themselves before God on account of their condition. Yet the Lord utters a gracious word, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock" (verse 20). Is it not a solemn thing that the Lord should be there, thus taking the place of one outside? Nevertheless He was ready to come in where He found a soul true to Him. "If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him," etc. Need it be said that this is not an address to the world in order to be saved? In John 10 the Lord presents Himself in full grace, saying, "I am the door, by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." But here He speaks thus to the church. What a solemn position! How utterly fallen now! What ought to be the enjoyed portion of all the church, whether in approaching God or in display before men, or in the communion of Christ, is proffered in pure grace to him who hearkens and humbles himself before the grace

of the Lord. He certainly had no sympathy with their self-satisfaction. He stood outside, knocking at the door, if perchance there should be a heart within, not too much occupied with the things and the persons around, that would open to Him. To such He says, “I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me.” But it is all individual. In presence of the gravest departure, are we to say, “there is no hope”? Not so; for the Lord is standing at the door and knocking. There may not be many to answer His call, but some will; and the promise is, “To him that overcometh will I give to sit down with me in my throne; even as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne.”

It is a mistake to suppose that this is comparatively a glorious promise: we are apt to think so, because we naturally value display. But God does not estimate things thus. His holy love, proving itself divine most of all when Christ humbled Himself, in coming down to man and dying for him — this is the standard of value, rather than power or glory. He could make a thousand worlds with far more ease than He gave His Son to suffer. I do not question the grace of such a word, spite of such evil; but our sharing the kingdom with Christ is not the most blessed thing we shall enjoy. And the promise here does not go farther. What we have and shall have in Christ Himself is much more precious. Yet is this a portion with Christ In John 17:23 the Lord shows that the display of glory is for the vindication of Himself before the world. All the glory disclosed in the future will be the proof to the world, that they may know that the Father loves us as He loved His Son. But we are entitled to know it by the Holy Ghost now. We do not wait till then to know the love that has given us the glory — a deeper thing than

the appearing to the world, or thrones in the kingdom. The personal affection of the Lord to His people is a better portion than anything displayed before men or angels.

Here the Lord closes the churches. He had reached the last phase. The wisdom of God has provided in these chapters not so much deep truth as what requires conscience: this rather than great ability is what we are to understand. The need for guidance is the eye fixed on Christ. Besides these epistles being messages to local churches in the name of St. John, we have seen in them a sketch of the whole history of the church till the Lord comes. For properly speaking the Lord's addresses to the churches themselves or their angels constitute "the things which are," or the actual state in John's day. The addresses, while primarily connected with the facts then existing, go far beyond them, and reach out into a prolonged moral application, till there is no longer any recognised assembly, the last (though with mercy to individuals) having been summarily rejected as a public witness by the Lord. After that we never hear of the churches any more upon the earth. On the contrary the curtain drops, and we have a new scene altogether. The seer no longer turns round to see who spoke behind him on earth,29 but hears the same voice above, whither he is now invited to ascend. The government of the world from the throne in heaven, its accompaniments and consequences, are the things which follow, when the church's time — state is closed. After this we have individual. saints both among the twelve tribes of Israel and out of all nations mentioned as such, but this only makes the contrast more striking. Henceforward, if specified at all, they are named as Jews and Gentiles,

because there was no longer any thing of the nature of the assembly of God upon earth: for the very meaning and essence of the church is, that there is neither Jew nor Gentile, because all are one in Christ.

In the detail of these seven epistles there is also abundant practical instruction. It is true that the Spirit addressed them to the churches; but “he that hath an ear” is expressly enjoined to give heed; and this to the challenges of the Lord sent to them all. Such application, however, falls more fittingly within the domain of ordinary ministry in the word.

It may be well, now that we have gone over the ground of the Apocalyptic epistles, to notice the objections urged against the larger view of their meaning by Bishop Newton. “Many contend, and among them such learned men as More and Vitringa, that the seven epistles are prophetical of so many successive periods and states of the church, from the beginning to the conclusion of all. But it doth not appear that there are, or were to be, seven periods of the church, neither more nor less; and no two men can agree in assigning the same periods. There are likewise in these epistles several innate characters which were peculiar to the church of that age, and cannot be so well applied to the church of any other age. Besides other arguments, there is also this plain reason; the last state of the church is described in this very book as the most glorious of all, but in the last state in these epistles, that of Laodicea, the church is represented as ‘wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.’“ (Newton’s Works, vol. i., p. 549, edition 1782.)

Now it is plain that “it doth not appear” is rather an assumption than a proof. Why does it not appear? Another might urge the same objection, and perhaps with quite as much weight, against the seven seals, trumpets, and vials. God has been pleased to specify in each of these instances seven salient points, so to speak, as His complete account of each. “The main subjects of this book,” the Bishop had just before remarked, “are comprised of sevens, seven churches, seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven vials, as seven was also a mystical number throughout the Old Testament.” If this answer satisfy as to the seven vials, why not as to the seven epistles? Doubtless more spirituality may be required for right discernment in the latter than in the former case; because one series relates to external judgments in the world, whereas the other series takes cognisance of such remarkable spiritual conditions, good and bad, in the history of the church, as it seemed good to the Lord to notice. Hence à priori one might be prepared for a greater divergence of judgment among Christians in their adaptation of Rev. 2, 3, than in their views of any other parts of the book. If there had been therefore a considerable measure of truth in what he says, the general principle would till remain undisturbed. But this is not the case. There is a striking agreement as regards the first three or four churches. This of course is not urged as in the least degree authoritative, but as a sufficient answer to the charge of hopeless discrepancy preferred by Bp. Newton. Retort would be easy on the discordant schemes of interpreting the seals, trumpets, and vials.

It is singular, however, that the Bishop bears testimony in the next page to the mystical meaning of the epistle to

Smyrna. For the “tribulation ten days” is there explained of the greatest persecution that the primitive church ever endured, Diocletian’s persecution, which lasted ten years, and grievously afflicted all the Eastern churches. Conscious that such an application, not in the promises attached but in the body of the epistle, is fatal to his own exclusively literal application, the Bishop thereon allows that the “promissory or threatening part foretells something of their future condition,” and asserts that “in this sense, and in no other, can these epistles be said to be prophetical” (p. 550):

But how stop here, once you own, as he does in the Smyrnean epistle, a bearing beyond the bare single church in or near that age, once you extend its scope to all the East, and its date to the beginning of the fourth century? Indeed, that fierce persecution was not confined to the East; for all the empire, not excepting Spain and Britain, was stained with Christian blood. If the principle is true in one epistle, why not in all? And in fact was not general declension within as clearly marked in Ephesus, as persecution from without in Smyrna? and does not Pergamos portray the corrupting influences of worldly exaltation, as palpably as Thyatira sets forth the proud unrelenting false prophetess of Popery?

No doubt the unsactisfactory character attached by our Lord to Sardis must be painful and startling to those whose eye is filled with ordinary Protestantism and its decent orthodoxy. And perhaps yet more distasteful is the sight of another and a subsequent testimony, which sets those who bear it in weakness and scorn outside the religious world, with the coming of Christ their blessed and animating hope.

But it is plain that the picture of the last assembly, in its deplorable lukewarmness and the Lord's peremptory rejection of it, was the great difficulty to Bishop Newton, because of its inconsistency with his theory of the last state of the church, "described in this very book as the most glorious of all." But this is a total mistake. The Revelation never describes the church on earth after Laodicea. The glorious description, to which the Bishop refers is probably in Rev. 19-21, where the entire church is glorified above. In a word this reason is plainly invalid. The bride of the Lamb is to reign; but this does not contradict the solemn testimony of the Laodicean epistle, that the last state of Christendom here below is to be, like that of Israel before it, "worse than the first." The general testimony of the New Testament entirely confirms the witness borne by this particular part, as appears from Luke 17:26-37; 2 Thess. 2:1-12; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 2 Peter 2, 3; 1 John 2:18; Jude 11-19. The gratuitous assumption that the last phase of the church's condition on earth must be the brightest is then clearly opposed to the direct testimony of Christ and the Apostles, as well as to the solemn warning of the Apocalypse. How humbling that all this should be explained away for many souls by the unintelligent reasons we have just disproved! Nor is the evil speculative only, but very great practically; and the danger becomes every day greater for those thus misled. For if the soul be taught to view events as gradually moving on toward a glorious future for the closing years of the gospel here below, it cannot but be thrown off its guard and exposed to a loss of discernment in its desire after such a consummation, instead of being called to watch as during a long sad night, and to judge each new move and measure, as good soldiers in an enemy's land.

And if it be certain that the falling away or apostacy is the predicted issue, the means taken for the widest development and apparent triumph of the church on earth, must finally at least be but means for consummating that apostacy, and a prime object for the Lord's judgment at His appearing.

27 I am far from thinking the Romanist idea of works sounder than their depreciation of faith. The remnant in Thyatira, viewed mystically, were not Romanists, but persecuted by Jezebel.

28 The Alexandrian and Paris uncials with a fair support from cursives, and especially from versions, read οὕτως "thus;" but the Basilian, Vat. and Porphyrian uncials, and most of the juniors with some versions read οὗτος. Cod. Sinaitica gives the former first, and then corrects it by the latter, and perhaps by the original scribe. Externally therefore the balance is nearly even. But in the older MSS. especially the interchange of o and ω is so common as to make their evidence in such cases of slight value. Internal consideration greatly inclines in my opinion to οὗτος, as in the text.

29 The chief opponent of the future or rather protracted application of the Apocalyptic epistles, draws from the local direction of the voice that, according to a mode of interpretation then prevalent, the visions about to be shown would refer to events yet future and behind, in the course of time. (Horae Apocalypticae, 5th edition, vol. i. page 70.) If there be any truth in that interpretation, it strongly confirms the future bearing of the seven addresses. But it is certain from Rev. 4:1, that when the purely prophetic visions are about to begin, the speaker's voice is above, not behind. What the

turning to the voice behind in Revelation 1 really shows is, that the prophet's eye was forward, as it were, in the direction of the kingdom, and that he was recalled to take notice of the churches, "the things which are," as justifying the Lord in His setting aside of Christendom in order to the introduction of His kingdom in power, when patience shall no longer be demanded. For the Lord will create new heavens and a new earth: first, in a partial preparatory sense — the millennium; and then fully and finally, the eternal state. The church state is thus emphatically treated as present time.

Revelation 4

We are now come to the strictly prophetic part of the book of Revelation. The seven churches formed together what the Holy Ghost calls “the things which are.” And the Son of man was seen judging the house of God on earth, represented by the Asiatic churches. They existed in the time of St. John; and in a mystic sort at least, they have an existence continuous, and to a certain extent successive, as long as there is any testimony rendered by the professing body on the earth. If the literal application is past, the protracted representative bearing still goes on. In Revelation 1:19 we were told that, besides “the things which thou hast seen” and “the things which are,” there is a third division — “the things which shall be hereafter.” The word “hereafter” is vague, whereas the sense intended appears to be precise: it should be read “the things which shall be after these,” meaning what is to follow after the church has come to an end on the earth. Its present history closes here, though it will have a better existence in heaven, and it will reign over the earth too in the day of millennial glory. We then arrive at this wholly prophetical portion. Revelation 4 and 5 are a kind of preface to “the things which shall be after these.” Their great object is to show us, not events occurring on the earth, but the attitude or aspect in which God appears, and the place of those who are nearest to Him, during the occurrence of these future events, or the crisis of the present age. I must here dwell a little on the first of these chapters.

“After these things I looked, and, behold, a door opened in heaven, and the first voice which I heard [was] as it were of a trumpet, talking with me;” etc. (ver. 1). The “first voice” here does not mean the first of the voices that were about to speak, as some have strangely thought, but the voice that John had already heard in Revelation 1 — the voice of Him who had been in the midst of the seven golden lamp-stands. It still addresses him like a trumpet, no longer from earth but from heaven. There was a door there, and the voice spake from thence, so that this portion of the book supposes the earth done with for the moment, and the scene lies above. It is not merely that saints render testimony on the earth, but the voice speaks from heaven, showing the things that should follow the church-condition on earth now concluded. “Come up hither, and I will show thee the things which must happen after these things” John is said to be immediately in the Spirit (ver. 2); that is, by the Holy Ghost’s power he was rapt and characterised, so as to enter into the new scenes he was now to behold.

“Behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat,” etc. God is not named as such in this account, save as “He that sat upon the throne.” John is about to show us what the aspect seemed of the One who sits upon the throne, while there is that in God which “no man hath seen or can see. This is a representation, in a symbolical way, of the glory of God. He may assume any appearance that pleases Him; but as far as He permitted it to be displayed here, it was what could be compared to these precious stones. In Revelation 21 the bride, the New Jerusalem, comes down “out of heaven from God, having the glory of God;

her light [was] like a stone most precious, as a jasper stone," etc. It is quite evident that this cannot be the essential glory of God. It rather means, I think, that it was not a human but a divine glory. There is in God that which He can confer upon the creature, and there is that which is incommunicable. Here divine glory is meant in contrast with creature glory — not that which would derogate from His majesty, but be a reflection of it. Her light was like a jasper stone; the wall also was of jasper (verse 18), and the first foundation (verse 19).30 The general appearance of the city was as it were of jasper. This a little answers, I think, to the view we have in Revelation 4 of what John enjoyed of the sight of Him that sat upon the throne. In Rom. 5:2 it is said, not only that we have access to the grace of God in which we stand, but that we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. That glory of Him who sat on the throne, as far as it could be viewed by the creature, was presented under the figure of jasper and sardius (verse 3); and when the church comes forth in the glory of God, her light will be jasper-like. That is, the thought of God's glory, not man's, is the thing conveyed to the mind. Even in the "eternal day," there will be no such change as God abandoning or lowering the dignity of His own proper Godhead; for there must always be an infinite difference between God and the most exalted of His creatures. Still, there is a resemblance between the glory of God as seen by man, and the church's glory by and by. And this answers exactly to the words of our Lord in the Gospel of John (John 17:22, 23): "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that

thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."

Far more untenable is the view that the jasper sets forth the incarnation. It appears to me to fall in with not a single occurrence of the figure; it sets Revelation 4 hopelessly at variance with Revelation 5, and it would involve, I fear, serious aberration from sound doctrine, if carried out in Revelation 21.

But, besides the appearance of divine glory, there was a rainbow round about the throne. This evidently carries our thoughts back to the covenant that God made, not with His people Israel, but with the earth at large. The covenant with His people is noticed for the first time in Revelation 11, where we have heaven opened and the ark of His testament seen in His temple. It is not the new covenant itself; for when this is brought about, there will be no earthquakes, and lightnings, and thunders, etc., but the day of peace and blessing for Israel. But at the time to which that vision refers, God will show that He has respect to His covenant. Here the rainbow is God's remembrance of His covenant with the earth. The ark spoken of in Revelation 11 is God's remembrance of His covenant with His people. God is going to pour forth judgments on the earth and on those who had the responsibility of being His people. But He takes pains to show that, before a single judgment falls, there is mercy in store. Before He touches creation, there is the sign of His covenant with the earth, just as when He is forced to pour down plagues on His people Israel, the ark of His covenant is seen. The rainbow was the witness that God had not let slip His ancient word: He could not forget it. The rainbow is the sign of mercy. It spans the heavens, and takes in earth and sea, the

whole compass of that blessed security of which God had hung out the token on high. And now we have the rainbow not merely over the world, but round about the throne in heaven. This is not its usual place; but it was comforting for John to see, in the midst of all that bright glory, how God wished to fill the heart with confidence. He had not merely the vision of what was coming on earth, but in the circle of the divine manifestation and power the rainbow is seen above. If God shows us His own glory at the same time, the rainbow would tell us that God is true — that He was purposely putting man in mind of His pledge, given after the great judgment of old, and the rather as now He set it in this peculiar place, where a rainbow had never been seen before, in order to assure our hearts. But though peculiar, what could be more in character? For it is the throne of God the Almighty, the Creator and supreme Lord of all things.

Perhaps it is needless to remark that no such things will happen literally; but the vision was a panoramic sign, putting all before the eyes of the prophet — a most lively and admirable way of conveying what God meant to teach. When persons are once thoroughly founded in His grace, nothing is more important than the study of this book. But it may be injurious to souls who have not been so established to get absorbed in the Revelation.

First, then, we have the throne of One who is the centre and source of all the action, God’s glory and majesty being set forth by the symbol of the jasper and sardine; and next there is the rainbow, the familiar emblem of God’s faithfulness to creation. The rainbow was of a particular kind, “in appearance like an emerald” (verse 3). We could scarcely have colours more opposed than

those which represented the divine majesty, and the emerald so refreshing for the eye to look upon. The Holy Ghost gives us a vivid impression by these simple symbols. For this book was not written for great scholars; it was intended for suffering saints. Even by men of the world it has been noticed, that the Revelation was specially the book sought into by persecuted Christians; and certain it is that, while those who make it a field for human research and speculation go wrong here and everywhere else, a general or even bright idea would present itself to the mind of in unlettered believer, who looks up to God and desires the glory of His Son.

The first thought suggested to one by the chapter is, that the only true place from which to look at the things coming to pass after the seven churches is heaven. It is not upon and from the earth that we can rightly judge of these events. It is from above that we must learn and look; if we are earthly-minded, we shall never understand them. If I am merely on the level of the scene upon which the judgments are passing, I shall endeavour to make the best of present things, and to put off the judgments; I am not entering in by the door opened in heaven. A heavenly standing must be taken as the ground, and the only ground, on which these visions can be rightly estimated.

The main object seen is God and His throne — His power ruling in providence. The throne is not in itself connected with priesthood, but with the power whence divine government proceeds. God would establish souls in the thought that He governs, even in the midst of all the wickedness that was to be developed in the time of the beasts, or the final apostacy. The vision is of the

throne of One who did not need to be named, but who permits His glory to be seen as far as it can be by the creature. From His throne above He is dealing with the world. Then we have His throne surrounded by the remembrance of His covenant with creation. Next, in the fourth verse, the prophet sees that, round about the central throne of God, there are other thrones. The reason why thrones here are preferable to “seats” is, that it is an essential part of the vision to show that the persons seated there were possessed of kingly dignity. The same word means a throne and a seat, and the choice is only determined by the connection in which it stands. We should not say of a person in humble life that he was sitting upon a throne, nor of the sovereign when in state that he was upon a seat. We can judge by the subject-matter.

Around the throne of God then, in the scene of such glory as man perhaps never saw before, there are other thrones with elders seated on them — that is, those endowed with wisdom from on high, who entered into the thoughts and counsels of God. They are clothed in white raiment, answering to their priestly, as their crowns do to their kingly, dignity. They are clearly saints and at home in heaven by glory around the great central throne before the world’s judgment begins. The number of these is twenty-four, corresponding with the twenty-four courses of priesthood in Israel. When the forerunner of the Lord was to be born, his father Zacharias was a priest of the course or order of Abia. In 1 Chron. 24 we must look to see these divisions, and we find the eighth was the one in question. The priesthood was divided into these courses in order that each in succession might take up the work of the priesthood,

every course having its own chief priest. The High Priest is not named here: we all know who He is; but we have the twenty-four elders answering to these twenty-four courses of priesthood, or rather to the chiefs who represented them (verse 4).

But a deeply interesting inquiry. arises: If these crowned and enthroned elders represent the heavenly saints, as few will deny, when and to what condition does the vision apply? Does it speak (1) of those who have departed to be with Christ? Or (2) does it foreshadow the manifested kingdom of Christ and His saints during the millennium? Now it appears certain that both these questions must be answered in the negative, and that the time of Revelation 4, and therefore the interval during which the elders are thus engaged on high, is after the separate state is over, as far as they are concerned, and before the millennial reign begins.

For (1) it is obvious that the symbol of the twenty-four elders implies the sum of the heads of the heavenly priesthood — not a part, however large, but the whole. There were just so many courses, and no more. In the vision they are complete; and in the reality, which it symbolizes, this can never be the case, while the saints are absent from the body and thus present with the Lord. During that state of things there will always be members of the church on the earth. For “we shall not all sleep.” And when, at the Lord’s return, the dead in Christ shall rise first, “we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” That is to say, the symbol understood and interpreted aright requires that all the members of Christ should be together and in the same condition; and as this will

never be true of the separate spirits, it necessarily follows that the vision will be realized only when “we shall all be changed” and with the Lord.

But (2) it is clear, that whatever may be anticipatively presented in the songs of the elders, or of others who catch up as it were the chorus of their strains, both the actions of the elders, and the entire heavenly scenery, in which they take so prominent a part from Rev. 4 to Rev. 19, suppose that the reigning over the earth does not arrive as a literal fact till Christ and His saints have left heaven for the judgment of His enemies. But the full complement of the elders is made up a considerable time previously: none can deny they are in heaven before and during the seals, trumpets, and vials. The inference is plain. The saints represented by them must be as a whole in heaven before these judgments begin to be fulfilled. The millennium does not come till Rev. 20; the elders, shadowing the glorified saints, are with the Lord in their changed bodies lone, before. When He comes from heaven to the destruction of the beast, they follow, and with Him they subsequently reign for a thousand years. Others, I doubt not, will be joined with them in that reign: these will not be glorified in their bodies till Rev. 20, having suffered after the rapture of the church under the beast, etc. But Rev. 4 intimates, that the rapture will then have taken place, and that the saints caught up are viewed as a royal priesthood, interested, as having the mind of Christ, in the trials, sufferings, testimony, and hopes of those who succeed themselves, as witnesses for God, during the hour of temptation which will then come upon all the world, to try those that dwell on the earth. Even for the raptured saints on high it is not yet the time for the marriage of

the Lamb; and therefore, as well as for other reasons, they are here regarded, not as the body or bride, but as kings and priests worshipping and as yet waiting for their manifestation in glory when they shall judge the world.

There is a solemn connection with this in Ezekiel, where we have twenty-five men named (Ezek. 8:16); and to my own mind it appears that they were the whole of the heads of the priesthood — the twenty-four chiefs and the high priest besides. But where were they now? Alas! they were the promoters of the idolatry and wickedness perpetrated in the temple of Jehovah. They were there not is those whose raiment told of the blood that cleanses, but the corrupters of God's holy standard and the defilers of Israel, leading them on to apostacy; so that, if judgment is to be inflicted, it must begin with the house of God. There is a tacit contrast between the scene here described and that in Ezekiel. There we had the living creatures first, the symbol of the executive judgments Of God — of His judicial power putting down evil. The earthly result of the action of these living creatures, as seen in Ezekiel, might be the destruction of Jerusalem; but this was only what man saw.

The cherubim and the living creatures (

ζῶα) are the same substantially; they must be carefully distinguished from the beasts (θηρία) we read of afterwards. The first mention of the cherubim is in the early part of the book of Genesis. (Gen. 3) When sin entered the world, immediately we find them: they were the beings to whom the work of judgment was entrusted. "He placed in the garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword, to keep the way of the tree of life."

The emblem of their power was the flaming sword. Again, if we look at the second book of Moses ‘ we find the cherubim in a new but blessed way. Where were they looking? Within. Had they been looking outwards, they would have seen sinners; had they looked under, that is, into the ark, they would have seen the law; but they were looking within on the mercy-seat, where the blood of atonement was sprinkled. There was the blood that spoke of the perfect mercy of God which had met and triumphed over sin; and there was the power of God — both combined in preserving the glory of God, and both really for man instead of against him.

If we examine this again in the time of Solomon, we find a remarkable difference. The position of the cherubim completely changes, for instead of looking within they are looking out, because Solomon’s day typifies the time of glory, when the true Man and Prince of Peace shall rule. And why should they not look out then? Sin will have been judged, and, instead of the goodness of the Believed falling as it were in drops here and there, the King shall come down like rain on the mown grass; as showers that water the earth, and the whole earth shall be filled with His glory — the just answer to the glory of David’s Son. When mercy will have had its full way, and judgment has been executed, there will be nothing to hinder the cherubim from proclaiming the goodness of the Jehovah.

But in Ezekiel a terrible crisis came. The mercy-seat had been despised, and Solomon’s glory had faded away. Israel was sinning with a high hand, and now the very temple itself was the spot where the greatest dishonour was done to God, and there the cherubim again as good as ask, Can God have nothing to do with this wicked

people? Judgment must have its course. Accordingly they leave Israel, though they bring judgment on the land. They are only seen again as giving the signal for judgment, and putting it in force by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.

We have the same thing in Revelation, with this difference, that in Ezekiel the living creatures are seen more in connection with the earth; and this may be the reason why they are there said to have wheels as well as wings. In Revelation, the earthly people being dropped for a season, and a heavenly people called, they are simply seen with the wings suited for heaven, and not the wheels suited for earth. From this omission it is easily seen that, if God is going to speak about judgment, the very form that the executive of His, judgment takes tells us that a heavenly interruption has come in, ere the world's history is resumed. Is it not then of immense importance, if we are to view these things aright, to get a firm footing on the ground on which the apostle stood — to enter in, as it were, by the door opened in heaven?

But, besides this, "Out of the throne proceed lightnings, and voices, and thunders" (verse 5). Evidently this is not the throne that we draw near to; for ours is a throne of grace, and this is emphatically of judgment. Its aspect described here has nothing whatever to do with grace. There proceeds later on from the throne a stream clear as crystal, as in the view of the throne mentioned in Rev. 22; but here "are lightnings, and voices, and thunders," etc., expressive of God's terrors. Even the symbolic likeness given here of God's Spirit is in keeping with it. "There were seven lamps [or torches] of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God."

The Holy Ghost does not take the symbol of lamps of fire when God's grace to the church is set forth. No doubt on the day of Pentecost we have tongues as of fire, a beautiful emblem of what God was then about to do; for it was divine force that gave those unlettered men to speak in every tongue. On the Lord Jesus He descended in the form of a dove; but this was quite a different thing from what we have in Revelation. Here it is the consuming power of the Spirit of God. Fire is the well-known emblem of the searching holiness of God. The Holy Ghost in full perfection as light and as a fire burning up evil is the representation that the Spirit gives of His own relation to this epoch. It is plain that the reference is not to the millennial kingdom, for then a stream clear as crystal is to proceed out of the throne of God; still less would such a symbol apply to His action in the body of Christ during the present time. Nor is God's throne now one from which proceed lightnings and thunders.

To what period then is the reference? To a short space between the two, when God has done His present church-work and before the millennial glory begins. The present is the time when God is gathering out His heirs, joint-heirs with Christ, and forming the bride; and now there is a throne of grace where we may receive mercy and find grace for seasonable help. Here, on the contrary, His judgments issue from the throne, and the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of judgment and burning, just as much as the throne is judicial and the source of terrors for the earth. Thus then it is neither the peaceful era of the millennial glory nor the present display of unbounded grace, but a time between the two. It is not conceivable for a person to have just light upon this

book who does not see that the Revelation fills up the interval after the Lord has taken the church, and before He comes out of heaven and the church along with Him. (Rev. 19) I speak, of course, of the prophetic visions which fill the body of the book, and not of the three introductory chapters, nor of the close, when the Lord is about to appear. There the whole scene is changed; the heavens are opened to send forth the Lord Jesus, for the purpose of putting the last stroke of judgment to man's iniquity and Satan's power, and then we have the full flow of blessing far and wide. Here we have the time that precedes it — an interval of most solemn character for the world, when the heavenly saints shall have been caught up.

"And before the throne there was a set of glass" (verse 6). It is not a sea of water, where persons could bathe, but a sea of glass. The Holy Ghost uses the washing of water now by the word for the purpose of purging defilement. There was no longer need for this in those before the throne. In Revelation 15 another class is mentioned as standing upon a sea of glass, showing that it is not there a question of the Spirit's power in dealing with what is contrary to God, but the victory is won. So here all question of the trial of the heavenly saints is over. The scene where they had been tried is now closed (Rev. 4), and they are seated round God's own throne.

Here too are the four living creatures, full of eyes before and behind, which are the symbol of discernment; for though it is judgment they have to execute, it is not, we need hardly say, unintelligible judgment. "The first living creature was like a lion, the second like a calf, the third had the face as of a man, and the fourth was like a flying eagle" (verse 7). The various symbols are taken from the

heads of God's creation here below, and represent different qualities of His judgments: the lion as the head of wild beasts, the ox or calf the head of cattle, man of intelligent beings, and the eagle of birds. The lion conveys the idea of strength or majestic power, the ox of patient endurance, the man of intelligence, and the eagle of rapidity. God shows us the strength, patience, intelligence, and rapidity with which His judgments should be executed. The four living creatures, having each of them six wings, denoted supernatural rapidity, and the eyes within intrinsic discernment (verse 8). Some have supposed, chiefly from the nearness of the living creatures to the supreme throne, that they, rather than the elders, must set forth the church.31 But this is quite a misconception. The reason, as it seems, why the living creatures are thus near, is because they are the judicial executive, and providential judgments will then be in progress. They characterize the action of the throne.

"And they have no rest day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." This is a remarkable word. It is not occupation with evil; but when God shows us the means or agencies by which He executes judgment, we have one unceasing cry as regards Him — "Holy, holy, holy."

One of the most important features of this scene for the soul is that the elders symbolize the heavenly saints in glory, the heads of the heavenly priesthood, found in their blessed employ above. But observe that when they are seen there first they are perfectly familiar with the scene: there is no hurry and no anxiety. They are peacefully seated on the thrones. There is no trembling even in the presence of God. These thunders and

lightnings and judgments might proceed from His throne, but still they sit peacefully on their thrones: not a single movement is produced. And what is it that does move them? They were entirely undisturbed by terror: judgment does not shake them from the thrones; but when those living creatures shall give glory and honour and thanks to; Him that sat on the throne, the four-and-twenty elders shall fall down, etc. Directly honour is given by the executors of judgment to Him that sat upon the throne, the elders worship. What satisfaction in God — what certainty that sin was at an end — does this show? He is surely going to judge, but He will not judge those who are made His righteousness in Christ. They are in sympathy with Him; and when the living creatures address God and ascribe glory and honour and thanks to Him, then it is that they rise from their thrones and are found prostrate before Him. More than that, in their homage they cast their crowns before the throne, saying, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive the glory and the honour and the power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy will they were, and were created,” They enter into His personal worthiness in a way that the living creatures do not, and with greater spiritual intelligence. They are elders; they understand here the creatorial and providential glory of God, just as in Rev. 5 we see that they enter into the worthiness and work of the Lamb. “For thou didst create all things,” etc. It is not, “are created and were created;” but for His will, or pleasure, they were in existence, even as they were originated at first (verses 10, 11). Thus their praise embraces the two great thoughts in the chapter — the creation glory and the governmental glory of God. “They were” (or they existed now under the care and the

government of God), “and they were created” (or to Him they owed their origination).

It is not merely what we shall feel then that God reveals to us; but He desires us to enter now into what we shall have then. This glory is given us already. Assuredly we shall not have such a place then, if we have not got its title upon earth. It is ours now by faith, though then we shall have it in its fulness. What enables the elders to be so calm in the midst of judgment? That which God had done for them through the cross of Jesus. But God has done this now. In Christ was wrought as perfect a work upon earth as there could be in heaven. He will not do another or a better work there, though it may be enjoyed more above. But God has revealed this scene to His own that they may now enter into it intelligently, and may be worshippers according to its spirit, even upon earth, seeing the glory which will be theirs in heaven. Worship is a more serious thing than is supposed by many. Anything that does not suit the presence of God in heaven is unfit for the presence of God on earth, Even in outward things He looks for our hearts to be exercised. It is a bad sign when the children of God allow themselves in any thing that is inconsistent with His presence. We are responsible that the worship of God should be conducted in a way worthy of Him — in solemnity but in liberty. We should be careful that we do not distract others, but rather help one another to enjoy Him better., The Lord grant that, walking in holy liberty, and remembering that it is not the order of the flesh or of forms that we have to keep up, we may be preserved from thinking that His order is less reverent than man’s! May He vouchsafe us to seek what becomes the presence of Him whom we come together to exalt! He

has given us the place of worshippers: may we worship Him in spirit and in truth! A better relation or employment God Himself could not give even in heaven.

30 The application of the jasper, in the account of the heavenly city, seems decisively to set aside the notion that the colour of this stone was intended to convey something in the appearance very awful as well as glorious. It is utterly out of the question to attribute such a feature to the New Jerusalem, of which the figure is used still more emphatically. I cannot but think, therefore, that we must search for a meaning in keeping with both, and that the idea of glory and splendour best meets all requirements.

31 All admit that the cherubim are invariable attendants on the throne of God, and that they were therefore, when in the most holy place, made of the same piece of gold as the ark — itself on which Jehovah sat. But it is argued that, though in till the Old Testament instances they were angelic, because the law had been ordained by angels (Gal. 3:17), they might become human in the Apocalypse, because the world to come is to be made subject to man. (Hebrews 2:5.) Thus the cherubim and the elders would represent the saints in a twofold aspect, active and contemplative. And certainly it is a notable fact, as another has remarked, that before the Lamb appears and takes the book, there are no angels mentioned who praise, and the cherubim or living creatures only express or celebrate the holy character of God, but are not associated with intelligent worship; whereas, when the Lamb is in the scene, the elders and cherubim join in intelligent worship, and the angels are expressly distinguished. But more may be said when we treat of Revelation 5.

Revelation 5

We have had in the preceding chapter a sight of the greatest significance and interest; God unfolding the interior, so to speak, of heaven — its thoughts and its employment, before the fall of a single blow of judgment upon the earth comes before us. But the picture would have been incomplete, if the Holy Ghost had not added the scene which we have revealed to us in this chapter. For if there was a divine manifestation, and the elders entered with spiritual intelligence into the worship of God, acknowledging His glory in creation and in providential government, yet they had no song there, much less did they sing “the new song.” Now it is the great object of the chapter before us to show this other and fuller way in which the elders are found prostrating themselves before the Lamb, and worshipping Him. The Holy Ghost tales particular pains to point out that God, as He discloses Himself, must be the object, spring, and foundation of all the adoration from the creature that follows. It is not an image conceived by the mind of man; that would be an idol. We must have a divine revelation to have divine truth and acceptable worship. The images of Rev. 4 left God in a sort of mysterious grandeur and majesty. Accordingly the worship of the elders did not go beyond recognising that God had created and sustained all things. It was His glory in creation and in providence, and theirs was suited intelligent praise.

In this chapter we have a sweeter scene. And why? Because we have the Lamb. What blessing does He not bring! He has blotted out sin — has removed the sting of death — has brought us nigh to God, and has put a song

in our mouth fit for His presence on high. In this blessed portion of the word we have, as the great subject of it, the bearing of redemption on the occupation or worship of heaven, and the connection of it with the counsels and ways of God on the earth. As long as it was only the creation-glory of God, we had no book at all. But now the prophet looks, and he sees in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a book-roll written within and on the back side, sealed up with seven seals (verse 1). In ancient times a book was a manuscript roll, written only in the inside in ordinary cases. But here there is a fulness of revelation. It flows over, as it were, and is inscribed on the back as well as within, and altogether is secured by seven seals.

But observe that, if God is seen with this book in His hand, it is only the Lamb who opens, and in connection with the Lamb that the contents of the book appear. How plain that there never can be any opening out of God's mind as regards things to come without the knowledge of Christ and of His glory in respect of them! Every Christian knows that there is no such thing as being saved without Christ; but many do not perceive that there is no real understanding of prophecy without Christ, nor any right knowledge of what the church is.

Thus men easily make religious societies, and call them churches. But I do not hesitate to say that it were easier to make heaven and earth than to make the church of God. But man's presumption has risen to such a height that the highest and holiest things of God are made the work (not to say the sport) of human hands, because they have practically divorced the church from Christ. They treat the subject as optional and external, instead of owning that it is the especial field of the deepest and

purest operations of the Spirit, the dearest object of the affections and the witness of the chief glories of Christ. The ordering of the church and the ways of God therein bring out the very depths and heights of divine wisdom and grace.

Again, one main difficulty now, as ever, is that those whom the Holy Ghost brings together round the name of the Lord are apt to carry with them a load of notions out of the country from whence they come — the long-cherished thoughts and habits which they have got to unlearn. They have also the same flesh as others — the same vanity, haste, conceit, etc. We must remember that what other people have done we are in no less danger of doing ourselves. If the church fell away so soon after God had brought out His new and blessed counsels of heavenly grace here below, it is much more easy now (when Christendom has forsaken and well-nigh forgotten its best privileges) to fall again into the same error and unfaithfulness. The great root of the mischief is the tendency to look at the church as ours, not Christ's. You never know the full truth of anything that concerns either God or ourselves apart from Christ. It remains always true that "the law was given by Moses" (and he was a most honoured servant of God), but "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

It is the same with prophetical interpretations. If I connect prophecy with myself, with my country, or my time, I may find in the seventh vial the last French Revolution, or the potato disease, or the Asiatic cholera, or the Crimean war, or the more recent struggles in Germany, Italy, and France. I may read the land "bordering with wings" of Great Britain and her colonies; I may interpret the vessels of bulrushes (Isa.

18) of her iron steamers. Do you think this too absurd? Christian men do so think, and this because they connect things with themselves instead of with Christ. The moment, on the other hand, anything is viewed in relation to Christ, He is the light, and we are delivered from these thoughts of men. For what is our country or our time? Neither one nor other is Christ. If I seek communion with Him, I shall at once be free from the desire to make something connected with myself the centre of. my system. If people look with an historical eye at the fall of the Roman empire or at the rise of the Papacy, at the dark ages, or at the previous invasions of the barbarians, they think it all very interesting, and assume that God could not have left these out of His book — that He must have said something about a transition so important. Thus even the invention of gunpowder has been conceived to be anticipated in Rev. 9, the discovery of America in Rev. 10, and the political importance of Protestantism in Rev. 11. In short, what is too wild for men to think they have not found out in the Apocalypse? And these things are put forth even by godly men. Is not God warning us by all this? May we be preserved from the same snare which has led away persons naturally as sober (or as weak) as we are! He shows us that no amount of information, learning, or ingenuity — nay, that not even piety — will enable us to understand God, or His word. What then will? Christ only.

The Lamb is the key to the things of God, and not our own minds. There are many who think that, the church being the peculiar object of God’s love, all prophecy must refer to it. Most erroneous idea! The reverse is true. It would be more true to say that the church is

never the subject about which prophecy occupies itself. Its proper province is to treat of earthly events; but the church has its place in heavenly glory When we come really to apprehend this book, we find that judgment is the subject of it; and the express object of these two chapters is to show that, before one of the judgments comes from the throne, the church is taken out of the scene, and is housed, we may say, in heavenly glory. The joint-heirs being then with Christ, God prepares to introduce the First-born Heir into the world. Unless this is seen, the Revelation as a whole cannot be understood. A person might derive comfort from particular parts, but this is not comprehending the book. To understand the scope of the prophecy, I must make Christ the object, and not the church; otherwise I am out of the line of vision in which the Spirit wrote it. Not the church, but Christ, is the centre of God's kingdom. Astronomers used to think that the earth was the centre round which the other heavenly bodies revolved, judging superficially by what presented itself to the senses. Christ is the true sun and centre of God's system.

Here then we find God about to unveil what man's mind could not possibly discover. "A strong angel proclaims with a loud voice," etc. (verse 2). Angels are those that "excel in strength" — not in intelligence. It is nowhere taught that they possess the same kind of spiritual understanding as the members of the body of Christ, The angels are never said, nor could they be said, to be sealed with the Holy Ghost. But He it is, witnessing to Christ, who is the power of intelligence in the feeblest child of God. If I want to know the true place of the church, the body, I must look at the place of Christ the Head; and if I desire to learn what God is going to do

with the earth, I must examine God's account of Christ as Son of David and as Son of man. If I am (unwittingly, no doubt) putting the church in His stead, I shall get all wrong. It is most true that God loves His saints, and intends that they shall share with Christ the rule over all the earth. Man draws from this the conclusion that the church must go on and prosper here below; but when the divine revelations touching Christ are weighed more fully, I learn another truth — that Christ, is coming in the way of judgment. This of course supposes that the professing body has not fulfilled its mission; for if it had, who would there be in Christendom for God to pour out His judgment upon? "That servant who knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes."

Look at the truth God brings before us here. First, there is the book, that is to say, the revelation of the counsels of God as to the earth. Not a creature was found worthy to open the book, neither to look thereon. The prophet weeps because of this (verses 3, 4). It should be borne in mind that in this book the apostle, John is not presented in his full place as an apostle to the church, but rather as a prophet. He was, it is true, a most honoured member of the body of Christ; but the object of the book is to not show our nearness to God in that relationship as a prophet of intermediate judgment and of final glory John writes. He is not here viewed as having perfect communion with what was passing around him. But this is very much the characteristic of what is described of the Old Testament seers; as it is said in 1 Peter 1:10, 11, "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired," etc. It may be also that the prophet John is here found in this position in the main, because the book of the Apocalypse

was not merely intended for the church which was to be translated to heaven, and then symbolically seen there; but it also meant to help a body of witnesses to be found on earth after the church is removed, who will go through tremendous suffering in: the last times. He is a representative man, but rather as it seems of those who are to enjoy the Spirit of prophecy here below in Israel, after the removal of the church to heaven, than of those who as sons are entitled by grace to communion with their Father's heart.

The elders show us the true place that belongs to the heavenly saints; and accordingly when John was weeping much, one of the elders, who thoroughly understood the matter, says to him, "Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book and the seven seals thereof" (verse 5). There at once we find the Lord Jesus introduced. His person is brought out, but it is in connection with the earthly purposes of God. He is in relation with David here. Jesse's son was he whom Jehovah elected King of Israel. (Psalm 78) He was emphatically David "the king" This title therefore expresses the purposes of God about Christ, as far as the earth and Israel are concerned.

Judah we know to be the tribe from which sprang the Christ or Messiah. Hence the style and character in which the elder announced the only One who could open the book — "the Lion of the tribe of Judah." Majesty and power among wild beasts upon earth are conveyed by the metaphor employed. Jacob compared Judah to a lion. One great chain runs through all scripture. The Holy Ghost who spoke by Jacob on his death-bed speaks now through John, and reveals that, rejected as He may be

on earth, the Lion of the tribe of Judah is owned on high, the One in whom God's purposes all centre. He is also "the root of David." This implies more than being David's Son: He is David's Lord. He might be of David's line, but He is David's root, the real though secret cause of all his titles and promises; just as John the Baptist said that He who came after him really was before him. But there is another remarkable intimation. It is not merely said that He is worthy, but that He hath prevailed." That little word "prevailed" (conquered or overcame) is bound up with the whole subject of the chapter It is the victory of Jesus by His blood. The Lord Jesus had personal worthiness at any time to take the book, but if He had received and opened it on the ground of His own worthiness alone, what would this have availed for us? All must have been sealed to us still. Therefore the Lord not only proved that He had personal worthiness to open the book which contained these future counsels of God, but He prevailed, and by virtue of that prevailing we are entitled to listen and to understand the mind of God even as to the future.

"And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing as it had been slain," etc. (ver. 6). John had heard of a Lion, but now that he came to look, it was a Lamb. When he expected to see the symbol of power, there stood before all the picture of most holy suffering and rejection. And this was the emblem of Christ as seen even on the throne in all the glory of heaven — a smitten One, guileless and unresisting "a Lamb as it had been slain." He is clothed with perfection of power; the seven horns no doubt mean as much. The seven eyes are the symbol of perfect intelligence — the fulness of the Spirit,

here in respect of earth and its government. But the One who is seen with all the power and wisdom is the Lamb. The basis I believe, of all our blessing stands in that blessed truth. The Lord of glory has become a Lamb, and as such must be known, if we are to profit by Him.

The Lamb, as in John 1:29, is what answers to the idea of redemption. Even with the Jews, when the lamb was offered up morning and evening God was showing that, if a poor sinful people had anything to do with Him, and if He could go on with them, it was because of the lamb. Those who by faith understood looked forward, however obscurely, to a better Lamb. God's Son was to become God's Lamb. And now that He is sent away from the world, He is the rejected One, and though glorified in heaven, He still bears there the marks of the sufferer. He is seen in the midst of the throne a Lamb as it had been slain.

Yet the sacrifice of the Lamb is not so much the subject of the Holy Ghost here as His being the holy sufferer accepted above. Only foundation for the sinner, He is also the pattern and the source of the hopes of His own, and for this reason, that if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him. Here then, as everywhere, we find that the King of kings and Lord of lords was the greatest of sufferers. God brings those two thoughts into connection in Rev. 17 — the suffering and rejected Lamb, and the King of kings. Why? Because God would show us all glory resting on Christ, the earth-rejected and despised One. The very cross, which seemed to be the death-blow of all hopes for Israel, opens the way for better thoughts and higher counsels of glory than ever. If we looked at Calvary in itself, it might have appeared that all was at an end, and hope itself for ever laid in the grave; for

there was the One who might have blessed them, and vanquished Satan, and terminated human misery and sin, Himself cast out and crucified! All seemed to be nipped in the bud, and prematurely closed in the death of Christ; and yet such was the very way God took that He might readily and eternally bless according to His own heart. What seemed for the time to be the victory of Satan was really the triumph of God for ever over him and his works.

Observe, it is as the Lamb that the Lord Jesus takes His place in heaven. What is the practical effect of this on our souls? The more a man enters into it, the less does he look for a place of honour and esteem in the world. He knows well that, while Satan is god of this world, and Christ hid in God, truth must be despised here below; and consequently he is not surprised if he sees prosperity crowning that which is evil. He will be prepared for all this, because it is just the history of Christ. The slain Lamb brings before us the whole moral course of the world. But one thing more let me ask, Does the Lamb bring before your soul your own history? Do you know what it is to be cast out because of Christ, not because you deserve to be rejected (though in another sense this is true), but because you desire to stand for the Lord Jesus at all cost?

But there is another side: Christ is glorified now — not indeed as yet in the eyes of the world. But heaven is opened to our view, and we find that He who was most despised here is exalted in heaven, and that God has gathered there round the Lamb that was slain others into association with Him. I ask, Has He called you? Has He given you the portion of the slain Lamb on the earth? If you are a Christian, you ought not to be happy without

knowing something of this. A saint ought to be pained if he finds that, instead of realizing, he does not know what such language means. God desires that we should know it, not only about Christ, but as our own portion here on earth.

In the days of old David, though God's anointed king, knew sorrow and rejection, while another king had the power for the time. So now, though the power of the beast is not yet fully developed, the world gets ready for him to come and govern it. David was cast out, despised, insulted — thought, or at least by insinuation said by Nabal, to be some run-away from his master; and certainly appearances looked very unpromising, surrounded as he was in the cave of Adullam by a band of the distressed and indebted in Israel. There were many of his followers who, as far as nature was concerned, may have justly deserved to be thought lightly of. But what a change grace makes! David was the special person whom God's heart rested on, and they knew it, and gathered round the object of God's love. There was a dignity that now accrued to them because of their companionship with David. We can hardly be more miserable and weak than we are, but as that one object gave all the value to the inmates of the cave of Adullam, so it is from association with Christ that all our blessing flows. The priests of God were even drawn there by David. But a greater than David is come, and God has sent down the Holy Ghost that we may know that the despised One is now in glory. And the Lord grant that we may have more practical acquaintance with His place of rejection here below, and not want to escape or deny it! There is nothing the flesh dislikes so much as to be despised. It is comparatively easy to

buckle up one's strength to meet persecution or determined opposition, but it is another thing to be content in being nothing at all. In us, worms as we are, this touches the will most; yet this is exactly what the Lord of glory, Jesus, condescended to be; and the enmity that despised Him rose to its climax at the cross. In spite of all the pretended enlightenment and liberalism of the present day, the spirit of the world is not really changed. I would not trust for a single moment that which arises from mere indifference toward God, or from glorifying the rights of man. Men count truth and error all as one, have no conscience toward God, and preach respect for each other. The spirit of the age that now looks and speaks so fair might at any moment rise up fiercely against God, and then we should learn the truth of our experience, that it is a slain Lamb whom we know and worship on high. We should discover the reality of it, and of fellowship with Him, and it would arouse many a saint of God from the slumber in which he is now; for even the wise virgins may sleep. "Awake! thou that sleepest" is said to Christians. If you have been asleep among dead things and persons, the Lord grant that you may not remain in this condition, but speedily clear yourself from these, "and Christ shall give you light!"

It is the slain Lamb that is evidently the great centre of heavenly worship. Now that sin is come into the world, the creative glory of God is not enough, nor even His providential government. If He is to be glorified, save in pure judgment of His adversaries, if displays of merciful goodness are to be known in such a world as this, if a new song is to be sung in heaven, there must be redemption, and this not by power only, but by suffering and blood. Hence, as the central throne in the preceding

chapter was filled by the Lord God, the Almighty, so here the central object on whom all blessing for the creature depends, to whom, equally with Him who sat on the throne, worship is offered, is the Lamb. All heaven honours Him as the Father is honoured. He is the First-born, the Heir, not only by rights of creation and intrinsic personal glory, but by redemption the divinely appointed "Heir of all things." God destines the wide universe for His sceptre. But how and on what plea would Christ take the inheritance? By power? Surely, all power was His. In the day of His humiliation the demons were subject to the least of His servants through His name. Even then He could say, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven," the energy of the seventy in casting out demons being to His spirit, I apprehend, the sign and earnest of complete victory in due time. "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy." Why not take the inheritance then and there? After the evidence of such triumphs over the usurper, why go down unto death, even the death of the cross? "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." Because God must be vindicated in His majesty, love, wisdom, and righteousness. Because Christ could not accept a defiled inheritance. (Compare Col. 1:20 and Heb. 9:21-23.) Because He would not reign alone, and in this He and His Father were of one mind. In His grace He would have joint-heirs, the sharers of His glory. Such a reconciliation was only possible through death, even if the offering were the body of His flesh, all spotless flesh as it was. Peace could not be made stably and divinely save through the blood of His cross. Therefore is it that He is here seen and sung as the Lamb. God means

assuredly to bring the First-begotten into the habitable world; and the book in His right hand describes, I suppose, the process whereby the inheritance is to be put into His hands; but purchase by blood, blessed be His name, is the ground on which all is taken. When He receives the book, all is in motion. As in Rev. 4, when the living creatures pay honour to God, the twenty-four elders fall down and do homage, so here, when the Lamb takes the book out of the right hand of Him that sat on the throne, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders are prostrate before Him. Though it might be opened for the purpose of striking some blow, there was no apprehension, no trouble, no concern about themselves in particular; they fell down before the Lamb. It was not a question of merely receiving from God, but they would exalt Him. Far from taking away anything from God, on the contrary, in the very presence of the throne and of Him that sat on it, the Lamb is the object of worship, the source of its purest and deepest strains. God is best glorified when the Lamb has His meed of praise.

They had “each a harp and golden bowls32 full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.” In the tabernacle service of the wilderness silver trumpets were used for holy purposes by the priests. David first introduced the harp, separating the sons of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, for songs in the house of the Lord with cymbals, psalteries, and harps. These, like the priests, were divided into twenty-four classes; so that the allusion is obvious, with that measure of difference which is characteristic of the Apocalypse. Priestly and choral services are here blended in perfection. Does not this also serve to show that the elders only are here said

to have harps and basons of incense? In Rev. 15 the four living creatures give the angels the seven golden bowls full of divine wrath. Thus all is in keeping: the elders being the heads of royal priesthood, as the cherubim wait on the execution of God's judgments, though both unite (Rev. 5) in the fullest homage to the Lamb. But who are those "saints" that pray? The elders, or the church, were in heaven, and in full choir of praise. Whose prayers then are these,? They come from saints who will suffer when the church is above. The elders are those heavenly saints who have been removed previously, including perhaps the Old Testament saints. They are in the place of adoration and praise, whereas prayer implies reed. If they have to do with prayers, it is the prayers of others, not their own. Besides they sing a new song, that of the Lamb's purchase by blood, saying, "Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain," etc.

A very important change occurs in this verse, well known to every person tolerably acquainted with the original scriptures. Persons who have studied the most ancient manuscripts and other witnesses of this book, all agree that it is, "and hast made them to our God kings (or a kingdom) and priests" (ver. 10). Who are those meant by "them" and made kings and priests "to our God"? They do not speak of themselves.

Indeed, I am prepared to go farther, and am bound to state my firm impression that in the ninth verse the word "us" was put in by copyists who supposed that the elders were celebrating their own blessing.33 But the elders are so perfectly at rest about themselves, that they can be occupied about others. I believe, accordingly, that the true sense is this: "Thou art worthy to take the book,.... for thou wast slain, and hast bought

to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made them to our God kings and priests; and they shall reign over the earth." They are speaking about the saints whose prayers they were offering As they were occupied with their prayers, so here they were praising the Lord for His goodness to the saints still on earth. They intimate that in taking above the heavenly saints, He had not done with His rich mercy; that, even in the midst of His judgments, He would have a purchased people, who were to share the glory of the kingdom as a royal priesthood, instead of being swallowed up in the delusions of antichrist.

These anticipated companions are the same probably that we see in Revelation 6 as "souls under the altar, slain for the word of God," etc.; and in Revelation 14, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord from henceforth," etc.; and in Revelation 15, "Them that had gotten the victory over the beast," etc. There are other allusions also in the body of the book to the righteous. Clearly they were saints of God upon the earth in conflict or tribulation, after the elders (who, as we saw, represent the church or the heavenly saints) were translated to heaven. As to the saints who won the victory over the beast, "they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb." Observe the mingled character of the scene. True, it was the song of the Lamb; but it was the song of Moses too: it was partly earthly and partly heavenly. Again, in Revelation 20:4, it is said, "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them." These are the elders, already risen or changed, seated upon the thrones "And I saw the souls of them, that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God" (i.e., the people whose souls he had seen in

Revelation 6); and, again, those “which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads;” these last being the persons that had sung the song of victory in Revelation 15. Thus the two classes which had suffered, after the rapture of the church, are at length united with the rest in glory, and all reign together with Christ.

It will be remarked how thoroughly the whole agrees with the song in Revelation 5. The elders are in heaven, in the enjoyment of God and the Lamb; but there are saints on earth who are praying, and the elders above are occupied about their prayers, and celebrate the worthiness and work of the Lamb in behalf of others who should reign over the earth as well as themselves. 34 Instead of this taking a single fraction away from us, it adds indirectly, if not in itself, to the place of glory in which the church is seen in heaven. They are so fully blest that they can heartily rejoice in the good of others. There are some too apt to be restless if they are not always listening to the gospel for themselves — not because they value it more than others, but because they are not thoroughly established in grace. When our hearts are quite satisfied, we do not feel the need of anxiously picking and choosing in the scriptures; we prefer the Lord to choose for us, and are thankful, because it may be something to His praise that we perhaps have not known before, or a weapon we may want in our next conflict with the enemy. Whatever exalts Christ and glorifies Him is that which we should delight in. Whatever detects the deceitfulness of our hearts is most salutary to us. When the elders are found thanking God, they take up His goodness to those who are suffering on the earth, and they bless the Lamb

because He had been slain and had bought these also to their God. It was their delight to think of that work so rich in results for God — to think of others from every quarter who should share the kingdom over the earth.

The angels take up, not the new song in view of the Lamb's purchase, but His worthiness to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. Loudly do they proclaim His title to dominion whom man despised and slew. "Worthy [not "art thou," but] is the Lamb that was slain" (verses 11, 12). They do not sing of His purchase, because they were not so bought; they have not to do with it, though they are sustained by the power of God; but those who have known their need as poor sinners can well sing the new song. The angels speak of His worth and His death, but they do not chant the deep and joyous notes of the blood-bought. If I look at the gift and person of Christ, I can see how God's character comes out, and His love is manifested. if I look at the great work of Christ., and what I have in and with Him as He is, I can see how the love of God with us is perfected. But where is anything in the glory of heaven that shines so much as the cross of Christ? We may follow Jesus on the earth, and see the holiness of God; we may glance above, and see how He delights in having us happy around Him; we may look again at Jesus in His path on earth, seeking out the lost, the miserable, and laying His hands on babes, even touching the leper; but whether we think of the holiness or the love of God, of His righteousness or His grace, it is in the cross where all is found and displayed to faith, as we can get it nowhere else.

"And every creature which is in the heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth,35 and such as are on the

sea, and all things in them, heard I saying, Blessing,... to him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever" (verse 13). The chord is touched, the keynote sounded, and heard at last in heaven. If the Lamb takes the book, not a creature but responds in joy to the ear of the seer, as now the whole of the lower universe groans in sorrow because of Adam's sin. Why should they not rejoice if God and the Lamb unite to deliver? Doubtless it is but the opening out of the Lamb's title-deed; and much remains to be done in destroying the works of the devil. and those that destroy the earth. Still this is the sure signal, and before God every creature anticipates in sympathy.

All bow down before the Lamb. The myriads of angels join in acknowledgement of His death; but it is the place of the heavenly saints to enter into the sense of its efficacy, yea, and into the deep joy — God's joy — in the blessing of others, and not merely their own. The four living creatures set to it their seal, and say "Amen." but the elders fall down and do homage.36 They did not merely yield their assent to all, but their hearts went along with it. It is ever their place.

Such a subject as this may well leave one immensely behind. We must be living very much in its depths in order to feel it aright, or to give it an adequate expression. But if I have directed attention to the blessedness of Christ as the slain Lamb, and shown that God makes Him to be the key for understanding His otherwise hidden purposes, I shall be thankful. Even to understand God's purposes about the earth, we must see the Lamb. It is only in communion with Him that we can enter into them. To appreciate what follows, we must be subject to God's thoughts of Christ; we must no

back to what God begins with; we must see and hear the Lamb. The Lord grant that such may be our better portion? We shall be near that Blessed One, in whose person and work shines all that is gracious and blessed in God, from whom we can learn in peace His most solemn judgment of man's rebellion and apostasy.

32 The reviewer in Evangelical Christendom, August, 1860, p. 451, objects, among other departures from "the time-honoured expressions of our venerable Saxon Bible," that I have given "bowls" instead of "vials." But surely he must be aware that "a small bottle" is not intended by φιάλη here, or anywhere else in the book, but rather a broad open vessel or bason. Compare in the LXX. Ex. 27:3; Ex. 38:3; Num. 7 passim: also answering to other Hebrew words, Num. 4:14; 2 Chron. 4:16, etc. We ought not to sacrifice the sense to sound. The English word "vial," though derived from the Greek, really misleads. Habit or the ear may account for such a preference.

33 It cannot be denied that the true readings of Rev. 5:9, 10, are some of them unusually hard to be decided. Out of five there are four uncial MSS. available, one of the oldest being deficient from Rev. 3:19, to 5:16. The versions too are conflicting, and so are the editors. There is no doubt, however, that we are obliged to read αὐτούς, "them" (and not ἡμᾶς, "us") in verse 10, on the authority of the four uncials (the palimpsest of Paris being here deficient and so leaving us one short), forty cursives, and many ancient versions. But evidently that substitution, true and certain as it is, of them for "us" in verse 10, obscures or destroys the connection with the preceding verse, if "us" is supposed to hold its ground in verse 9. And this is the more noticeable, as both clauses

form part of the same song in the mouth of the same personages. For what more incongruous than "redeemed us.....and made them," when no other class has been referred to between the clauses? Hence the strangest solutions of the difficulty have been proposed. Thus Prof. 31. Stuart, who takes for granted the correctness of the text of Griesbach and Scholz, refers the αὐτούς of verse 10 to φυλῆς, γλώσσης κ.τ.λ. i.e. "thou hast made every tribe," etc., "to be kings and priests." Now, limit this as you may, it is a construction awkward in the extreme, and without parallel in St. John, or perhaps in any other author. Besides, it ignores, instead of solving, the enigma. For ἡμᾶς ἐκ is left out of the result, and if the same party is intended (as Prof. S. thinks), the question is, why should "us" be used in verse 9, and "them" in verse 10? The alternative to which the Professor is reduced, of portioning out this short song between the living creatures and the elders, and thus accounting for the change in the pronouns, strikes one as an evidence of the difficulty rather than of its removal. Singular to say, he alludes to the true key, as it seems to me, as if it had no authority beyond the conjecture of an eccentric German. The truth is that in one of the best manuscripts (A or the Codex Alexandrinus) which contain the passage, ἡμᾶς in verse 9 does not appear; nor is any equivalent given in one of the oldest extant versions, the Aethiopic of the fourth century. It is also wanting in a cursive MS. known in Codex Borgiae. I admit that in this case the amount of testimony is far from being considerable. Nevertheless the omission seemed probable to Griesbach; and in fact it is dropped in some of the latest editions of the Greek Testament, which appeal to ancient authority. Tischendorf omitted it from the first, as he does still:

Lachmann had it in his earlier manual, but erased it in his second and more correct edition: and the younger Buttmann has it not in his recent manual Greek Testament (Leipsic, 1856): so Dean Alford. These critics have arrived at that conclusion on independent principles, and on purely external grounds. If it be sound, the construction is elliptical but frequent, especially in the writings of St. John (compare John 16:17; 2 John 4; Rev. 2:10; Rev. 3:9; Rev. 11:9). There can be no objection, therefore, on the score of phraseology, but, on the contrary, the sentence runs quite in his style without ἡμᾶς. Some scribe, ignorant of this, and supposing that the saints in heaven must needs sing there of their own redemption, as they had done on earth (Rev. 1:5, 6), may have inserted the first ἡμᾶς. This, in turn, producing a jar with the αὐτούς in the following verse, would naturally require the further demand of taking its place there; and that again would lead to the change in the person of the verb in the last clause. The internal considerations I believe to be very weighty in favour of the omission; but these have been, perhaps, sufficiently given above in the text. The reading ἠγόρασας τῳ θειῳ ἡμῶν (as in Cod. 44) appears to be the original text. The Alexandrian MS. which is the nearest among those that diverge, followed pretty closely by the Aethiopic, omits ἡμῶν in verse 9 and τῳ θεῳ ἡμῶν in verse 10. But these words are unquestionably genuine, and add much to the proof that the elders praised the Lamb for His redemption of others, distinct from themselves.

34 I cannot but think Mr. E.’s remarks and notes on this (Horae Apoc. i. pp. 86-96) confused and unsatisfactory. He reasons from vulgar readings which no, competent

critic, whatever may be his bias, can entertain. It is easy to convert a preconceived opinion into a decision that our own view is much more simple. It is also a serious mistake to say that the sense is “substantially the same,” whether we have us or they in verse 10. Again, the Sinaitic and Porphyrian MSS. turn the scale in favour of the twenty-two cursives, and the better ancient versions, which support βασιλεύσουσιν against A B, eighteen cursives, etc., exhibiting the present tense. but ἡμᾶς and βασιλεύομεν are indefensible and manifestly the work of a meddling corrector. It is strange too that the question of the ellipse in verse 9 is passed over in silence, seeing that there “us” is, to say the least, doubtful; and if spurious removes the main reason for viewing the ζῶα as redeemed. Mr. E. treats this last idea as “unquestionable,” of which there is really no proof whatever. It is evident, further, that there is much embarrassment as to the condition of the elders, in one page referring their insignia to the resurrection-state, and in the next concluding that it is the division of the church consisting of the departed in paradise especially, that we must suppose depicted here. Finally, it is erroneous to speak of “the general assembly of the church;” for πανηγύρει belongs to the clause about the angels. But letting this pass (as the authorised version misleads many in Heb. 12), what is meant by the apparent distinction, in p. 94, between the church of the first-born, and the spirits of just men made perfect? I quite allow this; but I do not see its consistency with Mr. E.’s statement about the elders and cherubim.

35 Every creature “under the earth,”

ὑποκάτω τῆς γῆς, must be carefully distinguished, notwithstanding Bengel, from the καταχθονίων in Phil.

2:10. The former, I suppose, means the things, animate or inanimate, beneath the earth's surface which anticipate in the vision, their deliverance from corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. They cannot of course share the liberty of grace which we enjoy; but when we are in the glory, it will be the pledge of their glorious change speedily to follow. The latter in Philippians means the infernal beings, who must bow with every knee elsewhere at (or in) the name of Jesus. I am aware that Dean Alford, with Theodoret, etc., takes καταχ. as the dead; but this, though a classical usage of the word, seems to be far from the scope of the passage.

36 It is well to note that all the reliable authorities, including all the five uncials, a vast body of cursives, and most versions, etc., omit ζῶντι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων. How admirably this omission coalesces with the context and maintains the glory of God and the Lamb as the common object of homage on the part of the elders is evident.

Revelation 6

From the two preceding chapters the lessons are apparent, and I do not doubt should be learned: firstly, God sits on the throne, whence proceed lightnings, voices, and thunders; secondly, all things are given into the hands of the Lamb, who unfolds all; thirdly, the perfect security and the blessed employment of the heavenly saints, then removed from the scene of trial; and this long before the day of the Lord, when their blessing will be manifested fully to the world. The moment the soul and the body, or both (the soul now, the soul and body united at the coming of Christ), leave this world, there is for the saints, I believe, immediate enjoyment of the Lord. Is that a scriptural thought which, in a hymn we sometimes sing, about “soaring to worlds unknown”? Does scripture intimate anything at all like a soul journeying on a voyage of discovery? On the contrary does it not meet with peaceful and immediate entrance into the presence of the Lord? When heaven is allowed to burst for a moment upon men on the earth (as, for instance, at the birth and the transfiguration, and in the cases of Stephen, Paul, etc.) it appears that there is no such great distance between them. Of course it is not a question of mere physical space. But there is a divine power which at once brings a person out of the present state of existence into the enjoyed presence of the Lord. So when He Himself was speaking to the poor dying thief, it was “today shalt thou be with me in paradise,” — that very day. There is nothing to my mind like the poetical sentiment of soaring to worlds unknown.

But while the soul goes at once into the presence of the Lord in the case of death, and “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,” the saints will be caught up at the coming of Christ; yet we must remember that their manifestation will be a different and later event. Other passages prove or imply an interval. But we should not be able so plainly to gather from other scriptures how considerable it will be between their gathering to the Lord and their manifestation to the world, but for the prophetic part of the Revelation, which makes it quite clear. God has important purposes to fulfil during this interval. He has to put the earth into a condition to receive the Lord Jesus, who as the great Heir of all things must be put in possession of the inheritance. But, further, He purposes to bring the joint-heirs from heaven along with Jesus. Accordingly the interval is filled up with the preparations for all this. To accomplish it, there must be judgments upon the world’s wickedness; but, parallel with these judgments, we have some signal acts of divine mercy. When the great and terrible day of Jehovah comes, there will be forbearance no longer with such as are found evil; “the door is shut.” But during the intervening time there will be testimony and the reception of it among both Jews and Gentiles; but so much the more surely judgment for those who, having heard the gospel now, will have rejected it. I see small ground to conclude that there will be hope of mercy for such. There will be an interval of some years, in which God will work in judgment and in mercy — judgments increasing in severity on these favoured lands where the gospel has been preached; but I doubt any such thing as the grace that now is. The sad reverse will appear. God will give up to blind hardness those who have now refused His mercy. He will, as it were, retire from these

countries to save outside them; and from those who have been talking so self-complacently about the light with which they are favoured, God will then, if I read prophecy aright, turn to such as are now far away from the gospel.

Is it not a solemn thought that, where the light of Christendom is now most found, there will be the greatest darkness of apostacy? As to this scripture it is plain enough. (2 Thess. 2) He lets us know that the favoured scene of God's mercy, where He is now at work and His word is most circulated, is destined to fall back into the most frightful and fatal idolatry — into the union of infidelity along with it — into anti-christianism. (Dan. 11:36 et seqq.; Rev. 13.) Such a change may be set down as the gloomy dream of a feverish mind. But this is because men prefer to believe their own thoughts and fancies, and do not take the trouble of searching into God's word to see what is there. Alas! do not too many in Christendom even make the prophetic word a butt for their ridicule? Will it be believed that men pride themselves on their ignorance of a great part of scripture? Would it be conceived, if it were not the fact, that the wise and prudent hold as an axiom that prophecy was not given to show us what is coming, but only, when the events are past, to prove that God had foreknown them? Surely the Christian wants no proof of this; and prophecy is given that the believer should know how God opens to us His secrets about what He is going to do on the earth. We have the word and the Spirit to make us understand it. But if Christians have not faith in the prophetic word, it cannot profit them; for, like the rest of scripture, that word must be mixed with faith in them that hear it.

One important thing, then, we have seen to be assumed — the removal of the heavenly saints from the earth. In Rev. 4, 5 and throughout the body of the book they are no longer found there. They are glorified in heaven, and yet it is not until Rev. 19 that they are manifested, when they come out of heaven. Between these two points we have evidently a long series of events. We have seven seals, seven trumpets, seven vials, with various episodes of great interest and importance. These three different series of judgments are not executed by the Lord in person. It is manifest that they must occur after the Lord has come to receive His church, but before He executes His grand personal judgment in Rev. 19. For it is beyond dispute that, before the saints are taken to the Lord and so can come with Him, He must have come for them. How then did those symbolised by the four and twenty glorified elders get to heaven?

It may be said, they might have been taken into this position individually through death, or that their souls might be glorified there. But there is no such thought in scripture as the souls of the saints being seated on thrones, and having crowns on their heads. Neither do the souls of the saints form the complete headship of heavenly priests, as taught us by the four and twenty elders; for we know from 1 Thess. 4 that part of the heavenly company will be found alive on earth up to the presence of the Lord which raises the dead and changes the living believers. There can be no such completeness, then, as is meant by the symbol till the Lord will have translated both to meet Him above. The allusion is to the twenty-four orders of the priesthood set up by king David. Now Christ is at that time about to take the place of king, and, just as before the kingdom of Solomon was

established, David divided the priesthood into twenty-four courses, so we find that before the true Solomon, the Lord Jesus, comes out in all His glory, we have the antitypical courses as a whole. The heavenly priesthood is seen complete.

It might be asked, Why is it only the heads that are seen, and not the body of the priesthood? It appears probable, but I only offer it as a suggestion, that those that are taken up when the Lord comes will form the heads of the priesthood, and that those who suffer after and join them may be the subordinate body. Twenty-four is necessarily the complete sum of the courses, or of their chiefs. Now, the souls in heaven can never be even that completed; because till Christ comes, there will always be a part of the church remaining on the earth, as we have just seen. I conceive, therefore, that by the full priestly number twenty-four surrounding the throne, God intends to show that they are not that portion which consists of the souls in paradise;37 for it requires the addition of us who are alive and remain, in order to make up the church of the firstborn, or the then complete sum of the risen and changed saints. The heavenly saints up to that time must then be necessarily removed to their seats on high.

How and when did this take place? There is no real difficulty about their translation, because they never can be removed as a complete body, and changed, till the Lord Jesus comes Himself; as He said, “If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself.” And this evidently is not sending angels for them. We find angels sent to gather in elect Jews, or Israel, from the four quarters of heaven (Matt. 24); but to gather in His church He comes Himself. And

this falls in with what we said elsewhere. The saints in Thessalonica were told to wait for God's Son from heaven (1 Thess. 1); and as to those who were gone, they were not to sorrow as those who had no hope. For the lord Himself — not merely by angelic or providential intervention, but the Lord Himself — would descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. There might be angels, but there is not a word said about them here. When the Lord is revealed executing vengeance angels will accompany Him; but here, at the descent of the Lord Himself, "the dead in Christ shall rise first," forming one portion of the heavenly saints; then "we which are alive and remain" shall be caught up together with them. There and then, as it seems to me, we have the twenty-four elders, evidently the whole of the priestly heads. The saints whose bodies are in their graves are raised first, then the surviving saints are changed, by the presence of the Lord. There is but the barest interval of a moment between those two momentous effects of the voice of the Son of God. And so shall we, caught up together, ever be with the Lord.

This most solemn and blessed event must occur therefore between Revelation 3 and 4. It is not described, because the object of the Revelation is not to show the Lord's coming in the way of grace, though there are of course allusions to it. There is an entire passing over of His presence to meet His heavenly saints in the prophetic visions of the Revelation, but a full description of His coming with them in Rev. 19. This last is what is styled elsewhere the appearing or day of the Lord, when He punishes with everlasting destruction from His presence, and from the glory of His power.

During this interval the heavenly saints are with the Lord above; all the members of the church are there, and in their bodies of glory. The first mention of them is in Revelation 4, where we find not angels, but redeemed men — persons whose very vesture of white, whose thrones, and crowns of gold, are all connected with redemption — persons who are evidently exercising their priesthood before God in Rev. 5. These are the elders. How did they get there? The Lord must have come, and have gathered them to Himself in the air, and so have accomplished His promise to them: — “In my Father’s house are many mansions.” “I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am ye may be also. So now when this future scene arrives, having prepared the place, He will have come for them, and taken them to the Father’s house.

It is remarkable, however, as showing the character of this book, that, although we do see them in the presence of God, it is not called the house of the Father. On the contrary, it is a throne that is seen; and so too, when He who sits thereon is named, it is not as the Father, but as the Lord God Almighty. When we speak of God as “the Father,” it is to express the nearest place of affection into which God has brought us; and when we hear of God as “the Lord God Almighty,” it is connected with the putting forth of Divine power and government. “God,” as such, is the most general and abstract name, and implies no relationship with another being. But to be called “the Father” necessarily implies the closest relationship of love, whether spoken in the highest and intrinsic and eternal sense of Jesus as the Son of the Father, or subordinately of those whom He has taken

into the adoption of sons, loved with the same love. (John 17 and 1 John 3.)

In Genesis 1 creation is the subject, and God (or Elohim) is spoken of as the One who originates. In the next chapter of Genesis He is called the "Lord (or Jehovah) God," because He is there entering into special connection with His creatures, and Adam is put in the place of responsibility to Him as Jehovah-Elohim, that is the God of creation in moral relationship. How perfect is every word of God! Infidels, instead of seeing the perfectness of His word, have only reasoned from their own ignorance and impotence, and have endeavoured to prove that these chapters must have been written by two different persons, because of the different titles given to God. But instead of being the varying style of different men, it is the wisdom of God that discovers itself in these distinctions. When the relationship of authority occurs, and man is put under the test of obedience, Jehovah-Elohim is the title used; but when in the New Testament He enters into relationship with sons, it is "the Father." He did not bring out the latter name as a formal name until THE SON came, who opened, so to speak, the sluice, that all God's grace might flow out, and specially in His resurrection by virtue of His death. But between the two extremes of the trial of the creature in Eden and the accomplishment of redemption, God brought out first the name of Almighty, and next that of Jehovah. Abraham was called to leave his own country and kindred, called to be a pilgrim, having none but God to look to, and so Jehovah most suitably reveals Himself to him as El-Shaddai, God Almighty. (Gen. 17: l.) Subsequently He makes Himself

known to Israel by His name Jehovah, as a ground of national relationship.

Here the Lord constantly brings out these names, but not that of Father, or at least not to us, but to Jesus. Just as the scene is not the Father's house, but the throne, so the title taken by God is not that of Father. The centre of this heavenly scene is the throne of God, and the saints are not alluded to as enjoying mansions with the Son in the Father's house, but are seen enthroned. God will be no longer gathering the church on earth; Jesus will have come for it, and gone above. When the church was the object of God's care on the earth, they even here below called Him Father; but when He is going to execute judgment on the earth, they, already raptured and in heaven, understand it and address Him accordingly.

The Lord's coming, then, to receive the church must have been before the facts which answer to the vision of the twenty-four enthroned elders. Some people may be slow to believe that the prophecy would pass over such an important event in silence. But it is forgotten that, whenever and wherever you put it, there is silence as to the act of the saints' rapture in the book of Revelation. The only question is, Where according to our best light from scripture is it to be understood here? It must, in my judgment, be supposed before the heavenly saints can be seen as a complete body above, which is in Revelation 4. The Lord will then have come and received the glorified saints, and given them their place in the presence of God, before any of the judgments come on the world. Terrible things in righteousness are going to be enacted, but the saints will be above them all. The seals, and vials, and trumpets, have no terrors for them; they call out from the glorified not trembling, but

worship only. Nay, these risen ones will be occupied, it seems, about their brethren who are still in the midst of trial; for there shall be saints called after the present work of God in forming the church is done with, brethren who will suffer on the earth after we are gone. Of these the central part of the Revelation treats (Rev. 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, etc.). Again there will be godly souls alive when the King comes to sit on the throne of His glory, and all the nations are gathered before Him, whom He will call “my brethren.” As is plain in the latter part of Matt. 25, the living Gentiles, or nations then on the earth, will be treated according to the way in which they may have behaved to the messengers of the King. The sheep will have proved themselves to have faith in the King, because they have received His servants; the conduct of the goats will have shown their incredulity. For when all the preliminary warnings given to those on the earth are over; when all the judgments that proceed from the throne in rapid succession have been proved to be in vain, and the rebellious hearts of men are only rising higher against God, the Lord says as it were, “I will send them no more chastenings, will wait no longer for a repentance which is refused, but will come myself and sweep them away to destruction.” Accordingly this day of judgment on the quick we have in Revelation 19. And the interval, from Revelation 4 and 5 to Revelation 19, is filled by new dealings of God in providential judgments, by intermingled mercy to Jews and Gentiles, and by glances at the heavenly saints in the presence of God.

No doubt the souls of dying saints go to God during the interval, but whatever may be the blessedness reserved for such (Rev. 14:13), the saints who are already

changed remain there through the whole period. The heavenly saints, including those that are true Christians now, those that have been such before, and the Old Testament saints, may be caught up at any time to be with the Lord. I know no scriptural ground which entitles a believer to say, He will not come tomorrow. Who can affirm with divine authority that there is something yet remaining to be done before, that there must be a delay? No doubt there may be more or less time to intervene, but scripture never puts the delay between us and Christ's coming, but before His day. As a servant with his hand upon the door, and on the stretch as it were for his master's arrival, so as to be able when he comes to open unto him immediately-such is the true attitude of the child of God now. So says our Lord Himself. He would have, if so we may speak, everything settled up. He looks for practical readiness at all times. Not as though we could do anything by way of preparation. Thanks be to God, He has made us meet through the grace of Christ. But there may be things in our ways and walk, in our spirit and hopes and objects, which will not stand the light of His presence. Whatever we do, we should seek to enter on nothing that renders the thought of the lord's coming unwelcome.

We must then, if wise, beware of speculations or plans which suppose us to have a long time before us. The Lord desires us to be as travellers passing through a foreign land, and withal going out in desire to meet Him who is speedily coming for us. The Lord may be a little longer than we think; but He is coming, and this too at an hour when men think not. His coming will immediately act on all the heavenly saints, raising the dead, changing the living, and removing both to Himself

above. Then follow the scenes of Rev. 4 and 5, which let us see the interest of the glorified saints in the righteous who suffer on the earth, after the others are gone to heaven. They cannot apply fully, either while only a part of the church is above and in the separate state; or when the millennial reign is arrived. They suppose an interval between these two things, when the Lord will have come and changed them into His risen likeness, and before they accompany Him from heaven in order to judge and reign.38 Next we come to the earthly course of “the things that must be after these.” The seals are not judgments executed by the Lord, but of a providential nature. Some, because of the white horse, have thought that the first seal applied to Christ. On the face of it, what more strange than to conceive Him so represented, seeing that He it is who, as the Lamb, opens the seals successively, and, when clearly alluded to under the contents of the sixth seal, still preserves the name of the Lamb! And yet stranger that He should enter on a course of conquest at the very time, if you take it historically, when all Asia had turned away from Paul; when Timothy had the sad and sure foreboding of evil men and seducers waxing worse and worse; when John himself had written, or was about to write, “Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.” Nevertheless most of the ancients and not a few moderns begin their comments with this false start.

Some, again, refer it to the second advent; but this quite upsets the order of the seals fixed by the Holy Ghost, and indeed the structure of all the book. It is true that in Rev. 19 where the Lord comes judicially and in person,

He is represented as riding upon a white horse. But there is all the difference possible between that vision of the white horse and the opening of Rev. 6. This horse does not issue from heaven, as that in Rev. 19 does. Next, there is not a word in Rev. 6 about the rider, which necessarily means Christ; whereas in Rev. 19 He is called Faithful and True, and said to judge and make war in righteousness. Of whom could this be said save of One? His eyes were as a flame of fire. His written name none knew but Himself. The Word of God — King of kings, Lord of lords — can be the titles of none but Jesus. Not to speak of the blood-dipped vesture, the sword proceeding out of the mouth, the iron rod wherewith to rule, and the treading the wine-press of divine wrath, are descriptions in Rev. 19 to which nothing answers in the rider of Rev. 6. No armies followed here, clothed in fine linen, etc. And though the rider is said to have a crown given to him, the word is quite different from that employed in Rev. 19, which signifies a kingly diadem, the crown of royalty. The earlier Romans were fond of a sort of chaplet, which did not to their mind, like the imperial diadem, convey the idea of absolute authority and that is the crown mentioned in Revelation 6.

Furthermore, there are two frequent figures or symbols used in scripture to express power; the one is the throne, and the other is the horse. Thus we have already seen the supreme throne above, and now we have the horse with the rider on earth. The same thing is seen in Rev. 19 and Rev. 20. The symbol of horses in the one chapter, and of thrones in the other. The difference between the bearing is this: When power is meant by putting down of rival or opposing authority on earth,

“the horse” is taken, as from its use in war, it is intended to subdue; but when the victory is won, and it is a question not of subjugation, but of governing and judging, “the throne” is used, as being the fit emblem of rule over those who have been thus subdued or are subject. When Christ is going to put down His enemies, He is seen in the vision of chap. 19 on the horse, used to represent the exertion of His power to subdue; when the subsequent sway is meant, thrones appear in chap. 20. It would be quite weak, of course, for persons to confound this symbolic use with a material horse or throne. The idea of the former is power to subdue, and of the latter is dominion after the victory has been gained. The throne may also be used, as it is afterwards, for the solemn and eternal judgment of the dead — a throne of stainless holiness. Still even here, it is Christ’s judgment before the kingdom is given up to God. (1 Cor. 15; 2 Tim. 4)

Of course we cannot apply the four horses and their riders to the great empires, three of which had long disappeared. Equally untenable at least is the notion that four successive religions are intended, especially when one hears it gravely laid down that Infidelity closes the list, which primitive Christianity opens, followed by Mahomedanism and Popery. It is hard to say whether such thoughts are most opposed to time or place, to congruity or context. Again, it is agreed that it is harsh in the extreme, and in almost every point of view, to understand the first seal of Christ or the church in early gospel triumphs, and then the three subsequent ones of the Roman empire or emperors.

But it is important here to notice, that there is positive ground from the Apocalypse itself to deny the

assumption that the horse means the Roman empire. I do not refer to passages like Revelation 9:17, where literal cavalry seem to be meant; but Revelation 19 furnishes an example of its symbolic use. Does the Lord on the white horse mean His direction of the Roman empire? Or the white horses of the linen-clad hosts, do they imply imperial powers? Surely we must look for an interpretation more in keeping with its usage elsewhere. It means, in my judgment, a militant aggressive agency towards the earth, though it may be from heaven. Hence, as in Zech. 1, it may apply to the Lord, or to the various imperial powers which succeeded Babylon. And so the chariots with the horses of various colours in Zech. 6. But as distinguished from the horns (Rev. 1:19), the former symbol rather refers to the providential instruments behind the scene, and connected especially with these empires, than to the rulers themselves or their realms. Plainly therefore there is no ground from the book itself or from Zechariah, to which the allusion is obvious, to interpret the horse simply of the Roman empire.

Nor is there better ground in profane history to maintain that the horse is the special sign of that people and power. And no wonder. For the Roman infantry was more characteristic of their military power than their cavalry. No doubt the horse abounds on their medals, but not more comparatively than among other warlike nations, particularly in the east, who so set forth their victories. It had formerly been one of the Roman standards of war, but for two centuries before Domitian all the varieties had given way to the eagle.

Abstractly, then, the horse cannot be regarded as the necessary national badge of Rome, or emblem of the

Roman empire. Whether it be referred to here must depend on contextual considerations. And here it appears to me that the fourth seal rises up conclusively against such a view, the four seals being providential judgments homogeneous in character but differing in form. The Roman earth may be the sphere, but this has nothing to do with the symbolic force of the horse in the passage.

Without further discussion let me state my own view. We have a regular series of providential judgments. The first is the white horse, the symbol of triumphant and prosperous power. “He that sat on him had a bow” (verse 2). The bow is the symbol of distant warfare.39 His course is evidently that of unchecked victory. The moment he appears, he conquers. The battle is won without a struggle, and apparently without the carnage of the second judgment, where the sword, the symbol of close hand-to-hand fighting, is used. But this first conqueror is some mighty one who sweeps over the earth, and gains victory after victory by the prestige of his name and reputation. There is no intimation of slaughter here.

But the second judgment is of a more appalling character. There went out a horse that was red, and the one who sits upon him is not the proudly prosperous victor to whom people tamely submit, but one who, if he wins, waves his standard over heaps of slain. Accordingly, he has a blood-red horse — the symbol of power connected with frightful carnage. The result of the first seal (i.e. of the victorious career of the white-horse rider) may have been peace and comparatively bloodless changes; but all is sanguinary under the second seal (ver. 4). The fiery-red horse, the peace taken

from the earth, the mutual slaughter, the great sword, are tokens too plain to be misunderstood.

The third horse is black, the hue of mourning. It is a colour chosen to show that there must next follow peculiar sorrows, caused not now by bloodshed, but by scarcity, and perhaps, we may add, to man's feeling, a most capricious famine.40 Here we have the voice proclaiming (ver. 6), "A choenix of wheat for a denarius, and three choenixes of barley for a denarius; and see that thou hurt not the oil and the wine." The penny in our country would give the idea of something insignificant in value, but in those times and lands, a choenix of wheat for a denarius was very costly; for not long before men could procure seven or eight choenixes for the money. A denarius was given for the daily wage, and was barely enough for a man's daily food; for the choenix of wheat appears to have been a minimum, being the allowance given to a slave. But while there should be this scarcity of the very staff of life, there was a command not to touch the luxuries of life, the oil and the wine. What the richer Classes require was not to be touched, but only what people want of the prime necessaries of life. God is laying His hand upon the world.

Yet such events as these might happen in ordinary times. There might be some great conqueror any time, and this might be followed by bloody struggles; and this again by famine, etc. And in the fourth seal we have God's four sore plagues let loose together, the sword, famine, death, and pestilence, and the wild beasts of the earth, but here limited to a fourth part. They are but preparatory chastisements as yet. "And behold a pale horse, and his name that sat on him was Death, and

Hades followed with him" (verse 8). In Ezekiel 14 you will find that these four same things are mentioned together in connection with Israel. In these first judgments God does not proceed to any very extraordinary measures. A conqueror is no rare thing in the earth, a bloody and perhaps civil war not uncommon. These might be followed by a famine, and that naturally enough might breed pestilence, etc. Thus man would account for these things, and the wise are caught in their own craftiness. But we know before, through God's word, that there is a time of conquest coming — then of bloody warfare — next of dearth — and lastly of the outpouring of God's sore plagues. The heavenly saints must be set in rest and peace in the presence of God — the church must be safely sheltered before these judgments begin.

The next scene, under the fifth seal, is a remarkable one. The living creatures drop their cry of "Come,"41 which was connected only with external judgments in providence. But now we have a series of events somewhat different. The fifth seal discloses that God has a people on earth still. Who are these that are suffering now? The prophet sees their souls under the altar, where they are as holocausts offered up. Though dead, they yet speak. They were slain because of the word of God, and because of their testimony. Man after that has no more that he can do. They call for retribution; for after the Lord has taken home His heavenly saints, He will begin to call earthly ones. They will not of course be born again by a different Spirit, but they will be called to a different path, and will not know God in the same full and near way wherein He reveals Himself to us now, and as we ought to know Him. These saints will have "the

Spirit of prophecy." Such was the mode the Holy Ghost wrought in the Old Testament saints. The effect of the Spirit of prophecy was that they were waiting for Christ to come for the accomplishment of promise and prophecy; and so these saints will wait for Christ to appear in glory. All their hopes hang on Him, who is to be their deliverer from circumstances of such excessive sorrow.

Not thus do we expect Christ for ourselves. We have rest in Him now. Though surely looking for Christ to come, we have present communion with Him in peace, and the title, whether slain or not, always to rejoice in Him. It does not become Christians when persecuted to say, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge, and avenge our blood?" Stephen "cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Such also is the only right and suitable prayer for the saints of the heavenly calling.

But here the sufferers are on different ground. They take up the position, and express the sentiments described in the Psalms, which call for divine vengeance. Hence such as think that the Psalms are intended to convey our place and proper feelings as Christians find great difficulty in understanding the language of imprecation that is used in them. It is an error so to apply them; for "what the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law" is the apostle's comment after quoting from the Psalms. (Rom. 3) But when the church is removed, God — from His place on the throne — will pour out the judgments described in this prophecy; and then it is that these Psalms fully apply. God deals in mercy now: then it will be earthly judgment. When these visions are really accomplishing, God will show not as now the exceeding

riches of His grace, but the exceeding terrors of His righteous wrath: and so when that day comes, and men are yet heedless, the saints living or dying say, “How long, O Lord,” etc.

“And a white robe was given unto each one of them” (verse 11). That is, vindication has been accorded them, though they do not take their place on thrones till Revelation 20. Disembodied spirits are never said to sit there. We do not read of spirits glorified, but of bodies, when they enter on their destined blessedness above. They will reign with Christ. Thus, after the church is gone, there will be persons who witness for God here below, but taking up totally different language — the claim of retribution and not long-suffering grace. It was a holy duty once to exterminate the Canaanites; it would be far from a Christian’s place now. How unbecoming for us, if God would show mercy! But when He introduces His kingdom by judgments, that conduct will be right and suitable which would not now be in season. When God sees that the due moment is arrived for the earth to be chastised and judged, it will be a holy thing to take part in it. But if the Christian were to occupy himself in judging bad people on the earth now, he would be doing what the Lord is not doing — nay, the very reverse of what engages Him He is now at work in marvels of grace, and thus all who understand Him will be acting in the same spirit.

The tremendous convulsion (verse 12) of the sixth seal comes apparently in answer to the prayer of the saints who are concerned. The language at the close of the chapter shows that the powers and instruments high or low of the persecuting world received an earnest of their doom, as truly as the slain ones in the seal before have

their recognition in part before they inherit the kingdom. Their blood, we may say, cried to the Lord of Sabaoth. They lived unto God, and shall surely rise again; but they must wait. Another class of martyrs must yet be made up. “It was said to them that they should rest yet a little space, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed even as they, should be completed.” No account of the killing of these saints appears here: we must seek for this in other and subsequent parts of the book. The earlier sufferers meanwhile enjoy the result of righteousness, and are owned of God; but they are to await the filling up of a new and distinct band of martyred brethren, who are to suffer up to the close. Then retribution will come. Iniquity must reach its height and do its worst ere the hour of full divine judgment. Another and final outburst of persecution must precede. But mark here also that no such hope is held out to a single individual as the Lord’s translating them without passing through death.

We have stated that the heavenly saints (that is, the dead in Christ, and we who remain to the coming of the Lord) have already been taken from the earth, as Revelation 4 had shown, the fifth chapter adding another thing, that while they are above, there are righteous persons on earth in whose prayers the risen saints are interested. That is to say, those above are found in the place of intercession; and there is nothing sweeter than that place — nothing in which we are practically brought nearer to Christ, save in our immediate relationship to Himself. The church is destined to have that privilege in glory, as we have it now in grace for all men (1 Tim. 2) — the privilege of intercession for others still in trial on the earth. The

church will take the deepest concern in their sorrows, blessings, and hopes.

But who are these sufferers on earth? In Rev. 6:9, as we have seen, there was a dreadful slaughter of the saints. They cried with a loud voice, and we are permitted with and through St. John to hear their cry. They appeal to God as the Sovereign and arbiter of every soul. “How long, O Lord, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” Evidently this is not a Christian cry: I do not say it will not be a believing one, but suited to their circumstances and to the then dealings of God. People are so narrow that they think a person can never be a believer without being a Christian. It is quite true that now a believer is, of course, a Christian. Even the babes know the Father. “Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father; he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.” But in divine things we ought always to gather our thoughts and our language from scripture, not from our own imagination. Now, though Abraham and all the Old Testament saints were born of the Spirit, yet they were not Christians in a proper New Testament sense. For a Christian is not only one who has faith in Christ, but one to whose faith Christ dead and risen has been presented by God, and who has, consequently, the Holy Ghost uniting him to Christ in heaven. But this was not and could not be till Christ had come and finished the work of redemption. They had the new birth no doubt, for to be born again does not necessarily imply that the work of atonement had been previously accomplished; but still there is a difference of position into which the accomplished work, and the consequent presence of the

Spirit during Christ's absence in heaven, has brought us.

From those under the altar, then, we do not hear Christian accents, but that which reminds us of the state and feelings revealed of old. From the time that the Lord Jesus came into the world, and went up on high, as the rejected One now glorified — from that time the sufferings of Christ as the righteous witness for God, and in perfect grace to man, become, so to speak, reproduced in His people. The Holy Ghost puts them in sympathy with Christ. What was in a measure true before was now the appointed portion for the saints. None but Christ could possibly know suffering from God for bearing sin. But part of the suffering even of the cross was because Christ was put there through the wickedness of men: another and a far deeper part was, that He was put there by the grace of God for the vindication of His holiness, and the deliverance of the sinner. In the last He suffered for us; in the first we may and should suffer with Him. Hence, the apostle Paul did not hesitate to say, "That I may know him and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." A Christian might share the sufferings of Christ, in the sense of being cast out even unto death. The apostle himself had it often literally before him in this way. (See 2 Cor. 1; 2 Cor. 4.) He knew the fellowship of Christ's sufferings; Stephen knew the same.

Such is not this cry. Here the sufferers were under the deep feeling of the wrong that was done to them, and they called only for the judgment of God. How different the state of things when persons. instead of shrinking from prison and from judgment, thanked God and went away full of joy, because they were counted worthy to

suffer shame for the name of Jesus! Is this what we get here? No doubt, the world is as unrighteous as ever; but is there not something more blessed now than appeals to God to deal with the world as the world has dealt with us? This was the state of things when men had to do with the law; as the principle of righteous retribution will appear again in the millennial day, when they will have the law written on their hearts. As far as the moral import (δικαίωμα) of the law is concerned, God makes that good in His people now. But there is another principle which is being displayed now in every form; for God's grace is going out to the lost. Christ's death is the greatest manifestation of that grace, and the Holy Ghost works after this pattern in the hearts of His people. But the cry under the fifth seal is that sin may be laid to the charge of their oppressors, and vengeance taken accordingly. This is righteousness, but not grace. Let us bear in mind, however, that God does not allow us to take up a righteous or a gracious cry just when we like. We are always wrong when, under suffering from the world, a gracious cry is not brought out by the blow. When we have to do with one another, we are entitled to look for godly and righteous ways from Christians: indeed, it is part of the character of a Christian to feel what is wrong, as well as to value what is right. (Rom. 12.) But there should always be power to rise above evil, and to bring out Christ to meet it, whether it be in the way of discipline for those within, or of intercession for those that are without. God is dealing in perfect grace, and so should we, with the world.

Here, in the seals and sequel of the Revelation, it is another state of things God is judging in a preparatory way for His people; it is another order of relationship,

not that in which He has set us till the Lord receives us to Himself. Accordingly it is the Jewish expectation of deliverance through God's destruction of the adversaries, not the Christian's hope of removal out of the scene to heaven. Righteous vengeance is invoked on those that dwell on the earth. Not that vindictiveness is implied, but assuredly it is not practical grace. They look therefore for God to judge, instead of longing, as we should do, for Christ to come and take us to Himself. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come."

Remark, that the word used here for "Lord" is not the one that is generally employed; but the same term occurs in Luke 2:29, Acts 4:24, Jude 4. It means the Lord as "sovereign master." It is also used in 2 Peter 2:1: "Even denying the Lord that bought them." We have not here the nearness in which we know Him as "our Lord," but the general authoritative relation in which the Lord is the Master of the whole world — of all men, whether bad or good. It is never said that those who know Christ by the Holy Ghost can deny the Lord who bought them.

However that may be, the appeal is answered by the throes of nature universally, presenting in symbols to the prophet's eye what was coming. "And I beheld when he opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the whole moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth its untimely figs, when it is shaken by a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places" (verses 12-14). The heavens are convulsed from one end to the other; the stars fall, etc., evidently, as it

seems to me, in the vision only. “And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the chieftains, and the rich, and the mighty, and every bondman and free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and they say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his42 wrath is come; and who is able to stand?” (verses 15-17.) Every class of men is in agitation through these impending judgments. It is not really the great day of the Lamb’s wrath, yet people think that it is. They fear that the last day is already come.

An idea has prevailed with many that this seal represents the epiphany of the Lord in judgment at the end of the age. This has disposed them to understand the description as a literal account of the heavenly and earthly changes which accompany that great event. But there is no solid foundation for such thoughts. In the first place, the seventh seal is not yet opened, so that the end it cannot be, even if one adopted the system which supposes the trumpets to be a rehearsal from another point of view. Again, not a word occurs alluding to the presence of the Lord. There is a great earthquake; but the appearing of Jesus is incomparably more serious than any possible commotion in the world. The difference is manifest, if we compare these verses with Rev. 19:11-21, and with 1 Thess. 5; 2 Thess. 1; Luke 17:24-37, etc. Not to speak of the sixth trumpet, under the seventh vial (which must surely be owned as at least not earlier than the sixth seal) there is an earthquake, of which the Holy Ghost speaks in still stronger terms. Yet we know that this is before the day of the Lord; for all admit that the vials are poured out before He comes as a

thief. And à fortiori why not the sixth seal? Had these convulsions been given under the seventh seal, there might have seemed more tenable ground: as it is there is really none.

There is also this marked difference between our seal and the passages in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, with which some would connect it, that in the latter the Son of man is expressly said to be seen coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, in the former, as has been remarked, there is not a trace of it. It is represented under the seal, that all men in their terror say to the mountains and rocks, (is this literal, after they had been moved out of their places?) “Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his43 wrath is come; and who is able to stand?” But it is a revelation, not of that which God declares about the time or circumstances, but of men’s alarm and its effect on their consciences. To take what John saw in the vision as so many physical realities, to be then verified in the literal sun, moon, stars, and heaven, is, I think, an opinion adopted without due consideration. Would there, could there, be need for any to invoke the fall of the mountains and rocks, if the stars really fell unto the earth? Could men or the globe survive such a shock? Besides, it is plain that the description alludes at any rate to passages in the Old Testament, such as Isa. 13, 34; Ezek. 32:7, 8, and Joel 2. Now the last distinctly states that the signs therein predicted are before the great and terrible day of the Lord come, and the first had its accomplishment in the past fall of Babylon, though there be also types of a more solemn and universal catastrophe at the close.

All this is to my mind decisive that the sixth seal, according to its natural place in the prophecy, in no way means the great day of the Lord, but sets forth, first in figures and then in simple language, an overwhelming revolution which overthrows existing institutions and governmental order. The authorities, supreme, dependent, and subordinate, are broken up. The shock is universal. They think the last reckoning is come. Not the Lord, but their bad and affrighted consciences call it the day of His wrath. But when that day does come (as in Revelation 19), they are bold as lions. The very frequency of divine judgment acts upon the hard hearts of men; and so, though the trumpets have yet to blow, and the judgments become more and more intense, yet when the Lord comes in person, instead of calling on the mountains to cover them, they are found fighting against Himself. When their consciences were not so hardened, they were alarmed; but when the great day arrives, they are in open rebellion against Christ. What a thing is the heart of man! and what an infinite mercy which has brought us, not in the thought of His wrath — though the Lord grant that this may be used to awaken some souls — but by His grace to enjoy the peace He has made by the blood of His cross! He will have us also in the full fruition of our heavenly blessedness, when all these judgments are passing beneath us. To be above in the presence of Him who will then direct and at last execute all needful infliction — this is to be our portion. The Lord grant that we may walk in His grace now, not dragged down into the spirit of the world, nor standing for our own rights. Alas! if sinful men begin to talk about their rights, let them remember that in the sight of God the only thing they have a right to is to be lost for ever. If He dealt with us on that ground, when — how could

we be saved? But He has forgiven us all our wrongs, and has given us the joy of standing for His rights. May we be true to Him and to His cross!

37 The reader of the Horae Apoc. will remember how embarrassed the author is on this very point (i. 91-96). He is compelled to own that the elders' insignia point to the resurrection-state after Christ's coming, page 92; yet in the next page, 93, he says, it seems that it is especially the departed in paradise that we must suppose figured here. For want of seeing the distinction between the παρουσία of the Lord and the ἐπιφάνεια τῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ (2 Thess. 2:1, 8), these and other perplexities constantly spring up.

38 It will be observed that this, if well-founded, decides the question of the true and proper application of the rest of the book. For what more weighty than to know whether it speaks throughout its central visions of the time during which the church is still on earth, or of the days which follow — the great crisis when the church is not here but risen, and God is dealing with the earth after another pattern? To say that it is given to us to know these visions proves nothing. All scripture is given to us and is good for us, but it in certainly not all about us; and we are most profited, not by the fancy that God is always thinking of us, but by really understanding its objects, scope, and end. Had Abraham imagined that he was to be involved in the impending catastrophe of Sodom because the Lord graciously revealed it to him before it came to pass, such a delusion would have done him harm. It was not to Lot who was there, but to Abraham who was not, that the fullest communication was made. And so it will be, I doubt not. A remnant is to be saved — saved as through fire. May our place be

above it all — above the world in spirit now, and looking down upon its plans and progress with the abiding consciousness of a judgment that hastens — destined to be actually above when that judgment comes.

39 The ingenuity of Mr. E.'s attempt to make out in the bow an allusion to the Cretan origin of Nerva's ancestry is undeniable. Yet even if one admitted a more precise reference to past history than I conceive to be intended, I am convinced that the meaning of the symbols is not to be sought in recondite points of antiquarian research, but rather on the surface, or at least in the broad and natural features of the scriptural portrait.

40 It is almost incredible the amount of discussion, if not of careful research, which has been expended on this verse, and especially on the import of "a measure of wheat for a penny" (i.e. a choenix, or about 1.5 pint English, for a denarius, or about 8d. of our money). Is a time of scarcity or abundance indicated? Or does the verse proclaim an authoritative adjustment of a due average price? It appears to me that, (1) occurring as the third seal does in a series of providential judgments, such a question ought not to have been raised by the least enlightened reader; for, in such a connection, how incongruous the idea of plenty or a fair price! And (2) are not these thoughts particularly contradicted by the details of the seal in question, as e.g. by the black or mourning colour of the horse, and by the balances in the hand of the rider? (Compare with the last Lev. 26:26.) The facts of the case are on the whole plain and decisive. Thus from Cicero's Orations, we learn that the Senate estimated wheat at four serterces the modius (= 8 times the choenix); and, what is more important, that the then market price in Sicily was two serterces, or at

most three. “Hoc reprehendo, quod, cum in Sicilia HS II tritici modius esset..... summum HS ternis..... tum iste pro tritici modiis singulis ternos ab aratoribus denario exegit.” (In Verr. Act. ii. lib. iv. 81.) The inference is that the extortion was, say, half the Apocalyptic price. Again, it is allowed that the ordinary price under the Emperor Julian and his successors (i.e. long after St. John) was moderate. From the Misopogon it seems that the price of the modius was then about 12d. of our money, and therefore the choenix = 1.5d. or less than a fifth of the Apocalyptic rate. But it is argued from a passage in the Natural History of the older Pliny (lib. xviii. 10), that in his time, which was a little before the Apocalypse was written, the medium price of wheat was about the same as in the text. This would be the more extraordinary, not only as opposed to Roman experience both before and after, but also because that laborious compiler does not speak of the prices then current as extravagant. We know that in nothing are MSS. less to be relied on than in numerals. Besides it would seem that several elements more or less mistaken have concurred to perplex the case. “The comparison of ancient and modern prices of corn is a difficult subject, and the results hitherto obtained are unsatisfactory.” (English Cyclopaedia, Arts and Sciences, vol. iii. col. 251.) It is well known that Dr. Arbuthnot’s tables no longer carry their former authority, and that modern scholars reject some of his premises, and most of his conclusions. Now it was on his computations chiefly that the author of the Horae Apoc. depended. But (1) if I understand Pliny, he speaks in the passage cited, not of the price of broad, but of flour, which then cost forty asses the modius. But it would appear that the similago or flour spoken of was by no means coarse, though there might be finer; for out

of a peck of wheat came but a half peck of this flour, with a large residue of pollen, coarse meal, and bran. (2) There is no evidence that I am aware of in St. John's time to set aside the common Attic choenix, which was the eighth (not the fourth) part of a modius or peck. The verses of Fannius Rhemnius are not forgotten, nor the reading which Facciolati and others prefer, which reduces the quantum of the choenix one half, and thus harmonizes with other authors. And why were they cited if it be another scale, seeing that he lived a considerable time after not St. John only, but even the epoch to which the Protestant historical school would refer the accomplishment of the third seal? (3) The denarius, no doubt, in very early times equalled ten asses, whence the name was derived; but it is notorious that about the second Punic war, B.C. 214, it was by law made equivalent to sixteen asses, save in military pay, fines, etc., which were reckoned by the old standard. Who or what will the reader suppose is our authority for this? The very same work of Pliny (lib. xxxiii. 3). Nay, more, in the same chapter we are informed that, forty years later, the Papyrian law reduced the as one half. It is absolutely necessary to bear in mind these extensive changes in order to avoid the astounding results in which Dr. A. lands his followers. The true inference, it seems to me, is that the price in the Revelation shows decided and painful scarcity, as it exceeds that of the Cassian law eight times, and the actual Sicilian market price of Cicero's day yet more (xii. 76). It seems about as fair to cite on the one side the starvation price related by Caesar (De Bell. Civ. i. 52), as the poetical licence of Martial on the other. There is hardly a siege or a lengthened campaign, even now, without raising the price to a degree that would be fabulous under other

circumstances. The adulteration of the denarius under the second Severus to a third of its original value is deemed by Mr. E. to set right his great difficulty in the price of the wheat. But the question is as to its value in exchange. Wheat must be excessively dear, if a man could not do more than procure a quart for his day's labour. Nor would there be any disposition to employ labourers, if the prices of provisions were such that a man's daily wages were swallowed up in buying five or six lbs. of barley. The ratio of the barley to the wheat is, I admit, singular, as it was and is usually one-half, instead of a third. In, Rome, however, wheat was the food of men, barley of horses; and it was a military penalty to use barley. According to Seneca a slave's monthly allowance then consisted of five modii (= 40 choenixes), and five denarii. Under the emperors Roman citizens (save senators) received corn gratuitously, and the tessera was inherited, bequeathed, or sold. For such to buy at the price prescribed must press heavily indeed. Jerome's interpretation of Eusebius' Chronicon puts the modius at six drachmae or denarii, during the famine in Greece in the eighth or ninth year of the Emperor Claudius. Syncellus doubles this, which Scaliger prefers. It is but fair to add that the Armenian text edited by P. J. B. Auchor (ii. 153, 193, Ven. 1818) confirms this emendation.

41 It may be well to mention in this note my opinion that the words "and see" (which, according to the common text and the authorised version, follow "Come" in the call of the four living creatures) appear to be an interpolation. In the case of the second (verse 3) there in no difference of judgment among critical editors of the least note; but, strange to say, Griesbach and Scholz

retain the ordinary sense in the last two, and, in the first case of all, Knapp along with them. Buttmann, Hahn, Lachmann, Tischendorf, and Tregelles omit the words uniformly, and, as I think, with reason. The difference as to interpretation would be this: as the text. rec. stands, it in a call from each living creature to John; but if they merely cry “Come,” it would seem to be a direct address to the riders on the several horses, who accordingly come forth at their bidding. The connection of the living creatures with the action of the horsemen in providence is made clearer and stronger by this little change. Besides, it entirely precludes such remarks as those of Mr. A. Jenour in his Rationale Apocalypticum, vol. i. pp. 214-217. That ἔρχου refers to Revelation 22:17, 22, and means the groaning of creation or a prayer for Christ’s coming, is quite wrong. Why should any of these be “in a voice of thunder?” That the call of divine providence should be so heard is natural.

42 The Vulgate with good authority, in we have seen, has “their” wrath (ipsorum, not ipsius). But I take this opportunity of saying that, invaluable as the best Latin copies are as a support of ancient and excellent readings, it seems a perilous thing to throw aside all the MSS. and every other version, and all the early writers save those who merely echo the Vulgate, as Mr. Elliott does in following its “quattuor partes” (verse 8). There is really no ground but the exigencies of his system. To square with facts, according to his application, it should have been not the fourth, but the whole of the Roman empire. Hence Jerome’s manifest oversight is adopted, and it is argued that he must have had ancient witnesses now lost! But this is most unreasonable when we see that Jerome is often loose. To take this chapter alone, is

it pretended that “vocem,” in verse 1, the omission of “et,” in verse 2, “singulae,” in verse 9, “insulae,” in verse 14, rest on original authority? Are they not evidently due to mere laxity of rendering? And why impute “quattuor partes” to a higher source? The wonder is that we have not some of the later Greek manuscripts influenced by the Latin in verse 8, as perhaps 26 was in verses 1 and 2. We know there are stupendous blunders occasionally in the best copies of the Vulgate, as in 1 Cor. 15:51; Heb. 11:21. Why give it a place in this verse, which is not claimed for it in any other verse of Old or New Testament? Besides, is it according to the analogy of this book, or of any other book, to speak of “four parts,” if the entire empire were intended? The attempted historical answer of quadripartition seems to me extremely meagre. This, of course, is matter of opinion. But it is serious when the author is so enamoured of his theory as to bid his readers “well in that if the prophecy here differ from the history, it differs from, and is inconsistent with, itself also: seeing that the whole horse is depicted with the pale death-like hue, not its fourth part only.” — H.A., i. 201. This is bolder than man ought to be with God’s word, unless there were infinitely graver grounds against the text. The inference from the horse I have, I think, shown to be unsound.

43 The Sinai MS., the palimpsest of Paris, and the excellent Vatican cursive, conventionally known as 38, with the Vulgate and Syriac, read αὐτῶν, “their.” which admirably fits in with the context.

Revelation 7

The careful reader of the Revelation will have noticed that this chapter does not perform any part, properly speaking, of the course of events. That is to say, it is neither one of the seals, nor of the trumpets, nor of the vials. We have not finished the seals yet. In the sixth chapter we have had six seals, and there is a seventh that comes before us in Revelation 8. What then is the meaning of Revelation 7? It is an interval — a sort of parenthesis in these events — that occurs between the sixth and seventh seals. Under the sixth seal there is a frightful catastrophe among kings and subjects, high and low, calling to the rocks and mountains to fall on them, and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb. To their minds His day was come.

On the other hand, when He opens the seventh seal (Rev. 8), there is silence in heaven about the space of half-an-hour: so that the whole of Rev. 7 is no link in the regular chain of the history foreseen. Yet this apparent interruption of historic sequence is just as orderly as the formally numbered series of the judgments, because all that God does is perfect: every detail is fixed with the greatest care and nicety. What confirms this is that, when we come to the seven trumpets, the sixth trumpet is given in Rev. 9 and the seventh does not appear till Rev. 11:15; so that the whole of Rev. 10 and the larger part of Rev. 11 form a great parenthetic revelation of events, similar to what we have in the chapter before us. Indeed to me it is still more remarkable in the trumpets; for you will observe in Rev. 9:12 it is said, “One woe is past, and behold there come two woes,” etc.; and then

we have the sixth angel sounding, and the description of the Euphratean horsemen But it is not till Rev. 11:14 that “the second woe is past,” evidently referring to the Euphratean horsemen mentioned before in Rev. 9. So that the whole scene of the mighty angel coming down from heaven, of the little book that was to be taken and eaten by the seer, of the temple and worshippers measured, of the court and city abandoned for forty-two mouths, of the two witnesses, their testimony, death, resurrection, and ascension, — all this forms part of the striking episode. Thus, as there is a parenthesis between the sixth and seventh seals, there is an exactly corresponding one between the sixth and seventh trumpets; and not only so, but we have something analogous in the vials. If you look at the sixth vial (Rev. 16:12), you will find there is an interruption between it and the seventh. First the water of the great river Euphrates is dried up, that the way of the kings from the East might be prepared, and then we have a totally different subject. “I saw three unclean spirits.... they are the spirits of demons;” and then, distinct again from this, “Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth,” etc. This is a brief but singular parenthesis, containing both the account of the evil and the lord’s coming in judgment on it. I only refer to it now for the purpose of showing that there is nothing but what is laid down with the most astonishing precision of purpose in God’s word, and in this book, it may be added, conspicuously.

Taken up at first sight, the Revelation may appear all a maze; but it is not so really; for the impression arises from ignorant haste or from incapacity to discern. The fact is, that people bring certain feelings or wishes with

them to the book, instead of waiting in the desire to know what God thinks and speaks to them in it. Let us take the highest ground of faith for the word of God, and maintain that the Holy Ghost is the only power for understanding any part of that word. Whether for a man's soul, for his salvation and hopes, for his practical guidance, either individually or corporately, for his ways in the church or in the world, for his instruction as to the worship and the service of God, or even as to his relative duties on earth, whatever it be, there is divine light for every step of the way; and the only reason why we do not all see it is, because we have not the single eye which faith produces. It is faith that receives the blessing; and I believe that, as it is ever true that "according to thy faith so be it unto thee," it will also be blindness according to the measure of unbelief. The Lord always gives what faith counts on from Himself; unbelief inevitably finds the barrenness that it deserves.

In this chapter, however, it had long been a difficulty how there could be here the sealing of a body of elect Jews and the vision of an innumerable company of spared Gentiles, when their blessing only comes at a later part of the book.44 But the moment I learnt that it was all a parenthesis, and that the actual time when the sealed remnant of Israel and the saved Gentiles come into public action and take their place upon the stage is another thing altogether, that difficulty was at an end. God for our comfort, while the judgments are going on, allows the curtain to part for a little moment, and we see that they are all safe under His eye and ready to be manifested in due time. But when they come publicly into view is another question. In Revelation 14 there is a body spoken of, 144,000, of whom the Lamb is the

centre, and these stand with Him on mount Zion, having His name and His Father's name written on their foreheads. That body is evidently similar to, though not the same as, the 144,000 that we have here; and perhaps also we may compare, but not identify, the "nations" in Rev. 21:24-26 with the countless host of Gentiles here. Still more striking is the resemblance to the sheep of Matt. 25, because these are not merely the blessed Gentiles of the millennial day, but had stood the test during the interval of grievous trial which preceded it. And observe that the sheep in that passage are distinguished from the King's brethren who have a position yet nearer to Himself — Jewish saints who, after the church is taken to heaven, will be entrusted with the gospel of the kingdom, which is to be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations before the end comes. Thus, in Matt. 25:31-46, Israelitish brethren of the King, just before the close, test the Gentiles, who at His appearing are summoned before His throne, and discriminated as blessed or cursed, their faith or unbelief being proved by the way they had carried themselves towards the messengers of the coming kingdom in the time of their sorrowful testimony. Millions of the nations will be born during the peaceful millennial reign, for whom the loosing of Satan at its close will be fatal, even were all spared at first born of God.

In this chapter, then, there are simply two striking scenes, connected in sense if not as to epoch, outside the regular march of things. The Spirit of God, who laid down the historical order of the divine judgments, leaves that for the moment and shows us that God has mercy in store even in the coming day of distress. Israel will be in

frightful circumstances: “Jerusalem shall receive of Jehovah’s hand double for all her sins.” As she had been strong in her hatred against the Lord, so will He reckon that His vengeance has been doubly poured forth upon the guilty city. We have had judgments, first beginning with comparatively ordinary events, such as a great conqueror going forth, bloodshed, scarcity, God’s sore plague (death referring to the body and hades to the soul); then a remorseless outburst of persecution on God’s people; next a universal and dreadful convulsion before the eyes of the seer, affecting heaven, earth, and sea, the greatest alarm and bewilderment among men, who think that the day of the Lamb’s wrath is come. But that day was not come then. When it does arrive, the Lord will execute judgment in person on the dead and the living. But now it is a panic which leads men to dread judgment-day. And the kings of the earth, and the nobles, and the chieftains, and the rich, and the mighty, and every one, bond and free, were in the utmost consternation.

But here we find that the Lord stops and draws us aside for a season to show us what His mercy is going to do. “[And] after this I saw four angels…. holding the four winds of the earth.” They are kept in cheek for the moment. “And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads” (verses 2, 3). Some have conceived that the sealing angel is Christ, partly because it is assumed that the work done is communicating the Holy Spirit of promise, the seal of

redemption. To me all this is more than doubtful. It is not till we reach the trumpet series that our Lord ever assumes the angelic form and title. Whether we look at the seals, or at the parenthesis between the two last, He is invariably, where the reference is certain, spoken of as the Lamb. Again, this angel rises up from the sun-rising. I can readily apply such a movement to angels subject to the Son of man, ascending and descending to do His pleasure. But when the Lord appears in angelic garb, He either ministers as High Priest with the golden censer, or He comes down with unmistakable tokens and proclamation of His dominion and power. In the present scene nothing is said which unequivocally reveals His own glory. Much has been made of the phrase “till we have sealed,” as if it corresponded with the allusion to the persons in the Godhead, as in Gen. 1:26. I am surprised that the rest of the sentence was not observed to be incompatible with such a meaning Would Father, Son, and Holy Ghost (which in that case would be the sense) say, “till we have sealed the servants of our God?” The idea seems to me unfounded. Nor even if our Lord exclusively could be imagined so to speak, does it seem to be consistent with His dignity. He teaches His disciples to say “our Father,” but does not say it with them. When He does associate them with Himself risen from the dead, it is even then “My Father and your Father, my God and your God” — never “our God.”

The meaning then is, that before the various judgments are poured out on creation, God will have appropriated a certain people for Himself. They are sealed with the seal of the living God; that is, a character is put upon them as set apart to God. Cain had a very different mark put upon him by Jehovah; it was to screen him from man’s

judgment. Here also protection may be involved. At any rate, they are sealed on their foreheads, which, of course, means no physical mark, but God's setting them apart for Himself, and, I suppose, publicly. Who are the sealed ones? A measured remnant from His ancient people.

Thus the angels are seen restraining the judgments that are about to fall on all creation, and we have the seal of God upon a certain chosen number out of Israel. He will have an election from that people, but it will be a personal and individual election — not a merely national one as of old. When David attempted to number the people, it was a presumptuous sin, but here it is the grace of God appropriating a complement of the tribes of Israel to Himself. The number 144,000 is a regular and complete number, though it be a mystical one, as I suppose, with a view to God's use of the favoured nation here below. The number twelve always has a reference to what is perfect for God's accomplishment of His work, administered by man. This may be seen in the twelve tribes of Israel, twelve patriarchs, twelve apostles, and even the twelve gates and twelve foundations of the New Jerusalem. It is a perfect number where human administration comes in. Hence, when the nation of Israel are to be brought in again, it is the multiple of twelve that we have, and this expressed in thousands; the full result, as far as Israel is concerned, of the administration that God will commit to man.

An important question has been raised here, whether the tribes of Israel are to be interpreted literally or mystically. For the latter sense it is argued, that the very first vision of the seven candlesticks, borrowed from the Jewish sanctuary, and the allusions in the seven epistles

that follow, but more particularly in Revelation 3:12 compared with Revelation 21:12, sustain the Christian meaning throughout the book. But does not such reasoning overlook the fact that the application of Jewish emblems to the churches, while they are expressly spoken of here below, and of others to the church, either glorified above or following Christ out of heaven in the day of the Lord, is totally distinct horn the question whether certain symbols, taken from Israel, may not also apply to a different class of witnesses on earth between those two points? The real question is about the interval, when churches are no longer spoken of, and before the bride appears with the Bridegroom in glory. To state the question aright is enough to show the inconclusiveness of the argument, as applied (not to Rev. 1, 2, 3, nor in Rev. 21:12, where in the main we all agree, but) to the prophetic visions from Revelation 6 onward.

Besides, it is allowed by the more intelligent of the historical school, that about the close of the age the Jews will be converted and take the lead in the earthly song of praise on the occasion. This may be put too late in the book and founded on the feeble evidence of the occurrence of the Hebrew word “Hallelujah” in Rev. 19:3. Still the fact is admitted — an Apocalyptic prophecy of that which is to happen before the appearing of the Lord. What is more, a large part of the same school,45 represented by one of their most popular books, (Bp. Newton’s Dissertations on the Prophecies; Works, i. pp. 578, 579,) understand the tribes of Israel to be meant in their natural historical import, and apply the prophecy to the vast influx of converted Jews in the reign of Constantine. In fact the earliest Christian writer

who alludes to the chapter, Irenaeus the pious Bishop of Lyons, unhesitatingly solves the omission of Dan so as to prove that he considered the actual tribes of Israel to be meant, So also speaks Victorinus in one passage at least of the earliest extant commentary on the book. Others soon began to veer towards the allegorizing method, till at length the anti-Judaic theory became much the more general view.

But it may be well to notice briefly the reasons alleged by one of the ablest advocates of the mystical class — Vitringa. First he argues that if the names were to be taken in the letter, so must the number. But does this follow? And if it were a necessity, what is to hinder? He who reserved 7,000 in Elijah's day may seal 144,000 of Israel in a future epoch. But I see no need for this. The people might be literal, the number symbolical, without difficulty save to one fascinated by the love of excessive simplification. It is not denied that symbols exist, nor that they yield a determinate sense; but to look for a sort of pictorial consistency in all the parts is contrary to the facts everywhere. Moreover what could be the meaning of a mystical Reuben, Gad, Asher, etc.? Nobody that I know pretends to assign a distinctive signification, unless persons in the last degree fanciful. Yet if they are to be so taken, one might expect each to have a meaning, which is looked for in vain in those who plead strenuously for the general idea. Next it is urged that by the sealed must be understood God's elect, who are to be preserved from an otherwise universal calamity; and who can assert these to be Jews only? But who affirms that none are elect save these? We shall see presently that the scope of the prophecy and the connection of the passage intimate the contrary. The false assumption

therefore is, not that the sealed thousands are out of the actual tribes of Israel only, but that there will be no other saints than these. Thirdly the omission of Dan seems to be at least as great a difficulty on the mystical as on the literal hypothesis. In the blessing of Moses (Deut. 33) Simeon is left out. Is this list of the tribes, then, to be taken allegorically? Fourthly, the alleged parallel text, Rev. 14:1, by no means proves that the tribes are not literally of Israel. The 144,000 in Rev. 14 are saints on earth, not long before the final catastrophe, and in contrast with those defiled by Babylon and enslaved by the Beast. That they are not the church, but rather a godly remnant of Israelites associated in the Spirit's mind with the suffering but now exalted Christ, is what writers of this stamp have never even fairly weighed, much less have they decided on good grounds one way or the other.

On the other hand, I conceive that the specification of the tribes is inconsistent with any sense but the literal. Then again the contradistinction is as plain and positive as words can make it, between the sealed numbers out of Israel and the innumerable multitude from all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues. So that the mystical theory, when closely examined, cannot escape the charge of absurdity; for it identifies the sealed Israelites with the palm-bearing Gentiles, spite of the evident and express contrast on the face of the chapter. This results from trying to make out that the Gentile crowd consists of all the aggregated generations of the elect from the tribes. As to the sealed ones, not a hint appears of a succession: indeed the command to suspend the action of the four winds till after the sealing implies the contrary. It was a precise limited hour, as it

was a special class. But what clenches the matter is that the palm-bearing Gentiles (i.e., according to some, the Christian church in its heavenly completeness) are all described as coming out of the great tribulation - a tribulation which even they view as following the days of Constantine. Thus all seems to me strong and conclusive that the sealed here are literal Israelites — not only of Israel, but Israel, the Israel of God; as the mystical reading of the first part of the chapter, with the literal understanding of the rest, involves its advocates in consequences the more gross where it is most systematically pursued.

With regard to the tribes mentioned, there is a certain peculiarity on which I can say little. There are the sons of the various wives of Jacob: first, the two sons of Leah, Judah and Reuben; then of Zilpah, Leah's maid, Gad and Asher; then Naphtali, the son of the maid Bilhah, and instead of Dan her other son, Manasseh (Joseph's firstborn) is substituted. Then there are the four sons of Leah, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, and Zebulun; and finally, the sons of Rachel, Joseph, and Benjamin. Clearly we have the sons arranged according to the different mothers, the offspring of the bondwomen being intermingled with that of the free. Dan, who had been the most conspicuous for idolatry, is left out, and instead of Ephraim, the younger son of Joseph, Joseph himself appears. We find here the sealed of Israel, but the tribes numbered and arranged in a singular manner. They are no longer merely taken up in a natural way according to the order of birth, but God seems to intimate that He would make them a spiritual people also, stamped with His seal. They will then be Israelites indeed, in whom is

no guile. Nor is Dan at last disinherited. (Ezek. 48:1, 32.)

Nor this only; God is also going to save a multitude of Gentiles, and here no numbering appears. This is a most refreshing thought from its largeness. For though from them God is now gathering a people to His name, yet when we think of the multitudes that are immersed in darkness, of the myriads on myriads of men in heathen countries, of a handful — yea, perhaps but one — among them here and there having the knowledge of God, it is an afflicting and humbling reflection. But is it not remarkable that when God is to show us the increasing wickedness of both Jew and Gentile, and when His judgments are about to fall, we find there is this multitude of Israel numbered with the greatest care, and God not forgetful of the poor Gentiles? They may not be put in the same high place as the Jews, yet God will bless them wonderfully notwithstanding. But the prophet, who had just known the election of Israel sealed and had heard the number of them, has to turn to one of the elders in order to learn who the countless company are. They were to John a new unknown crowd among the blessed. If they were sealed on their foreheads, is it reasonable that they should just after seem so strange?

The multitude spoken of here is distinct from, if not in contrast with, the church; and it is thus that we ascertain it clearly. The elders represent the heavenly saints as the heads of priesthood. Now God might use two different symbols to mean the same body; as, for instance, the wise virgins and the good and faithful servants in Matt. 25 are successive representatives of the heavenly saints. But here we have the Gentile

multitude and the elders given as distinct parties in the same scene. Again you have the elders doing one thing and the multitude doing another. Above all, note that the way in which God speaks of this multitude totally separates them both from the church of God and from the Old Testament saints. This cannot be so clearly seen in our authorized translation, but the right version in verse 14 is this: “These are they which come out of the great tribulation.” One could understand of course that as a figure the whole of this dispensation might be called a time of tribulation, or even of great tribulation. But here it is not merely said, “These are, they which came out of great tribulation,” but “out of the great tribulation.” It is not possible to make “the great tribulation” extend over all the time between the first and second comings of Christ. Even the vague Protestant interpreters make it specific, but apply it, as is natural in them, to the fierce persecutions of the Papacy — “the great predicted tribulation of the coming apostacy and Antichrist.” The phrase means a special time of trouble, and we gather from elsewhere that it is yet to come; and it is exactly this time that the central part of the Revelation includes, and chiefly covers. In the epistle to Thyatira it was said, “Behold I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.” May we not judge that the threat of this great tribulation is to be fulfilled now. The scene of the church is closed, the great tribulation comes on apace, and those who had professed Christianity but who had gone back into idolatry would be cast into it with others. Thus, what God shows us here is a multitude of saved Gentiles: not the Jews, for we have had them just before; and not Christians, for these will then be in heaven. Those are a

Gentile body called after the church is taken up; they are to be in the great tribulation but shall be preserved through it.

We shall find the great tribulation spoken of in several parts of the word of God. In Jeremiah it is named in connection with the Jews. (Jer. 30:7.) “Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it; it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.” There is to be a time of excessive anguish, which closes with the day of the Lord, and Jacob is to be saved out of it; so that there you have the Jew in trouble, and the Jew delivered out of it. But in Daniel it is still more explicit. (Dan. 12.) The angel speaks of Daniel’s own people, the Jews. “At that time.... there shall be a time of trouble.

such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.” This is “the time of Jacob’s trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.” It is evidently the plain counterpart of the words of Jeremiah; and it warrants the inference that there is to be a future “time of trouble, such as never was” — the immediate precursor of deliverance for Jacob’s people as spoken of in these prophecies.

In Matthew 24 the Lord Himself refers to it: “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.” There again we have the same time, the Lord quoting the very passage of Daniel just cited. It is quite plain that He is speaking only of Jews, because they are supposed to be connected with the temple, and they are told to pray that their flight be not on the sabbath day, in which case they could not go beyond a sabbath day’s

journey, nor in winter. In either case there would be a hindrance to their flight, whether on God's part, or in the circumstances of the season. We have the same thing referred to in Mark, but Luke seems to speak in a more general way.

What parties then are to be in the scene of the tribulation? First a Jewish one spoken of in the Prophets and the Gospels, the object of God's care, who will deal tenderly with a remnant of Israel, and deliver them out of their distresses. Then in Rev. 7:9 we hear of a Gentile multitude. But neither party is the church.

Never have we God dealing thus with the Jew and with the Gentile as such, and forming the church at the same time; for then God would have at least two, if not three, objects — not various only but opposed objects — of special affection on the earth at the same time, with quite different modes and aims of action.

Suppose there were two persons, whom the Lord was bringing near to Himself. If He were dealing with the Jew, He would have acknowledged an earthly temple, priesthood, and worship. The Lord Jesus recognised the Jews as such when He was on earth, and in a still more blessed way He will do so in the day that is coming. But as long as the Lord is occupied with forming the church, Jewish order ceases to have any claim. Thus then suppose that God were blessing the Jews as Jews, and at the same time forming the church on earth, if two persons were converted, the one might say, I must still have my priest and go to the temple; while another would exclaim, There is no priest but Christ, and the temple is in heaven. See the confusion that would spring

from God’s owning an earthly and a heavenly people at the same time here below.

In this time of tribulation, when the Lord will recognize the Jew (or the godly remnant) to a certain extent, the church will not be in the scene. The objects of deliverance will be elect Jews and elect Gentiles, each distinct from the other, and not the church of God, where both are united and all distinctions disappear. We have seen direct proof of the removal of the church in Rev. 4 and 5. Here there is indirect evidence, because we have Jews sealed and Gentiles saved, and the latter expressly distinguished from the elders or heavenly saints. The sealing of the Jews included the election from the whole twelve tribes of Israel, except where there was a special brand of evil, as in the case of Dan. But the moment we find the Jew, we have God looking also, though separately, at the nations; because, having once visited the Gentile with His mercy, He will never take it back. Thus, when here He speaks of mercy to a complement of Israel, there is also salvation to a multitude out of every nation and kindred and people and tongue.

We saw that if the guilty Christian professors went on in their sin with Jezebel, they would be given up, and would be left to go through great tribulation. Here we find the great tribulation come; and not only are Israelites sealed, but a multitude of Gentiles are delivered out of it. The Old Testament does not speak of Gentiles being delivered thence, but Jews. Meantime, God has been sending salvation to the Gentiles. Hence in the New Testament prophecy Gentile deliverance is as prominent as Jewish deliverance is in the Old Testament. God shows that, in the last days, He is going to save a

vast throng of Gentiles. But will it be so in these countries where the light of the gospel has shone and has been despised? “They received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” (2 Thess. 2:10-12.) God will visit those who have not enjoyed this testimony, the external peoples who have not had Christ rightly presented to them. The church has completely failed in what God looks for from us. He called on the church to take up the cross and to follow Christ; but the church has, in practice, given up the cross and followed the world. All this has hardened the heathen, who find that the church does not bring forth the fruits that are suitable to the grace and truth which we profess to have found in Christ. But God, in His fulness of mercy, will go to those outside. Thus I believe that these very countries which have set themselves up as the centre from whence the light emanates will then be in antichristian idolatry, while those which have been in darkness will come out into light. It will only be the tale of Galilee of the nations again, when Jerusalem despised and lost the Son of God — alas! how long.

Here we see the blessed result. There will be this innumerable multitude of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, who stand before the throne46 and before the Lamb. Theirs are the robes of righteousness,47 and their palms are the palms of victory; but they do not sing the new song. There is nothing like the high and exulting tone of Rev. 5, no intercession for others, nay, not a word of being made kings and priests to God. They cry with a loud voice,

“Salvation unto our God who sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb.” They are saved persons, but the ascription is limited to the title that He takes upon the throne and to the Lamb. God is not now sitting upon the throne that is described here: at least it is not thus He reveals Himself while the church is on earth. He will by and by take His place there as One issuing judgments; and the great point seems to be, that although it is a time of preparatory wrath and judicial action, yet God is showing signal mercy, even to Gentiles. In verse 13, we have the elders looking upon the scene. How could they be looking upon themselves? Yet this must be the case, if the elders and the innumerable multitude are both supposed to set forth the church. We have two distinct parties. If the elders are the church, the multitude is not; and if the multitude is, then the elders cannot be. I well understand a man having a picture taken of himself in one suit of clothing at one time and in a different suit at another. But we could not possibly have a portrait of a man taken at the same moment with two different sets of robes upon him, so as to display distinct characters, and fulfil opposite functions together.

In the church of God which is being called now there is neither Jew nor Gentile. The moment you find the distinction kept up between them, there cannot be the church. Whenever you separate the Jew from the Gentile, you are off church-ground. Before the death and resurrection of Christ, God was not forming Jew and Gentile into one body. Thus, even when the Lord Jesus was upon earth, He forbade His disciples to go to the Gentiles, or so much as enter the Samaritan cities. But when He, the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, was about to form the church, He charged them to go

everywhere and preach the gospel to every creature, instead of merely seeking out him that was worthy in Israel. Thus, a complete change was evinced in the ways of God, not as if He knew not the end from the beginning, but with a view to fresh displays of His glory in His Son. So too when the present calling closes, His mercy will flow out in fresh channels, as we have seen.

I trust, then, it has been shown plainly that the subject of this chapter is not the church, but Israel and the Gentiles blessed as such. Indeed, one need not hesitate to say that, if any person supposed Rev. 7 treated of the church, it would argue that he had no true idea of its nature and calling — that he had no conception of what the Holy Ghost connects with the body of Christ here below.48 The church of God is essentially a heavenly body that entirely sets aside all distinction of Jew and Gentile. The scope, if not object, of this chapter shows that these distinctions reappear at the time that is referred to. We have first a company of Israel, then an innumerable crowd out of the Gentiles. Besides these, that class of the redeemed formed out of the Jews and Gentiles, and long familiar to us in this book (namely, the crowned elders), are seen as a distinct body altogether.

Thus we have in this chapter “the Jew, the Gentile, and the church of God” — sealed Jews and saved Gentiles, for the earth, as I suppose, and the church with the Old Testament saints preserved for heavenly glory. While the elect of the twelve tribes are said to have great mercy shown them, and the Gentiles too, who might have been thought to be forgotten then (ver. 14-17), yet it is not the same exalted privilege that we shall enjoy. “They” (i.e., these spared Gentiles) “serve day and night in his

temple." But when the Holy Ghost is showing us our special place of blessing, the prophet says, "I saw no temple therein." In Revelation 21, where he describes the bride or the heavenly Jerusalem, it is a state of things totally different from what we have here. Though it be the city where you might above all expect to find a sanctuary, he says, "I saw no temple therein." Why is this? Because that city is the symbol of the bride, and when God brings out the blessedness and glory of the church, He speaks of it as drawing near to Himself, so that there shall be none but Christ between Him and them, if we can call that between, where Christ Himself is the image of the invisible God, the One who reveals God to us and who is God. It excludes the idea of the temple. Here, on the contrary, we have the temple. One of their greatest privileges spoken of is that they serve Him day and night in His temple, and "He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell again among them." There might seem to be a difficulty in this, but there really is a careful guard against the thought that might be drawn from the words "dwell among them." The true meaning is, God having His tabernacle over them, not among them. In Rev. 21 we find God dwelling among men. It is not the same phrase at all. Similar in English, it is totally different in the Greek. In Revelation 7 the idea is that the presence of God overshadows the Gentiles, but there is no such thing intended as God's taking His place among them. They are blessed of God, overshadowed and protected as Israel of old under the cloud of His presence. Like them too in the future (Isa. 49), they shall not hunger nor thirst, neither shall the sun nor heat smite them; blessed expressions, but rather conveying an earthly position than a heavenly one. We have the Lamb Himself to feed us now. Even here He gives us to

have in us wells of water springing up into everlasting life, and out of us flow rivers of living water.

I have been endeavouring to prove, then, that God's purposes are not limited by what He is doing now. Besides forming the heavenly body, the church, and conferring upon it the highest privileges even He can give, God is going to visit the Gentiles by and by. They will be remembered; and this will be done in the midst of the most appalling judgments which precede the great day. And God makes plain our own position amidst it all; for we see the elders distinct, and they have the mind of Christ. This last is the portion of the church even on earth, just as Joseph was in his time the depositary of God's wisdom. Whether in prison or out of prison, he entered into the thoughts of God and was able to explain them to others. This is the place that God's goodness puts us in, alas! how little it is prized or acted on. It is one of the most precious privileges that belongs to the church of God, save the position in which God sets us as brought nigh in Christ to Himself. There ought to be the power of announcing the revealed thoughts of God by the Holy Ghost.

44 Not many of my readers will be more disposed than myself to accept Mr. Elliott's way of accounting for the occurrence of the sealing and palm-bearing visions at this particular time. Augustine, the celebrated Bishop of Hippo, flourished at the date to which he applies the sixth seal, or rather its consequences! Mr. E has culled from his copious writings whatever might be supposed to strengthen this far-fetched idea; and certainly it would be strange if in so large a field he did not find abundance to his hand. But when he begs "the reader to pause and consider with himself, whether he can

possibly imagine any two symbolic figurations that would more exactly symbolize the doctrinal revelations made to Augustine than those that were exhibited at the exactly correspondent epoch in the Patmos visions to the representative man St. John," I must answer that I think if the vision of the holy city Jerusalem had been inserted after the sealing and instead of the palm-bearers, Mr. E. would have sung yet louder in praise of so marvellous a foreshadowing of Augustine's great work De Civitate Dei. Let the candid reader judge.

45 Mr. Birks widely differs from Mr. Elliott, and this too in perhaps the most acrimonious attack ever made on futuro-literalism. Even Mr. B. confesses that "in the abstract, it can neither be unreasonable nor improbable that they should be a direct object of the prophecy, and, since no more appropriate symbol could be found for them, that they should be, so to speak, their own emblem. Those who view the book in general as symbolical may, therefore, without inconsistency, conceive literal Jews to be designed." (Elements of Prophecy, pp. 256, 257, the "masterly work" in which, according to Mr. E., the writer has shown himself the martel and hammer of truth against the reveries of the futurists.)

46 John's vision of them there does not imply that they are to be in heaven, rather than on the earth, when the kingdom comes. "Before the throne and before the Lamb" is moral rather than local. (Compare Rev. 12:1; Rev. 14:3.) It merely expresses where the prophet beholds them in the mind of God. The description with which the chapter closes conveys the idea of people delivered from bitter sorrow, and sheltered for ever. No doubt this will be inexpressible comfort to them: but

nothing they say rises to the height of the joy and intelligence which are seen in the elders, nor is anything said of them which at all sets them on equal ground with these. They are never presented with crowns nor seated on thrones like the twenty-four. They are in relationship with God when He is no longer viewed as seated on a throne of grace such as we know now, but as on a throne whence judgments proceed. All harmonizes with the interval of introductory government which precedes the millennium.

47 It has been sought to draw out the contrast between these Gentiles in Rev. 7 and our own position in Rev. 1:5, 6, by dwelling on the different statements, that they washed their robes, and that He washed us. But such comparisons often lead to grave misconception, as indeed this has done. I wish, therefore, explicitly to state my own conviction (in which, doubtless, the writer referred to would cordially join), that the salvation of all the saved at all times depends on the work of Christ, and that the Spirit is the only efficacious applier of it to any soul. The real question is as to the various dealings of God and His sovereign arrangements among the saved. Scripture, in my opinion, is quite clear as to all this, if men would but give up preconceived notions and wait on God for the answer.

48 The following extract from Dr. John Owen’s Prelim. Dissert. to his Comment on the Hebrews (Exer. vi.) is endorsed with strong commendation by a living Professor of Theology, and may serve as evidence of the darkness that reigns on the subject. “At the coming of the Messiah, there was not one church taken away, and another set up in its room; but the church continued the same, in those that were the children of Abraham

according to the faith. The Christian church is not another church, but the very same that was before the coming of Christ, having the same faith with it, and interested in the same covenant. The olive tree was the same; only some branches were broken and others grafted into it: the Jews fell, and the Gentiles came in their room. And this doth and must determine the difference between the Jews and Christians about the promises of the Old Testament. They are all made unto the church. No individual hath any interest in them, but by virtue of his membership with the church. This church is, and always was, one and the same. With whomsoever it remains, the promises are theirs; and that, not by application or analogy, but directly and properly. They belong as immediately at this day, either to Jews (?) or Christians, as they did of old to any. The question is with whom is this church which is founded on the promised seed in the covenant? for where it is, there is Zion, Jerusalem, Israel, Jacob, the temple of God." There is not a clause that is not an error; for even where there is a certain substratum of truth, the use is fallacious. The Judaising of the church on this scheme is complete. The truth is that Dr. O. confounds the calling of the church, according to the mystery hid from ages and generations, with the earthly order in which the promises are administered. Thus the doctrine of Ephesians, Colossians, and other such scriptures, is left out and unknown; that is, the doctrine of a body united to Christ its glorified head, and manifested on earth by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Such a state of things did not exist before Christ's first advent, nor can it be after His second. As to the inheritance of the promises, we share this with the saints of old; but it is not our peculiar place of blessing. The church, as such,

is quite a distinct thing, though the members of it are, with others, heirs through Christ. So with the olive tree; doubtless the Gentiles are now grafted in: but is it possible a spiritual man could confound this with the body of Christ? The Jews were natural branches, the olive was their own olive tree: even the unbelieving branches formed part of it, though at length broken off to let Gentiles in. Does one word of this bring out the church as shown in Eph. 1, 2? Is not all above nature here? In that one body, it is not Jews making way for Gentiles, but the believers, whether Jew or Gentile, brought out of their old previous condition, reconciled in one by the cross, and builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. All this is neutralised by Dr. Owen's theory. At least, as regards the future, Mr. Elliott renounces it. "The church of the firstborn, the bride, may be complete; but it does not follow that none afterwards can be saved. What is said of the kings of the earth, walking in the light of the heavenly Jerusalem, seems to me to imply an enjoyment of the blessing by other parties, besides those that constitute Christ's bride, the New Jerusalem. The very statement of Christ's being a priest upon His throne (if applicable, all I think it is, to the millennia] era) implies Christ's still exercising His intercessory and other priestly functions. And it I am correct in my view of John 17:21, 23, it was a marked point in His earliest intercessory prayer that the world's believing on Him generally might be the result of the distinctive manifestation in glory of the church of His disciples of the present dispensation; — that manifestation which, as all agree, will be only at His second coming." (H. A., iv. p. 187.) Every one must allow that in the millennium the olive tree will flourish more than ever, and the Abrahamic promises be fulfilled to the

letter. If then the church, Christ's bride, is distinct from the millennial saints, albeit these last inherit the promises and are branches in the olive tree, the principle is evidently given up. The same thing, then, may be true of the Old Testament saints. It becomes a question of the testimony of scripture. Now this, we have seen, pronounces clearly that the church of God, Christ's body, depends on the gift and presence of the Holy Ghost, consequent on the death, resurrection, and glorification of the Saviour. (Matt. 16:18; John 7:39; John 14-16; Acts 1, 2; 1 Cor. 12, etc.)

Revelation 8

To me it is manifest that the seventh seal is followed by a short but solemn pause, which again is introductory to a new course of divine inflictions.49 “And when he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.” Now these judgments that come before us under the trumpets are of a somewhat different character from what we have seen in the seals. In the first place, the seals in general appear to have a larger extent, but the blows were not so severe. It is true we had in Rev. 6:8 a certain limitation (viz. the fourth part), used with regard to the extent of the blow then to be struck. But in the other instances there was no such restraint; whereas in most of the trumpets it is the third part, with some slight exceptions. The trumpets, then, may be less extensive in their range, but it will by and by appear that they are more intensely judicial than the seals.

Further, we find that the very name indicates a difference. The trumpet sets forth a loud and solemn call of God. It is God summoning men; for if they have rejected His grace, they must hear, even if they forget, these sharp warnings of His judgment. The seals might not so readily have been regarded as divine interferences, unless God had beforehand told us that such they were, with their nature and their order. In themselves, and especially in the first four, they ushered in disastrous but not unprecedented occurrences. But when we come to the trumpets it is not so requisite to

announce that they are heaven-sent judgments. Their sound or summons is quite plain and urgent. They appeal far more unmistakably to men.

But there is another remarkable difference and of a more spiritual nature. The Lamb disappears under these new scenes. The Lord Jesus is not spoken of in that point of view while these destructive judgments run their course. This supposes and marks a great change, and we have to enquire what God would have us to gather from it. If the Lord Jesus is introduced at all, it is in another guise or aspect, and not as the Lamb. It is not the Lamb that takes the golden censer, but an angel. I do not deny that Christ is referred to, but it. is in His angelic connection or at least in an angelic form. He is presented in a more distant way than ever the church or the Christian, as such, knows Him in. In Heb. 2 we find that the Holy Ghost reasons upon the fact of Christ's having taken the place of man. "For verily he took not on him [the nature of] angels," etc. In our version the expression is too strong and the italics a mistake. The meaning is that He did not take up the angels: they were not the object of God's calling nor of His redemption. Jesus took hold of the seed of Abraham (as it is given correctly in the margin), and because of this, "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." He did not undertake the cause of angels. He stands in no such relationship towards them. Still there is nothing, as it seems to me, to contradict the idea that the Lord Jesus may be and is intended in Revelation 8 as the officiating angel at the altar; for indeed He is the Head of everything, the head of all principality and power. Why, then, might He not be viewed here in exalted,

angelic glory? The personage spoken of acts as the angel-priest. Undoubtedly it is not thus that He has to do with the heavenly saints, and that He ministers before God for us. But then the Lord at the point of time to which we are come in the prophecy, has entirely done with His ministration for the partakers of the heavenly calling, at least so far as provision for their failure is concerned; but we learn His interest in another class of saints — in “all the saints” of course — who will be upon the earth when the church has been taken up to heaven.

There is less introduction here of the suffering saints of God than anywhere else. The judgments fall almost entirely upon the world, upon men in their circumstances and persons, and finally upon men in their responsible relationship to God. Outwardly the saints would seem to be mixed up with them. This accounts for the absence of the Lamb; for wherever He appears as such in the book of the Revelation, it is Christ in His character of the holy and earth-rejected sufferer. Accordingly, the Lamb is peculiarly brought out where there are sufferers mentioned. For that word remains always true, that “when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them.” He never puts them in a path of which He has not tasted the bitterest sorrow before them. Here He retires, as it were, and is only seen in comparatively distant, angelic glory.

Remark also how full of symbols the chapter is, and, from the first trumpet, of how external a kind. Everywhere mysteriousness prevails. It is not God opening out His heart of complacency in those He loves. Whenever this is the subject. He speaks as it were face to face. He is simple and explicit. Without leaving this book, take for instance Rev. 14. There He is going to

speak of persons who were, or were to be, exposed to all sorts of trials, because of association with Jesus; and the first thing that we see on the mount Sion is the Lamb, and the portion of the wicked follows in the most distinct manner. So again in Rev. 12 “they overcame him [the dragon-accuser] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto death.” But here we have God’s dealings with the world, and the scantiest notice of His own people as separate class; and as the world has no claim on God, whatever His mercy to it, as the world has no tie with Him and only despises His love, so God speaks but of His earthly judgments in forms more and more awful. He does not bring persons so distinctly forward as in other scenes; and thus, as I conceive, even the person of the Lord Jesus is therefore not set forth evidently. For here, as elsewhere, we find that there is the most surprising harmony governing all scripture, when once the key to it. is seen.

First of all there are the angels standing before God, and they take their trumpets, the seventh seal being a sort of preparation, or a signal, for a renewed course and another class of judgment. But before this begins we have an angel-priest. There are those to whom God is faithful, for His eyes are over the righteous, and His ears open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. Though there may be but a passing glimpse at the saints, yet God would never have us to forget that even at this time there are objects of His care on the earth.

“And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given him much incense.” Wherever the altar occurs without qualification, it

invariably means, I believe, the brazen altar — the first means or point of contact between God and men on earth. There the holocaust was burnt, and the other offerings of sweet savour; thence was the fire taken, in order to cause the incense to ascend from its appropriate altar in the holy place. And this, as it flows from or agrees with the rest of scripture, so it is in perfect accord with its uses in the Revelation (Rev. 6:9; Rev. 11:1; Rev. 14:18; Rev. 16:7). Where the altar of incense is in question, it is characterized as “the golden altar” before the throne, or before God (Rev. 8:3; Rev. 9:13). Both are referred to here. Had the same altar been intended in the beginning as in the end of verse 3, the full description would surely have been furnished at the first mention rather than at the second. Nor is there more difficulty as to seeing the great altar in the heavenly vision here, than the sea or laver in Rev. 4; for according to the Jewish type they were equally in the court. At this altar then which connected the fire with the offering and acceptance of Christ, the angel stood with the golden censer pertaining to the holy of holies. The very phrase conveys to my mind that it was not his usual place: he came and stood there. In the authorised version it is said of the incense “that he should offer it with the prayers,” etc. But if we take the phrase as it is given in Rev. 11, the sense becomes plainer and more just. There we read (ver. 3), “I will give power unto my two witnesses.” Now it is exactly the same form of expression here, and means that He should give power to the prayers or render them efficacious. “And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints ascended up before God,” etc. (verse 4.) What is the effect of the prayers and the incense? All would feel that the Holy Ghost does not lead persons to pray for

what is contrary to the mind of God, though when a mistaken prayer is offered, He will listen in His long-suffering, and knows how to teach His children the foolishness of such requests. But none can say that the Holy Ghost ever suggested or sustained a prayer which was not according to God's purpose. Observe also that incense out of the angel's hand accompanies these prayers of the saints, and they are offered up to God.

But the fifth verse records a new action: "And the angel took the censer and filled it with fire of the altar." Surely this is the brazen altar, where not the incense but the fire was burning. The result is, not the efficacy of Christ's work comes up before God in more and more sweetness (as we see in the case of the offerings put on the brazen altar in Leviticus), but that here the fire was cast into the earth, and immediately followed "thunderings, and lightnings, and voices, and an earthquake." So that thus we find evidently prayer of another character and with a different effect produced — nay, the very priest himself viewed in another manner, as compared with what is going on now. For us Jesus the Son of God has passed through the heavens, a High Priest who was in all points tempted like us, apart from sin. He died for our sins, He can sympathize with our infirmities, having suffered to the utmost both in temptation and atonement. Our God also is on a throne of grace, whence mercy and grace come forth to help in time of need. (Heb. 4.) Again, our attitude towards those without is akin; and hence supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, are and ought to be made for all men.

But here is not mercy but judgment; for though there may be the incense and the prayers of saints, the

immediate issue is that the symbols of God's judgments are seen taking effect through the earth. There is perfect congruity in all the scenes that are portrayed here. Although a priest, and saints, and an altar (both altars, as it seems to me), and incense, and the censer, and the fire are all found in due order, yet it is in communion with God chastising the earth: hence too the place of comparative distance already noticed. If the Lord is brought out at all, it is as an angel and not in His full dignity as the Son of God consecrated for evermore. Of course He is always the Son of God, but He has other dignities beside, and here the prophetic vision presents Him in a totally different title and glory.

Again does it not seem an unintelligent inference, be it made by Historicalist or by Futurist, that "all the saints" is a phrase which necessarily involves the conclusion that the church of God is meant? The question must be judged by the convictions we have as to the bearing of all this part of the book. And it has been abundantly shown that, ever since Revelation 4 began, the church is viewed as already and wholly glorified in heaven. Hence the church is really out of the question here, and these are all the saints on earth subsequently for whom deliverance is prepared. The angel offers their prayers, and judgment on earth for their deliverance is the reply. The ordinary reasoning is therefore beside the mark. All the saints are of course the Lord's people — a converted class, Jewish or Gentile. That this is what scripture calls christians or the church is another matter, which the objectors would do well to inquire into.

"And the seven angels that had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. And the first sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood,"

etc. The general bearing of this is apparent. These things are not to be taken in their mere obvious or physical drift. Supposing one looks at such a thing literally as a mountain falling into the sea (verse 8), would it ever turn the water into blood? Nothing of the sort. The fact is that these were pictures that passed before the eyes of the prophet. What the figures meant we have to gather from the general tenor of the word, by the teaching of the Spirit, I presume that even the prophet himself had to learn their meaning from the scriptures. For here we have St. John, not in the place of one before whom all was naked and open and at once understood, but rather simply as a Seer. He is not necessarily able, as a matter of course, to enter fully into all that is passing before him, but has need to mark, learn, and inwardly digest. We come in the Apocalypse to the ground of prophecy, and this is a different region from that in which the Holy Ghost opens out to us the things of Christ in the way of communion. Indeed what is told us of the prophet John himself throughout the book shows that he did not always nor of necessity appreciate the meaning of that which he beheld in the Spirit. In other words he saw a sort of panorama, and recorded the visions just as they appeared to himself; and we have to use the word of God by the Spirit to know what the symbols imply. We are not to suppose that the event itself will be a mere formal repetition of what the prefiguration was, but a reality answering to the foreseen shadow.50 Thus, when the first blast is sounded, there comes a violent tempest of hail and fire mingled with blood — the blood distinguishing it from all previous storms, as being beyond nature. This betokened or ushered in a furious, sanguinary, and destructive outburst that would agitate and rage over its

sphere. “And the third51 of the earth was burnt up, and the third of the trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up” (verse 7). This evidently does not refer to the literal earth, trees, or herbage. In scripture grass is the symbol commonly used to denote man in his weakness, his very glory being like the flower of grass. Human prosperity then would be set forth by green grass. Here we have a judgment of God upon it. Not a certain part only, however large, but the whole of it is destroyed. The trees represent such as are high and exalted among men. It is a very common symbol in the word of God to express those that are deeply rooted, with a lofty bearing and extensive influence here below. (Look for instance at Ezek. 31:3; Dan. 4, etc.) Thus, then, a blow is struck at a defined part of the scene of God’s moral dealings; and both the low universally, and the higher classes to a large extent, feel the ruinous effects.

The second blow supposes a great change; it falls on the sea, and so refers not to that sphere which is under special and settled government, but to what is or will then be in a state of confusion and anarchy. The nations which are in this condition do not remain scatheless. “And the second angel sounded: and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea; and the third of the sea became blood; and the third of the creatures which were in the sea, that had life, died; and the third of the ships were destroyed.” If Jeremiah be consulted, it will be seen that these things are not explained arbitrarily or out of mere imagination. As this is not so common a judgment, it would seem that God deigns to furnish us with another example; for just where we should be likely to make mistakes, there God

comes in with light and instruction. The “mountain burning with fire” represents a system of power, itself under the judgment of God and the occasion of judgment to others. In Jer. 51:25 it is said, “Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the Lord, which destroyest all the earth; and I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain.” There we have what answers, in some measure, to what we have here. Babylon, in Jeremiah, was to be “a burnt mountain,” hurled down from its place of eminence. Here the mountain is said to be “burning.” Babylon was itself to be as a consumed or destroyed mountain. Here the mountain is the means of destroying others, as in the Jewish prophet: “O destroying mountain, saith the Lord, which destroyest all the earth.”

A mountain is regularly the symbol of settled and exalted power; but here it is cast into the sea, because it is made the means of judgment to others, and not merely the object of judgment itself. The Lord Jesus Himself uses a part of the figure with regard to Israel. Seeing a fig-tree with nothing but leaves, He pronounced that no fruit should grow, nor man eat of it henceforward for ever. He had come and found no fruit upon it, only abundance of leaves. And presently the fig-tree withered away. Now almost every person who has read the word of God with care has viewed that fig-tree as the symbol of Israel, responsible to bear fruit unto God, but completely failing to do so. The fig-tree was figurative of “that generation,” and in connection with this the Lord says to His disciples, “ye shall not only do this.... but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, it shall be

done.” And so it was done; for no sooner had the apostles’ testimony gone out to Israel, and Israel had utterly rejected what the Holy Ghost preached to them therein, than judgment came upon them. It was not merely that they bore no fruit, but there was a positive judgment and an uprooting from where they were. The mountain was cast into the sea; the place and nation of Israel completely disappeared in the mass of the Gentiles. This was much more than their merely ceasing to produce fruit. Their polity was broken up and completely vanished, just as much as a mountain would be that was torn up from its base and cast into the sea.

So here a great power, that seemed to be settled, is removed from its place, and that power is not so much shattered itself as it is made the means of suffering to others. It is burning with fire, and the consequence is destruction to the third of living creatures and ships in the sea, the whole being a figure taken from what would be the effect of a volcano cast into the sea. It is thus that the Lord fills up the picture of destruction by a great consuming power that falls upon confused masses of people, with human carnage and political anarchy as the result. There may be some more precise meaning, but I am only presenting what little I see of the symbols, independent of their application to a particular time, place, or people.

The third judgment in the series of the trumpets is of another kind. “The third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a torch, and it fell upon the third of the rivers, and upon the fountains of the waters; and the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third of the waters became wormwood; and many of the men died of the waters,

because they were made bitter." Now a star, as we have seen in an earlier chapter, though in another connection (Rev. 1:20), is the figure of one who holds a place of subordinate authority — one who may give light to others — subject himself to another, but still ruling. Here it is a degraded ruler, a dignitary fallen from his place of authority. Waters are the symbol of people unformed, fountains are the sources of their refreshment, and a river that which characterises their course. A certain proportion is tainted by the fall of the star or ruler, which embitters whatever it touches, and many die because of the waters being made bitter. Here the infliction seems not so much of a political kind as the previous judgment; it is rather the poisoning of all that ought to be the means of blessing to man and that concerns his ordinary life.

Under the fourth trumpet there is something higher. The waters are poisoned before; but now we find that the highest authorities are touched. It is not a star that falls from heaven, but the third of the sun, and the third of the moon, and the third of the stars are smitten; "that the third of them might be darkened, and the day should not shine for the third thereof, and the night likewise." I apprehend that this is a judgment of God on the supreme as well as the inferior authorities of the world within the given range, which are all to a certain extent extinguished, or at least eclipsed.

An important question now arises — the proper fulfilment of these trumpet judgments. It is evident, however, that the answer must depend on the still larger issue of the time and condition to which the prophetic vision in general applies. For this is no matter of detail, but of broad principle, and it is not for me to deny the

immense practical consequences of the true application on the one hand, or of views which mislead on the other. Believing that the seven epistles had an immediate literal bearing on the actual Asiatic assemblies of St. John's day, I for one cannot doubt that the seals prefigured the course of the Roman Empire from that epoch onward, and that they have thus had an application by no means immaterial (substantially as the ordinary historical system insists) down to the overthrow of paganism and the nominal supremacy of Christianity, with the natural results of vast accessions of souls from Israel in a measure, but far more from the Gentiles in that sphere and day. According to this idea, the early trumpets appear to me almost of necessity to refer: first, to the Gothic invasions of Alaric, Rhadagaisus, etc.; secondly, to the depredations of Genseric and his Vandals; thirdly, to the "scourge of God," as Attila the Hun was pleased to entitle himself; and fourthly, to the memorable era signalised by the extinction of the Roman empire in the west.

But fully allowing these intimations to be contained within the scope of the visions thus far, it is to my own mind manifest that the seven epistles are stamped with the most comprehensive aims, and from strong internal marks imply the varying phases which the house of God in its protracted existence here below would assume, till the Lord removes the faithful to heaven, keeping them out of the hour of temptation which awaits the earthly-minded, and spueing out of His mouth the self-complacent mass of Christendom. In harmony with this continuous and successive view of the churches, which in one shape or another has commended itself to godly and discerning enquirers of different ages, the most

simple interpretation of Revelation 4 and 5 is, that they suppose the rapture and glorification of the church of the firstborn to have taken place, and that Revelation 6 et seqq. begin to receive their grand fulfilment subsequent to that event. It is easy for an ingenious mind to conjure up difficulties and to muster objections in formidable array: no part of scripture, nor truth revealed in it, is exempt from exposure to attacks exactly similar. But nobody can deny that, going by the sacred text itself, this is the most natural way of taking Rev. 4, 5, or that the common theory leaves these admirable scriptures without adequate adaptation to the then circumstances, whether we look at the scene as a whole or at the particular figures therein exhibited. Their occurrence here, on the ordinary view, is an enormous, unexplained and perhaps, it may be added, inexplicable difficulty; but with the rapture of the saints, then an accomplished fact as the key, they are a beautiful and needed preface to all that follows.

Nor this only; for Rev. 6 and the chapters that succeed raise the fundamental question, whether churches or Christians, in the proper sense of the terms, are any longer involved in the scenes they depict on earth, when their full, and not merely their inchoate, accomplishment is in progress. Why should writers on prophecy, without anything like reasonable show of evidence, assume the affirmative? Why not prove it, if they can? The more indispensable the point may be to the popular system, the less satisfactory to unbiassed persons it seems to find its advocates preserving a silence so absolute, not indeed as regards reiterating, and reasoning from that assumption, but as to attempting a demonstration. Who can allege that the

proposition is self-evident? Who does not know that there are many intelligent students of the prophetic word who believe that not the church but a godly Jewish remnant, with Gentiles converted but separate, are the parties contemplated and directly concerned in the struggles of the latter day? Is it not worth discussing? What prophetic question more vital or more comprehensive? It would not be charitable to impute this singular reticence to a feeling of contempt for their brethren, neither would it be fair to insinuate that they are conscious of their own inability to give some appearance of scriptural proof in favour of their sentiments.

We deny that these prophecies, precious as they are for our profit, are fully, much less exclusively, about the church: if any assert that such is the case, on them lies the burden of proving it. It is simply taken for granted. Would it not be better to gather up and present, as forcibly as may be, the evidence which strikes their own minds? We appeal to the very scriptures in debate, some as clearly evincing a glorified condition of the Christian body in heaven, before the earthly judicial events transpire, others as clear that Jews and Gentiles, distinct from each other and not associated in one body like the church, are after this seen on earth, and that they are the real objects in the crisis of the close. If we are right, a vast amount of the differences among those who study the subject would be decided without further contest. Why then waste time in the shallow fields of Germanising Praeterists or of Romanising Futurists? Why not grapple with the evidence produced by Christians who are, through God’s mercy, at least as far removed from Babylon as the most zealous of

Protestants can pretend to be? If this, as I am sure, be the sound and satisfactory interpretation, we are not compelled to bend the past into a reluctant and far-fetched accomplishment, nor are we at liberty to explain away the frequent and obvious indices of the future. It satisfies all just requirement that there be an unforced and general resemblance, sufficient to show the direct finger of God, yet not such as to exhaust the prediction, but rather to leave room for a still closer final application when the saints, body and soul, are above.

"And I beheld and heard an eagle52 flying through mid-heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the dwellers on the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels which are yet to sound" (verse 13). It was an eagle, I believe, which John saw here, an angel in Rev. 14:6, to which our verse may have been assimilated, if the two words were not confounded by mere carelessness. The eagle's flight in mid-heaven was the dark and most suited harbinger of coming woe. Nor is there any real difficulty in its loud utterance; for the altar itself is, in the true text, made to speak in Revelation 16:7.

We have had the preliminary judgments ushered in by the first four trumpets. They dealt, to a certain extent, with man's prosperity high or low — first, in the settled ordered system, and next in a state of confusion; then the blow fell on the means of human enjoyment, turned into bitterness and destruction; and lastly, the whole fabric of political rule, supreme and subordinate, has to suffer a notable eclipse.53 Thus, it was a judgment of circumstances, rather than a personal visitation. But we also see a closing intimation of still deeper inflictions, marked off in the most definite way from the series that

preceded: “Woe, woe, woe, to those that dwell on the earth,” etc. The unsealed do not escape in the first; the third of men are killed in the second. Under the last we come, in a general way, to the end of all.

“The dwellers on earth” may have a local significance, especially during the great final crisis. But it appears to me that a survey of the various occurrences of the phrase warrants the conclusion that a moral force is the chief and most prominent intention of the Spirit. Twice has it been seen in the Apocalypse before this, and it plays an increasingly grave part as we draw near the close. First it is found in the epistle to the angel of the church in Philadelphia, where the Lord promises to keep those who kept the word of His patience, from the hour of temptation, which is to come upon all the habitable world, to try them that dwell on the earth. (Rev. 3:10.) The reason, I suppose, why the earthly-minded are brought out so distinctly there is, because the church in question supposes an unusual apprehension of Christ, and this in a heavenly way, both as to present enjoyment of Him, and as to the hope of His return. Hence the contrast of the portion of those whose hearts were here below. They shall eat the bitter fruit of their choice when the great tribulation comes, as those whose affections are set on heavenly things will then actually be where they dwell now in spirit. Next under the fifth seal (Rev. 6:10) the souls of the early Apocalyptic sufferers are represented as calling upon the Sovereign Lord to judge and avenge their blood on “them that dwell on the earth.” These will then have broken out into relentless, deadly persecution against the witnesses, whom God will have on earth when the seals are being fulfilled. Now under the woe-trumpets, we find them to be the

special objects. Further details we must defer till we come to the chapters that treat of them more particularly.

49 Strange as it may seem that so simple a matter should give rise to long doubt and interminable discussion, such is the fact. Perhaps the earliest interpretation on record, that of Victorinus (a martyr in Diocletian's persecution) applies the half-hour's silence to the beginning of eternal rest. And this remains the resource still of most who understand the seven seals to embrace the outline of events in providence, down to the second advent of the Lord, save that some would rather style the seventh seal a pause at His return. It is plain that the view rests mainly upon the assumption that the sixth seal introduced the day of the Lord, with its dependent sealing and palm-bearing visions representing the consummated glory of the blessed. Nobody can conceive that silence in heaven for half-an-hour would have been so viewed, unless the seal before had necessitated to their minds some such reference. And yet it is evidently unnatural; for if we had the rest, be it millennial or eternal, described fully in the close of Revelation 7, why did it need a fresh seal to inaugurate or continue it in the commencement of Revelation 8? And with what propriety, either as to time or character, is it conveyed in the seventh seal? This has led others to adopt the still stranger idea that the sixth seal closes the sequence of events, the seventh being merely indicative of a separation between this series and the parallel one of the trumpets. And the very curious circumstance is, that some who receive this anomalous arrangement have persuaded themselves that theirs is the only perfect clue to the order of the book, whereas it is

nothing but hopeless confusion. That I may not be charged with injustice, let me give the following statement from Three Letters on the Prophecies, pp. 2, 3, by J. H. Frere, reprinted in 1859. “Every commentator who has hitherto written on the Apocalypse, by erroneously understanding the mention of the seventh seal having been opened, which occurs at Revelation 8:1, to be an introduction of the events of that seal, has committed the greatest possible chronological error: embracing in the midst of the seals, and therefore amidst the events of time, the eternal state of the glorified church, represented by the vision of the palm-bearing multitude before the throne, of the preceding chapter (Rev. 7:9-17): so that no chronological arrangement of the Apocalypse has as yet even been proposed, seeing that eternity has thus been universally introduced between the sixth and seventh seals. The Apocalypse, however, will be found really to consist of these chronological histories, viz., the seven seals, contained in Revelation 6 and 7, concluding with the vision of the eternal state; the seven trumpets, consisting of Revelation 8 to 10:7, concluding (like the prophecy of Daniel, Revelation 12:7) with the vision of Christ assuring His church, by the solemnity of an oath, that he regards their sufferings and sets bounds to their duration; and the little opened book (Rev. 10:8 to 14.) concluding with the great judgment of the treading of the wine-press of Armageddon.” It is manifest that this unheard of and systematic disorder is due to the great primary error that Rev. 6:17 is a prophecy of the wrath of the Lamb, instead of being the predicted expression of men’s apprehension at that early epoch of judgment. The seventh seal is rendered meaningless, the sixth seal being virtually made the seventh, and the contents of it

and of the parenthetical Revelation 7 entirely misunderstood. Equally are the trumpets mistaken. They do not conclude with Christ's oath, any more than the preceding series concluded with the vision of the eternal state. Neither does the little open book conclude with Armageddon. Like the sealing and palm-bearing visions, it is a parenthesis revealed within the limits of the sixth trumpet, instead of following the seventh trumpet. The reader will, therefore, see the immense importance of steadily resisting the too common error as to the sixth seal, and will understand why I have rum the risk of repeating its confutation too frequently.

50 The excessive fancifulness and uncertainty of the schemes of interpreting the trumpets, especially of those who deny that they follow the seals and attempt to deduce a stream parallel to them, may be gleaned from the subjoined sketch drawn up by one of the ablest of themselves. "It will be enough to select nine or ten commentators, of considerable eminence and reputation, that the diversity of their views, in detail, may be seen; while there is uniform agreement in the main idea, that these trumpets denote political judgments which fell in the early ages on the Roman empire. Let us compare Mede, Cressener, Sir Isaac Newton, Whiston, and Lowman; and of living authors, Mr. Faber, Mr. Cuninghame, Mr. Frere, and Dr. Keith, with the last of whom Mr. Elliott nearly agrees in the arrangement of this part of the prophecy. The first trumpet begins, according to Lowman, in the time of Constantine; according to Mr. Cuninghame and Mr. Frere, with the death of Valentinian, A.D. 376, and ends with the death of Theodosius, A.D. 395. But Mede, Newton, Dr. Keith, and Mr. Elliott, make it begin with

the death of Theodosius, and reach to the death of Alaric, A.D. 410. Cressener and Whiston include in it both periods. Mr. Faber agrees with Mode and Newton in its commencement, but continues it forty years after Alaric's death, A.D. 395-450. The second, according to Lowman, Mr. Cuninghame, and Mr. Frere, reaches from Theodosius to Alaric, the exact interval which Mede, Newton, Dr. Keith, and Mr. Elliott assign to the first. Mede refers it to the fall of the Roman sovereignty, A.D. 410-455; Cressener, to the Transalpine invasions, A.D. 410-448; Sir Isaac Newton, to the Visigoths and Vandals, 407-427; Whiston, Mr. Faber, and Dr. Keith, to the Vandals only, but within different limits, A.D. 407-460, 439-417, and 429-477 respectively. The third trumpet by Sir Isaac Newton is applied to the Vandals, A.D. 427-430; by Whiston, Mr. Cuninghame, and Dr. Keith, to Attila and the Huns, A.D. 441-452; by Mede, Cressener, and Lowman, to the troubles of Italy, or setting of the Western Caesar, A.D. 450-476; by Mr. Faber, to the same, within narrow limits, A.D. 462-476; and by Mr. Frere, to the Nestorian heresy. Lastly, the fourth is referred by Mr. Cuninghame to the fall of the empire, A.D. 455-476; by Whiston, to the extinction itself, A.D. 476; by Mede, Cressener, Lowman, and Dr. Keith, to the subsequent eclipse of Rome, A.D. 476-540; by Sir Isaac Newton, to the wars of Beliarius, A.D. 535-552; by Mr. Faber and Mr. Frere, to the reign of Phocas and the Persian invasion of the East, A.D. 602-610. The remark of Mr. Faber on these differences, in earlier writers, is very natural and just. 'While they agree that the downfall of the Roman power in the West is at least the most prominent object of the prophecy, scarcely any two expositors concur as to the division of that subject among the several trumpets, that are supposed to relate

to it. The general result brought out is the subversion of the Western empire, but the particular steps are as multifarious and discordant as can well be imagined. So curious a circumstance may well be deemed the opprobrium of Apocalyptic interpretation, and may naturally lead us to suspect that the true key to the distinct application of the four first trumpets has never yet been found, or, if found, has never yet been satisfactorily used.' The natural inference from this strange variety of opinion among the best expositors is, that the historical divisions they have adopted or assumed are dim and vague, when compared with the distinctness of the emblems in the four trumpets.' — Birks' Mystery of Providence, pp. 103, 104. I must add, however, that few have exceeded Mr. B. in the loose rein he has allowed himself in applying this chapter. Verses 2-4 are called the season of intercession, and are applied to the time from Nerva till after Aurelius (A.D. 86-180) — why then, more than at any other epoch, does not clearly appear. Then verses 5, 6, are the warning and preparation (A.D. 181-248); next, verse 7, the first trumpet (A.D. 250-268), with an imaginary pause of judgment (A.D. 270-365); verses 8, 9, the second (A.D. 365-476); verses 10, 11, the third (A.D. 431-565); verse 12, the fourth (A.D. 540-622). Verse 13 might be thought to denote at least as much as the invisible pause of judgment between verses 7 and 8, but it is passed by without any chronological notice. Indeed, the first woe is made to trench even upon the fourth trumpet, being dated A.D. 609-1063, as the second A.D. 1037-1453. But I have reason to believe the author has abandoned it, and now in the main coalesces with Mr. Elliott.

51 “The third” is an expression often occurring in the first four trumpets. It refers, as I conceive, to the Western part of the Roman empire. In Revelation 9 we find it again in a different connection where it must be modified in meaning; for there can be no doubt, I think, that the first two woe-trumpets (whatever may be thought of the last) find their local application in the East. In fact, this is so clear that one writer of our day would rule the use of the phrase in Revelation 8 by its undoubted oriental (or, as he perhaps would can it, Greek) reference in the following chapter. But this is obviously illegitimate, and the ordinal allusion to the third emblem of Daniel is an error. In itself “the third” defines nothing, save that there is a tri-partite division. It is equally applicable to any of the three parts: to ascertain which particularly is meant we must take the context into account.

52 Mr. E. refers after Zullig to the “learned critic” Wolf’s preference of the common text. I doubt that he would have cited such an auxiliary, if he had been aware that the main object of the Curae Philol. seems to be the maintenance of the received readings against the best authorities, and especially in opposition to Bengel. Besides, he is far from positive in this, though greatly suspecting αἐτοῦ. “Quod si tamen aquilae mentio facta censeri debeat, malim omnino cum Seideliano codice et Primasio legere ἀγγέλου ὡς

αἐτοῦ πετωμένου. “ — (C. P., vol. v. p. 514.)

53 I know but must demur to the reasoning of Mr. E. in behalf of the supposition that the literal and the symbolical are mingled in these trumpets. The general examples of figure and fact from Ps. 22 prove nothing

for such a book as the Apocalypse. The real question, as he feels himself, is one of admitting literal geography into obviously symbolical prophecies. So, again, an incidental allusion (as in Ezek. 27:26; Ezek. 32:6, 7; Ps. 80:8, 11; Jer. 3:6,) is not fairly to be compared with an elaborate orderly series of symbolical images, as in our prophecy, where earth and sea have a definite meaning, quite independent of literal locality; the former referring to the scene of settled government, and the latter to a state of anarchy (cf. Rev. 12:12; Rev. 13:2, 11). Indeed, the instances of Rev. 13: are admitted on all hands. It is most natural, therefore, to adhere to the same sense of the prophetic language in our chapter. The meaning afforded also seems simple and excellent, without the incongruous mixture contended for. And as we saw under the seals, so here in the trumpet series, the fourth, not to speak of the third, presents an insuperable barrier. For surely, we must take the heavenly luminaries in a homogeneous sense; and how then can these be understood literally? The occurrence of the figure in the woe-trumpets would not have been so conclusive; for a difference there is, when we enter on the fifth trumpet. But it is in the fourth that we have sun, moon, and stars smitten. If these, then, are confessedly symbolical, why cut the thread of consistency? why not interpret the three preceding trumpets, as to land, sea, river, and fountains, in a kindred spirit? The sole reason I can conceive for the opposite course is the difficulty that is found in adapting the successive inroads of the barbarians, in a sufficiently definite form, to the various trumpet-blasts. But even so, what ineffectual effort and uncertainty after all! If I understand the Horae A., i. in loco, “the burning of trees and herbage” is viewed physically by one who is

generally the intrepid antagonist of literalism in the mouths of his Futurist friends. Why not expound the burning of the third of the earth, which critics admit must be received into the text? Taken figuratively, all is easy and plain, as well as harmonious. Again, if the thunders, lightnings, voices, and earthquake in Revelation 8:5 are answered by the primary insurrection of the Goths under Alaric, immediately after the death of Theodosius the Great, what is the analogous reference of the lightnings, voices, and thunders of Revelation 4:5? Mr. Birks has urged repeated instances where the prefiguration ill accords with Mr. E.'s alleged fulfilment in history; but I am not careful to insist on such points.

Revelation 9

A prefatory remark I may be permitted to make is, that our chapter furnishes an incidental proof that the trumpets are not coincident with the seals. For the sealing, was given in the large parenthesis (Rev. 7) which followed the sixth seal, whereas it is referred to, not after the sixth trumpet, but before it. This could not be if the two series of judgments ran parallel to each other. The natural, and I believe true, inference is, that the seals had finished their course before the trumpets begin, so that when the fifth trumpet sounds the first "woe," the men of the earth fall under its predicted torment, those who were sealed being referred to as in the scene, but exempted from the scourge. How could there be a commission to hurt nothing but those men who have not the seal of God, if there had been no sealing yet? If the sealing had already taken place, parallelism there is not between the respective seals and trumpets, nor can they even harmonize in point of time. They are consecutive, and not concurrent, and the last seal, as we have seen, is the mere prelude of silence for the new series of divine plagues to commence. How could that be if they were to be accomplished side by side? For if the first six seals confessedly follow in regular order, the seventh must be the last in accomplishment, as well as in revelation; but the seventh, instead of shadowing some additional dealing in providence like its predecessors, is only a brief pause in heaven ushering in another and more severe class of decreed judgments. And of these trumpets we must now enter upon the fifth and sixth (that is, the first two woes), to which Rev. 9 is devoted.

“And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fallen from heaven unto she earth; and to him was given the key of the pit of the abyss. And he opened the pit of the abyss; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. And out of the smoke came locusts unto the earth, and to them was given power as the scorpions of the earth have power. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, nor any tree, but the men who have not the seal of God upon their foreheads” (verses 1-4).

The star fallen from heaven to earth is a dignitary in an apostate state; for a real personage is intended, as the next words show — “to him was given the key of the pit of the abyss.” The allusion seems evident to Isaiah 14:12, where the king of Babylon is taunted with “How art thou fallen, O Lucifer [i.e., day-star], son of the morning?.... Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.” Here it is not his doom, but the authority he was permitted to exercise over the abyss, which is the expression of the source of Satanic evil and misery. “He opened the pit of the abyss, and there arose a smoke out of it, as the smoke of a great furnace,” the symbol of a delusion which darkens the mind of man. “The sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.” The supreme power and all healthful social influence suffer pre-eminently from its blinding effects. Nor was this the sole result. “Out of the smoke came locusts,” the figure of the aggressive instruments of rapine, and these clothed with a singular power of torment, “as the scorpions of the earth have power.” The command given shows, I think very plainly, the error of

such as apply the locusts in a literal way. They were not to hurt the grass of the earth, etc., that is, their natural food, if real locusts were meant. Men were to be the objects of these symbolic depredators-men, save God's sealed ones. And yet it was the destiny of these marauders not to kill, but to torment men five months (verse 5). It is a limited predatory chastisement, not judgment-day. "And their torment [was] as the torment of a scorpion when it striketh a man. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death fleeth from them" (verse 6). Nothing on earth can exceed the agony of conscience which will be inflicted on their victims. It is a yet stronger colouring of wretchedness than that in which Jeremiah (Jer. 8:3) depicts the desolated and dispersed Jews in all the places whither they should be driven in the Lord's sore displeasure.

But there is a further description. "And the likenesses of the locusts [were] like horses prepared for battle; and [there were] on their heads as it were crowns of gold; and their faces [were] as the faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as [the teeth] of lions. And they had breastplates as it were iron breastplates, and the sound of their wings [was] as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. And they have tails like scorpions, and stings;54 and their power [was] in their tails to hurt men five months. They have as king over them the angel of the abyss; his name in the Hebrew tongue [is] Abaddon; and in the Greek tongue he hath the name Apollyon" (verses 7-11).

They were not mere plunderers, but had warlike energy, and they claimed for their onward-rushing career the righteous sanction of God, whose image and glory they

bore outwardly, whereas in truth they were thoroughly subject to man and Satan too. Ferocity is theirs, and hearts steeled against every emotion of pity in their swift career. But their worst power was the venom of falsehood which followed. It was the energy of false doctrine, represented by the scorpion sting in the tail. And we know from elsewhere, “the prophet that speaketh lies, he is the tail.”

Finally, the king is the angel of the abyss, the same perhaps as the fallen star, who had the key of the pit. If so, it is a dark Satanic destroyer, if not Satan. It is in this world that the devil is so exalted, its prince; he is ruler also of the power of the air and the god of this age. In the abyss he will be bound as a prisoner for a long season; in hell he will be tormented for ever and ever, the most miserable object there, and in no wise ruling as king in either the one or the other. So poets dream; but not so says the scripture.

“And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels that are bound at the great river Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed, that were prepared for55 the hour and day and month and year, for to slay the third of men. And the number of the army of the horsemen [was] two56 myriads of myriads I heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and those that sat on them, having breastplates fiery and hyacinthine and brimstone-like; and the heads of the horses [were] as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone. By these three plagues was the third of men killed, by the fire, and the smoke, and the brimstone, which issued out

of their mouths. For the power of the horses is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt. And the rest of the men who were not killed by these plagues repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold and silver and brass and stone and wood: which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk: neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts" (verses 13-21).

It is the voice of the Lord, no doubt, which is heard from the horns of the golden altar. But what a solemn sound is this — above all, issuing thence? For ordinarily that altar is the special witness of His all-prevailing intercession. Thence the incense rose up before God. It was the horns of the brazen altar merely which received the blood of the sin-offering, when an individual sinned, whether a ruler or one of the common people. But when the whole congregation were guilty, the priest was commanded to put some of the victim's blood on the horns of the golden altar; for the communion of the people as a whole was interrupted, and needed to be restored. Here how different! The voice from the four horns of the golden altar orders the angel of the sixth trumpet to loose the four angels that were up to that time bound at (or by) the Euphrates. There they had been prepared for (not "an," but) the hour and day and month and year to slay the third of men. They were prepared, not during that time, much less when it was expired, but with a view to it: when that hour and day and month and year arrived, or rather until the term was over, they were ready to accomplish their prescribed slaughter. They destroyed men by apostacy.

Still, if it be terrible to hear such a signal from the altar of incense, how comforting to think that all in the judgment is so minutely ordered and fore-ordained of the Lord! He it is who first gives the word, and gives it to the holy angel. The angel again looses the four bound at the Euphrates. The evil can only act when and as far as is allowed of the good, and the good, however they may excel in strength, only do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word. The notion that we are to identify the four here with the angels who restrained the winds in Rev. 7 is strange, seeing that contrast is marked, not resemblance. Here they are not restraining but restrained, which is nowhere said of the holy angels. There they stood at the four corners of the earth, as separate as they could be; here all are bound in the same spot.

As to the character of the second woe itself, it is not torment like the first, but destruction of life. Not that there is no element of false prophecy here, as also was there; “for the power57 of the horses,” it is said, “is in their mouth and in their tails: for their tails [are] like serpents, and have heads, and with them they do hurt.” That is, venomous error they propagated and left behind them, and this with more settled plan than in the locust-woe. The locusts in the first woe had scorpion-like tails and stings: the horses in the second had serpent-like tails, which had heads. But they had power in their mouth also. “And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and those that sat on them, having breastplates of fire and jacinth, and like brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths proceeded fire and smoke and brimstone.” It is the judicial power of Satan, as far as God permits that.

Besides, it far surpasses in energy and aggressive destructive warfare the preceding woe. This was spiritual — evilly so, of course; the second is more destructive, though in its train follows the injury of the enemies' delusion and falsehood. It seems also more varied as far as leaders go; for the other had but one, this had four angelic agents at the head.

"And the rest of the men who were not killed by these plagues repented not," etc. Humbling lesson, and most needful to remember! God has been sending judgment upon judgment, first on men's circumstances, and then on themselves, and in this last case torment, and finally death itself. But it is in vain. Such is man after all this, that he repents not of his evil, either religiously or morally. Satan's last effort remains.

The reader will perceive that I am merely anxious to present the leading feature of each woe, as far as I am enabled, so as in some measure to help souls to the understanding of the prophecy. This, he will remember, is a very distinct thing from the application of a Prophecy. The question of the persons, or places, or times alluded to, may be deeply interesting, but it is subordinate to the understanding of the book.

For my own part, I do not doubt that the common application of the locusts to the Saracens and of the Euphratean horsemen to the Turks is well founded. But we have seen repeatedly that the fulfilment of the. Revelation cannot properly be before the heavenly saints are caught up, and the earthly people are once more the objects of God's dealings on the earth and in their own land, though by no means to the exclusion of divine testimony and its blessed effects among the Gentiles.

According to this later and final accomplishment, the second woe would be fulfilled, I suppose, in the early ravages of the north-eastern (or Assyrian) armies, as the first might be antichrist's delusive agency in the land of Palestine. I conceive that when the prophecy will be realised in all its precision, the scene where these mysterious locusts are to enact their bitter but transitory torment will be the land where at that time the Jews will have largely gathered, but as regards the mass in unbelief. The unsealed naturally points to them and most probably to their land. For it will be noticed that there is no "third" under this trumpet to intimate the direction of the woe, nor any index that I observe, save the exemption of the sealed. The rest of the Jews were still in judicial blindness, and are the implied objects of this judgment. If they are the preparatory movements of these two powers, each is as decidedly opposed to the other as both are to the Lord Jesus: they are to be successively judged and destroyed when He comes in power and glory.

It is interesting to observe that the same chapter of Isaiah (Isa. 14), which I referred to as an illustration of the star fallen from heaven (i.e., the chief personage under the first woe), treats also of the Assyrian enemy, which I judge to be the full meaning of those who figure under the second woe. "The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand; that I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains tread him under foot; then shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their shoulders. This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth: and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all

the nations. For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" (verses 24-27.) The difference is that Isaiah gives us the end of their career for the deliverance of Israel, while St. John shows, us rather its beginning and course, as a scourge upon apostate Judaism and Christendom. It would be a mistake to limit Isaiah to the bygone history, or to take the past as more than a type of the future' however important in its day. For in the history the Assyrian fell first, and Babylon's doom was long after. In the prophecy it is the last representative of Babylon (i.e., the beast of the crisis,) who is destroyed first, and then he who answers to the great Assyrian leader of the nations shall come to his end, and none shall help him. So it is written in Isaiah 10:12, "Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks," etc. Our chapter of the Revelation gives us some of the early policy of the Assyrian, if not of antichrist, or of their respective parties.

According to the more vague and protracted historical application, which I conceive to have been comprehended in the divine purpose of these visions, it may be asked how this chapter is to be understood. I have already briefly shown how the earlier trumpets brought us down to the extinction of the Western Roman empire. Pursuing the same thread, the fifth trumpet has a distinct bearing upon the Saracenic infliction, as the sixth refers to the furious onset of the Turks. Hence one is quite willing to allow the general reference of the fallen star to Mohammed, who was the instrument of

Satan in opening on the world the delusion of the abyss, with all its darkening effects. Certainly the description suits in many of its characteristic features, not the gradual growth and spread of the doctrinal and moral pravities of Christendom, but that host of marauders who, embracing with ardour the hell-inspired creed of the Arabian false prophet, sprang forth on their ambitious and fanatical career. Not that I can accept without serious drawback much that has been made of the local or national significance of the locusts and the scorpions, the horses and the lions, the faces of men, the hair of women, and the breastplates of iron. For instance, it is plain that the nation, whose rapid devastation of Palestine is portrayed in Joel 2 (the prototype of the Apocalyptic locusts), has nothing to do with the Saracens or Arabia, but is rather the northern array, “the Assyrian,” of which the Jewish prophets so often speak Compare also Nahum 3:17, the reference of which confirms the same thing. An exactly similar argument applies to the use of “scorpions” as in Ezek. 2:6, where it is used figuratively as here, but with not the most distant glance at the robbers of the desert. As to the “horses” the very next vision of the Euphratean warriors refutes the notion of a geographical reference; for the Turks are a totally distinct race and emerged from a different quarter; and yet horses are just as prominent here as in the prophecy of their precursors. 58 Also, in the one we have the heads, in the other the teeth, of “lions.” This therefore destroys anything like an exclusively distinct usage, not to speak of the manifold application which other scriptures indicate. The truth is that the Spirit is making up an apt and complete symbolic picture, and in no way ties Himself to the animals, etc., peculiar to the country.

To my mind the intention is moral, not geographical; and this kind of teaching detracts from the real force of Scripture, occupying the mind with that which may be partially true in a natural way, but not I believe the object of the Holy Ghost. Hence does it not seem almost trifling to extract from the faces of men, the hair of women, and crowns like gold, an allusion to beard or moustache, coupled with literal flowing hair, surmounted by a turban? Taken as emblems of character, the dignity of the divine word is vindicated and felt. The locusts naturally point to countless swarms, devouring in specified limits, but more distinguished by the tormenting sting of false doctrine. The unsealed, the men of the earth, were the victims of the scourge, but the object was a conquering propagandism: not the extinction of prosperity, but rather the maintenance of it at the expense of the truth, and this for a limited period. The resemblance to horses prepared for battle is the expression of their aggressive attitude, and the crowns like gold seem to intimate their vaunted confidence in a divinely-righteous mission of victory. Their faces as of men, but with the hair of women, may denote that, with all their claim to act authoritatively in the name of God, they were nevertheless subject to the merest human authority, and not to God after all. The iron breastplates, the lion-teeth, the sounding wings, I regard as the figure of the unflinching courage of fanaticism (their strongest armour), and the ferocious depredations that accompanied their wonderfully rapid warfare. The Hebrew name of their king confirms, in my opinion, the full reference to the special wasting of the Jews, as also a connection with the Eastern Empire may be implied in the Greek.

I have thus rehearsed the spiritual significance of the first woe's emissaries, stating particularly what might be supposed to prefigure the past accomplishment, according to which the five months, of course, must be taken as months of years. But I protest against the arbitrariness of interpreting one part of the account literally and the other figuratively. Again, if we examine it closely, the utmost allowable is some such partial incipient accomplishment. For it is plain that the prophet of Mecca was more like a rising star than a fallen dignitary; insomuch that Mede, with the earlier writers in general, applies it to Satan, as others to the Pope, etc. Again, the command not to kill is very hard to reconcile with the exterminating policy of the Saracenic incursions; and the term of 150 years has been doubled by some of great weight, because of a repeated mention (but compare Rev. 20), in order to eke out a more plausible solution. Even this improbable inference from the twofold statement of the five months labours under its own difficulties, as others have sufficiently shown.

As regards the second woe, the first difficulty which the protracted view has to encounter is the meaning of the four angels that were bound by the Euphrates. Most of the Protestant school apply them to four Mussulman powers, either successive or contemporaneous. But, says Mr. Elliott,59 "the interpretations are found on examination to be one and all inadmissible. As the commissioning and loosening of the four angels in vision was but a single act, so the agencies symbolized must necessarily have been at one and the same time loosed or commissioned: by which consideration alone all such successions of destroying agencies seemed excluded, as Vitringa and after him Woodhouse have suggested in

explanation. And as to contemporary Turkman dynasties, whether we refer to the list given by Mede, and by Newton after him, or that by Faber and by Keith, from Mills and Gibbon, there is no quaternion of them that can be shown either to have combined together in the destruction of the Greek empire, — to have been all locally situated by the Euphrates, — to have had existence at the time asserted to be that of the commissioning of the four angels, — or to have continued in existence up to the time of the completion of the commission given, in the destruction of the Greek empire. In short, the manifest inconsistency with historic fact of every such attempted solution has been hitherto, in the minds of the more thoughtful and learned prophetic students, like as it were a millstone about the neck of the whole Turkish theory of interpretation." This at least is a candid confession, especially when we consider that it is about a prophecy which has been acquiesced in more generally than any other perhaps in the Apocalypse.

But what is the view suggested that is to leave the general application unencumbered? The resource of superhuman angelic intelligences directing the subordinate human energies, and this without reference to the number of earthly instruments employed. In fact Mr. E. identifies these angels at the Euphrates with the angels parenthetically introduced in the sixth seal (Rev. 7), and reasons from the assumption that the judgments of the preceding trumpets were the probable results of their actings. But this, it is clear, does not hang well together with the scheme which insists that the fallen star of the first woe was not an angelic being but Mohammed. Consistency would demand, one would

think, that if the angel of the abyss in the preceding trumpet sets forth a man, these four must represent similar leaders. Certainly these are in contrast with the angels whose office it was rather to restrain the winds than to urge on their devastating blasts. All the accessory circumstances strengthen their distinction. Again, the use made of the fire and smoke and brimstone which issued out of the horses' mouths, as if they prefigured the Turkish artillery, of the breastplates of fire and jacinth and brimstone, as an allusion to the Ottoman warlike apparel of scarlet, blue, and yellow, and of the serpent-like horsetails having heads, as the emblem of Turkish pashas, seems to me both inconsistent with other parts of the Apocalypse, and (shall I say?) grotesque in itself.

I deny not the application of the horsemen and horses to the past inroads of the Turks, as distinguished from their Saracen predecessors, devoting themselves to their destructive task in the Eastern Roman or Greek empire, with far more of system, and with more permanent results. In their fierce career they breathed out in no slight measure, along with all the old diabolical delusion, an infernal spirit of judgment; and as were their weapons, such was their armour. Fire and brimstone represent the most extreme form of divine judgment; for they are the same symbols used of the lake of fire at the end of all things into which the wicked dead, after their resurrection and judgment, are to be cast. Again, it was this peculiarly Satanic power, not like the scorpion now, but the serpent, to which the Holy Ghost draws attention as the grand source of mischief. The moral false-prophet action is there, and this too invested with authority; for the tails had heads, and with

them they do hurt. Throughout the permitted sphere the result was the utter extinction of Christian profession, while the rest, alas! heeded not the warning. But these features, in my judgment, involve elements still more terrible than anything yet seen on earth; so that all confirms me in the conviction that we must look for another and final answer to the imagery, in the last scourge for the corrupt and idolatrous East.60 An awful sketch is given after the judgment has run its course: "And the Test of the men who were not killed by these plagues repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold and silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk; neither repented they of their murders nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornications, nor of their thefts." Thus even the apostacy of those who fell under the scourge from God fails to awaken the seared consciences of men, all the worse for having seen but slighting the light of the gospel. Nothing then remains but a state of abandonment to all immorality and superstition.

The same friend who directed Mr. E.'s attention to Griesbach's citation of ἀνέμους and ἄνεμοι from 30 (Cod. Guelph. of the fourteenth century) for ἀγγ in verses 14, 15, recalls this variation to me. It is also supported by 98. (Cod. Bodl. Can. of the sixteenth century.) But I agree with the editors in general that it is barely worth a notice.

54 The common reading is followed by the authorised version, "and there were stings: and their power was to hurt men five mouths."

55 Mr. Elliott seems singularly unfortunate in his remarks on the Greek text. Thus, in verse 15, he contends for the strangest possible version of εἰς as = after, or at the expiration of, the aggregated period in question; and he twice in i. p. 518,519, speaks of ἀποκτεῖναι, a form and import different from ἵνα ἀποκτείυωσιν, the true phrase beyond all doubt, as he gives it in p. 521. It needs no reasoning to see that the action is not momentary but continuous, and that the preposition therefore has its ordinary sense, as Mr. Birks has properly remarked.

56 Mr. E. is quite wrong (H. A., i. p. 480, note) in supposing that Griesbach prefers altogether to reject the δύο. Michaelis considers it “a very improbable reading” in the ill-considered and unsound last chapter of his Introduction. No such doubt is expressed, but, on the contrary, δύο is the reading preferred, both in Griesbach’s first and second edition, and in the London reprint, 1810, 1818. This odd mistake is repeated in yet stronger terms in note 2 to p. 605, where it is said that Griesbach, on external evidence, prefers the more simple reading μ. μ. “which seems to me preferable on internal also.” The common text, read by many cursives, turns out to be that of the Sinai MS., and its equivalent in sense appears in the Alexandrian and the Porphyrian uncials, and a few good later copies. B and very many others, supported by the Arabic of the Polyglotts and a Slav. MS., but contrary to all other ancient versions, omit δύο. Matthaei follows them in that reading, which is the easier of the two. All other editors of note, like Griesbach, retain the δύο, δὺς, or δίς.

57 In note 5 top. 513 of the Horae Apoc., vol. i., Mr. E. omits, “Mill reads” in his last edition, and contents

himself with the remark “ αἱ εξουσιαι αυτων, ‘their authorities are in their tails,’ is the notable reading in some MSS. The word is similarly used in the plural, Luke 12:11; Rom. 13:1, etc.” How strange is the effect of a system! The truth is that the plural here is due to Erasmus’s which R. Stephens followed! And Mill’s text is merely third edition with some errata corrected. It is clear from Mill’s note that the evidence is entirely adverse. There is not a shadow of doubt that the singular is right; and probably αἱ γὰρ οὐραί led to αἱ γὰρ ἐξουσίαι.

58 Compare also what some of these very writers found upon the horses of Rev. 6. Egypt is the first power historically celebrated for its horses. (Ex. 15.) So it was the great market in Solomon’s day (1 Kings 10:28), as Togarmah was for Tyre. (Ezek. 27:14.) See Isaiah 31:1, 3. In Zechariah they symbolize the various imperial powers.

59 Horae Apoc., i. pp. 488, 490.

60 It may be seasonable here to notice briefly Dr. D. M’Causland’s Latter Days of Jerusalem and Rome. He regards (pp. 212, 213) the flood prevailing 150 days upon the earth as the type of the fifth trumpet visitation; but why the destruction of all flesh should typify the torment, not the death, of the future victims, does not appear. The sixth trumpet, he thinks, confirms this, because the time prescribed there (391 days and an hour) carries us down, if reckoned on the scale of a day for a year, from the deluge to the epoch of the judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah. Now supposing there were no chronological objections, where is the congruity of taking the five months literally in the first woe, and the

hour and day and month and year symbolically in the second? Besides, here again the destruction in the type exceeds the proportion of the antitype; and, what is more material, our Lord applies both the deluge and the destruction of Sodom to the days of the Son of man, and the day when He is revealed. These would answer to Rev. 19, not to Revelation 9, which discloses preliminary chastisements. Still less can I accept the singular idea that the four angels or their chivalry set forth Israel and Ephraim flying on the shoulders of the Philistines towards the west, and purging away the filth of Jerusalem. For “the men” he conceives to be the unsealed, who were to be tormented but not killed by the antichristian locusts: the horsemen of Israel finish the work.

Revelation 10

Some will remember a resemblance already pointed out between the two orders of seals and trumpets. When we come to the sixth in each series, there is an interruption of a most interesting kind. We saw that after the sixth seal there was such an episode, not of judgment but of mercy — God interfering on behalf of man, after the most signal convulsion among men and things on the earth; and not only so, but the powers of the heavens also shaken. Then we found God showing us that in the midst of judgment He remembers mercy. For there was the sealing of a full complement out of the twelve tribes of Israel, and besides clear and affecting proof was furnished that the poor Gentiles were not forgotten. Thus, when the prophet looks, he sees a countless multitude out of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues. These were evidently delivered by the great goodness of God, and come out of that terrible tribulation that is yet to be. Now in Rev. 9 we have had the sixth trumpet; and, answering to what we have seen in the seals, there is an interruption between it and the seventh trumpet, which is only announced in Rev. 11:15. There is a vision described of a very marked, and, considering the visions that accompanied all the trumpets, of an extraordinary character. A mighty angel comes down from heaven, who appears to be the Lord Himself So we saw in a previous chapter the angel-priest at the golden altar, putting incense to the prayers of the saints which He offered up to God. And I suppose few would imagine that God could commit this service of the heavenly sanctuary to any mere created being. In the Old Testament Jehovah had occasionally assumed an

angelic form; and as this book brings us back to a great deal which is akin to the Jewish Scriptures, herein may be one reason why we have Christ thus taking the form of an angel. As before the trumpets were blown, the angel who gave the signal for all was seen in a priestly point of view, here he is in power preparing the way of the kingdom. Accordingly there is every circumstance of majesty surrounding him.

"And I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud." The cloud, as any one will recollect who is conversant with scripture idea and phrase, was the well-known badge of Jehovah's presence. When the Lamb's blood was shed and Israel were being led out of the land of their bondage, God Himself went before them as the angel of the covenant, and the cloud was the visible form or token of it. (Ex. 13:21; Ex. 23:20, 23; Ex. 40:36, 38; Num. 9:15-23.) In the angel that we have here there is much that seems to indicate the presence of the Lord Himself, laying claim to the possession of the world at large. One remarkable sample may be remembered even in the New Testament, at the time when there was a little foreshadowing given of the coming kingdom. Now what was it that testified to the immediate presence of God? and what made Peter and John tremble, accustomed though they were to the company of Jesus and to the most marvellous effects of His power? "They feared as they entered into the cloud," because the cloud was the known and peculiar mark of Jehovah's presence.

Here then, I think, it was no mere creature, but the Creator Himself, who took the form of an angel. It may be too the Lord retreating, if one may so say, from all that would have linked Him manifestly and directly with

His people, and this for a very solemn reason. His people during the trumpets are supposed to have, only not wholly, lost their distinctive separation and to be sunk down into the world, so that God morally could not own in a public way His connection with them. In Hebrews 11 it is said of certain believers that God was not ashamed to be called their God. Alas! there are saints of whom God would be ashamed to be called their God. It was not so with the early patriarchs, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: God was their God. But He never calls Himself the God of Lot. This is a serious matter for thought, and our hearts ought to watch against anything that could make Him ashamed to be called our God. It has been alluded to before, when we noticed that the Lord is never spoken of in this series as the Lamb, because the people of God will have got so much mixed up with unbelievers. When these judgments fall, the saints will be painfully merged in the world, so that much of the chastisement will come upon both. Remember also that the Lord tells us the slips of His people that we may be warned by them. How sad to use the prophecy of unfaithfulness in order to justify it, and to attribute the effects of our unbelief to the providence of God!

At the time of the trumpets there is an ominous silence as to the people of God. There is just an allusion to their exemption from the torment of the apostates in Revelation 9:4; but this is the only distinct reference till the parenthesis of Revelation 10 and 11 if you apply the seals and trumpets to the past history of the world, the meaning is so plain that most thoughtful Christians have agreed in the main. Constantine brought in Christianity by force of arms. The consequence of this was the great

downfall of Paganism, with intimations of mercy by the by, and the seventh seal was followed by silence in heaven for about half an hour. No false expectation could be there. God knew that, so far from the world being made really better by that astonishing change, all would end in the frightful consequences of grace abused, corrupted, and despised. The vast body which had given up idolatry for the profession of Christianity would ripen for judgment. The immediate result here is the coming in of these trumpets. And what then? God was ashamed of Christendom; heaven was silent now, and yet we know joy is felt there over one sinner that repents. It was, externally at least, a swamp of forms; and where was the Rock of salvation? Alas! He is once more lightly esteemed.

Connected with this, I think, the Lord Jesus is no longer spoken of as the Son of man, much less as the Lamb, if seen here, He is in angelic guise. And as before (in order to distinguish Him particularly from all others) He was engaged with the incense at the golden altar; so here we find He was “clothed with a cloud” — the badge of Jehovah’s glory; “and the rainbow [was] over his head,” that is, the pledge of God’s unchanging covenant with creation. “His face [was] as it were the sun.” The sun is ever the symbol of supreme glory in rule, and the face of this angel is said to be like the sun. So it was on the holy mount (Matt. 17:2), and when John saw his Lord again at Patmos. (Rev. 1:16.) “His feet as pillars of fire” united, it would seem, the solidity of the “pillar” and the thorough final judgment that is so constantly conveyed by “fire.” He plants the left on the sea, meaning the unformed masses of the outside world, and the right on the earth, i.e., that part of the world which is favoured

with divine testimony and government. In other words, it is the Lord's universal claim over men, over the world. It is a public declaration of His right, not in respect of the church, but of the earth: not yet His actual investiture as Son of man, but a dealing of providential character, which involves a recommencing of testimony preparatory to His speedy assumption of universal dominion.

But a further step has to be taken now. It is not, as in Revelation 5, God seated upon His throne with the sealed book in His right hand, and then the Lamb opening the book as the One who had prevailed to do so. And how prevailed? Through death. It is not by creature-strength that the man of God conquers. The victories that will shine most and brightest are always those cast, so to speak, in the mould of the death of the Lord Jesus. In poor man's case it is life first and then death, because we are by nature dead in trespasses and sins; but in that of the Lord Jesus it is death first and then resurrection-life; and such is the pattern for the Christian's faith to realize. Our whole life, as believers, should flow according to the same cross that has wrought our salvation; for the cross is God's power for us all the way through. (Gal. 6.) It is God who has given us to suffer, and then comes power practically; but this is, perhaps always, after there has been more or less a realization of weakness and suffering. (2 Cor. 12; 2 Cor. 13:4.) A man cannot win Christian victories until he is ban and low before God. He must be broken down in one way or another. And blessed it is if we are broken down in the presence of Christ; for if it be not there, we must be broken down, if one may say so, in our own presence, and haply too in that of others. In Revelation 5, however,

Christ opens the book that was unintelligible to all the mind of man, and He shows, us from the seals certain judgments of God, so little removed from ordinary events in providence that we should scarce have known them to be judgments, save by that divine unveiling. But the Lamb unfolds all, and we find that God is at work to introduce the kingdom of the First-begotten, to put the Heir in actual possession of the inheritance.

In the chapter before us there is a difference. It is not a sealed book that we have, but an open one: and it is also emphatically a little book. There is nothing mysterious about the matter. We come here to a notable change in the Revelation. Instead of its being as hitherto, events that were the secret effects of God's unseen hand, there is a manifestation of His power and purpose with regard to His people. All becomes quite plain. We have no longer symbolical locusts, having a king (cf. Prov. 30:27), or strange and strangely numerous horses and horsemen, etc. It is now God's open, brief, and decisive actings. This I apprehend to be the difference between the two books. The first was in the hand of God and sealed, so that none could open it, save the blessed One who suffered all for the glory of God. Here it is an open book, which the prophet takes from the angel's hand; and immediately we have no longer the more secret or enigmatical appearances of earlier visions, but the temple, the holy city, the Gentiles treading it under foot — all an obvious manifestation that God is acting on the Jews. We have before had the sealing a certain number out of the tribes of Israel, scattered, as I suppose, throughout the whole world. But here (Rev. 11) we come to a smaller scale, where God's dealings are concentrated on Jerusalem, the sanctuary. altar,

worshippers, two witnesses, etc., and where they are also brought out so plainly that there need be no mistake as to what God means thereby. The beast as such also appears here in undisguised and tremendous opposition against God and His servants. And evidently the lord Jesus is showing that the time approaches when He must take all into His own hands. This then is an open book, because all that it Contains is perfectly plain; and it is a very little book, because but a short time and a narrow compass are contemplated in it.

“And he cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth, and when he had cried, the seven thunders uttered their own voices. And when the seven thunders had uttered [them], I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying, Seal the things which the seven thunders uttered and write them not”61 (ver. 3, 4). “Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing?... shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it? Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets. The lion hath roared, who will not fear? The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?” (Amos 3.) I cannot but regard this passage of the Jewish prophet as in various elements illustrative of the vision we are examining. Again, thunder in the Old Testament was constantly the expression of God’s authority in the way of judgment. We are summoned to hear this awful announcement of God’s judgments. John was about to write, but a voice from heaven forbids it. He was not to communicate the details of what God was going to do now. But the angel “lifted up his right hand to heaven and sware by him

that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven.... that there should be no more space [or delay], but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he should be about to sound, the mystery of God also should be finished, as he announced to his servants the prophets”62 (verses 5-7).

I apprehend that people often gather a vague if not wrong notion from those words, “there shall be time no longer.” Many imagine that it means there was then to be an end of time, and eternity was to begin. But this is not at all the sense, and the case shows the importance of seeking light from God. The meaning is, that God would no longer allow time to run on before He interfered with the course of this world. It is not that eternity was at once to begin, but that there should be no longer any lapse of time before His last summons to the world and the introduction of a new dispensation, in which He will deal in an open manner with men on the earth. Since the rejection and ascension of the Lord Jesus, men — “His citizens” have sent a message after Him, saying (at least in their hearts), “We will not have this man to reign over us.” Such has been the voice of the world ever since He went into the far country. The real desire of man is to be rid of Christ; and in general he thinks he is. And no wonder he dislikes to hear of His return in power and glory; for the scriptures declare expressly that Christ is to judge man, and man does not like to stand before his judge. Hence he puts off as long as possible the warning of Christ’s advent to judge sin and sinners. The Lord intimates here that there is to be ere long a close put to the present delay. All the time that Christ is away at the right hand of God there is a suspense of judgment. But God feels deeply for His

people, suffering as they must during the interval of Christ's rejection; and now He is not going to allow such a state of things to continue any longer, for there are the evident signs and tokens of the Lord's coming to deal with His enemies.

The mighty angel swears that there should be no further delay (not before eternity, but) before the day of the Lord. The space or day spoken of here is man's day, and when this ends, the day of the Lord begins, which latter in scripture is never confounded with eternity, because that day has an end; whereas of course eternity never can terminate. Viewed from every side, the real force then is "that there should be no longer delay." And remark the words in the following verse: "But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he should be about to sound, the mystery of God should be finished," etc. These words at once contradict the thought that eternity was to follow immediately. On the contrary, after this the whole of the millennium comes in; after it a little season, and then eternity. Souls are sometimes hindered from entering into the truth of God by one little word, and so I believe it has been with this passage. Often when a slight obscurity is cleared up, heaps of difficulties disappear.

God will put a stop to the present delay: "the mystery of God" will then be finished. This I take to mean the secret of His allowing Satan to have his own way, and man too (that is to say, the wonder of evil prospering and of good being trodden under foot) God cheeks, no doubt, the evil in a measure, partly through human government and partly through His own providential dealings. And indeed it is an immense mercy that there are such restraints upon the evil of this world. For what would it

be without them, when, even in the midst of God's providential cheeks, wickedness is often so triumphant, and godliness thrown to the ground? Still there is an influence for evil that no government can root out, and good that is belied and so has comparatively little influence. That is what seems so mysterious a thing to us, when we know God and how He hates evil. But it is soon coming to an end. God is about to touch all that is contrary to Himself, to bring all that has been promised from of old, and to give credit for all that has been done according to Himself And He is going to do this by His Son. The One whom man despised and rejected is the very person whom God will send to reduce all into holy order and beauty out of the existing mass of confusion.

"The mystery of God" must not be confounded with the mystery of His will in Eph. 1:9. This last is what has been always near to His heart, for it involves the glory not of the church only but of Christ. It is "according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself." There was no one that suggested it. It was His own will. And what is the mystery of His will? "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him." All these things that Satan has scattered now will be reunited in one under Christ. Mercy and truth will then meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other. This is true even now for the believer, as far as his own reconciliation to God is concerned. Satan may challenge you. — How can it be had in the presence of so much evil within? No wonder that this cuts right into the conscience of the man that doubts God, and even of the one that believes Him, if he is looking at himself. When

occupied with myself these doubts may well arise, but not if I am looking only to Christ. He alone is entitled to give me rest before God. It is Christ alone who can dissipate the waves and the winds. Satan has set man against God in every way, even against goodness coming down from Him; but God is not going to allow evil to pass a certain limit. Though Satan's opposition is allowed to frustrate God's plans for the present, yet every one of the ways in which He has been at work in the earth from the first is destined to triumph and to triumph together in the end. (Hosea 2:21, 23.) There was a man set up in Adam; there was government put into the hands of Noah; there was God's calling given to Abraham; there was the long and patient test of the law; finally, there was the mission of His Son and of His Spirit. All these things, so to speak, have been streams from God flowing through this earth. They have been refused or corrupted by man from the first, and through the enemy's power men will abuse these very dealings of God to bring in the most daring and deadly conspiracy that the world has ever seen — Satan and man combined against God, who will allow all this evil to come out, and will then put an end to it by judgment. This is the finishing of the mystery.

But that which is called "the mystery of His will" is not the subject of prophecy. Christ will be the Head of all blessing and He will gather all things in united blessing under His own headship — all that Satan had contrived to spoil. What God made originally was merely in a condition of innocence. but what the Lord Jesus will accomplish in the end, the reconciliation of all things, will be beyond Satan's power to touch. All will be gathered together in one, even in Christ their chief. And

another thing it is well to state. In this mystery of God's will we are not merely to be blessed under Christ, but in order to get the full character of the blessing, we are blessed with Him. And this is what we have here in Ephesians: not that we will be a sort of inheritance for Christ, but we are joint-heirs with Him. In that great mystery of God in Christ, there are two thoughts — Christ's universal headship, and the church's union to Him. There is no such thing as our being united under Christ's power; but all things that ever have been made are to he united under His headship; and, wonderful thought! the church is to share all that glory along with Him. it is not what belongs to Christ as a divine person, but what He takes as the reward of redemption. And this very work gives Him a title to bestow it on whom God will. The church is united as the body and bride of Him who is the Lord of all. She is the Eve of the Second Adam. In Ephesians 5 St. Paul takes up more particularly the latter part of the subject. Christ is to present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. The great mystery brought out there is the nearness, the love, the intimacy of bridal relationship between Christ and the church.

In the Epistle to the Colossians you have the same thing referred to (Col. 2:2): "To the acknowledgement of the mystery of God [and of the Father, and of Christ]." These last words seem inserted without adequate authority, and when persons try to mend scripture, they only damage it. There is a certain great mystery spoken of in Colossians 1 (Col. 1:26.) The meaning of the word mystery is a secret. It may not be a secret now, but it means a thing that was a secret. Where there is anything that people cannot understand, they are apt to

designate it a mystery. But in scripture it means a truth that God kept hid, but that is so no longer — something which they did not know as men or Jews, but that Christ was to teach them as Christians. There is another statement about it in the next verse: “To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

As to the predictions of Christ in the Old Testament, it is a mistake to call this or the fact itself a mystery: enough was quite plain. What the Jewish prophets proclaimed was a Messiah coming who would reign over them, and who would unite salvation with being “the great King.” What they did not understand, though revealed, was His humiliation and death. They stumbled over Him. Again “the mystery” is a term never applied to Christ’s death and resurrection. This was not a secret at all, but on the contrary is very plainly predicted in Isaiah 53, Psalms 16, 22, 69, 106, and many other passages.

But it was a mystery that, when Christ was rejected by His people, and during the time of His exaltation in heaven, God would make Him to be the Head of a heavenly body, chosen by His grace out of all — Jews or Gentiles. This was not treated of in the Old Testament. There were certain things that we can now show to be types of it, but they never would have yielded the least light upon it, if the mystery had not been brought out. There was no such thing then, nor even any such predicted, as Jew and Gentile being blessed together in one body; and this is the reason why it is called “the mystery hidden from ages and from generations.” It was a secret hid in God that the prophets did not touch upon. When the Jews have. their Messiah, it will not be as the

hope of glory, but as the One who Himself brings in the glory. When the time comes for the blessing they are looking for, there will be no doubt about it, for all will be manifested, whether for friends or foes; neither will it be a hope, but the actual accomplishment of glory in their midst. But now there is an extraordinary state of things that God is effecting among the Gentiles while the Jews are cast off. The Gentiles have Christ now, not as bringing in glory visibly on the earth, as it will be among the Jews by and by, but they have Him in them the hope of glory by and by, and in heaven.

The term “mystery of God” may be used in our chapter, because it was specially during the time of God’s non-intervention with the world that He had been working out the wonderful secret of Christ and the church. Now this was done with. Still the mystery of evil being permitted to prosper goes on for a time longer — that passiveness of God, whereby He does not hinder evil from having the upper hand, and good from being trampled down. It should soon close, as He declared the glad tidings to His servants the prophets. The voice speaks again and says, “Go take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel,” etc. (verse 8.) Accordingly John takes the book, and finds it, when he has eaten, in his mouth sweet as honey; but when he ponders its contents, and digests its results, how bitter within So it is and will be. When we see how God will accomplish all, it must be pain to think what is reserved for man, as indeed it is to know how perseveringly he rebels against God, and forsakes his own mercies.

The Lord grant that what has been of God for the clearing of our standing from earthly principles, and awakening a just feeling of the exceeding dignity of the

place in which God has put us, may be impressed upon our hearts. None are in so responsible a place as those who are occupied with heavenly things. And let us not suppose that position, or even truth, will of itself keep a soul: nothing but the spirit of God can; and He never will, where there is not dependence and self-judgment. He is come to glorify Christ. The Lord grant that we may watch and pray! For while the truth is calculated to separate from the world, yet where it is abused and degenerates into that knowledge which pulls up, one is prepared for the worst results.

It remains to add a few words as usual on the past measure of accomplishment which this parenthetical vision has received. I am not disposed to question its general application to that wonderful divine intervention, the Reformation. The Eastern empire had for some time succumbed to the furious onset of the Turks; the West was not a whit less steeped and impenitent than before in abominable idolatry and imposture, when that sudden light from on high shone upon astonished Europe. Not that the grace of Christ was deeply realized, or reflected in the Reformation. The testimony of its leading spirit, Luther, expressed itself in a way more akin to the lightnings and thunders of Sinai, and savoured too often of earth rather than of heaven. In fact it is this comparative earthliness of character, which enables the Historicalists to find so many apparent coincidences between that great work and the vision before us. It is just because Luther so much approximated, not to St. Paul’s line of ministry, but to the prophetic testimony of Jesus which is yet to be borne by the latter-day witnesses, that there seems so much in common between the tenor of his life and the tendency

of his labours, and the predictions of what they are to teach and do and suffer by and by. The idea of comparing it with the original sending out of the gospel and formation of the church at Pentecost is, I cannot but feel, a gross misconception.

Besides, is it true that there is not a particular in the vision to which the Reformation does not exactly answer? Does the blaze of the Sun of righteousness intimate the republication of His gospel? I do not doubt that the full meaning of the vision involves a public testimony to the coming of "the day;" but for this reason the gospel is excluded, as any spiritual person may see who dispassionately weighs Mal. 4. For the essence of the gospel is that therein God justifies the ungodly and saves the lost; whereas it is "unto you [the godly remnant of the Jews] that the Sun of righteousness arises with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith Jehovah of hosts. Remember ye the law of Moses my servant." There may be a measure of resemblance between this and the aims and course (though not the issue) of the more warlike Reformers; but in that very proportion it is the reverse of the gospel, or of the practical conduct which flows from and is suitable to it.

Again the cloud recalls the deliverance of Israel, as the rainbow does the covenant with the earth, when government was instituted; the pillars of fire represent judicial firmness, and the loud lion-like voice is the terror-striking assertion of His rights, preceded by the significant claim laid to the whole world, and followed by the complete utterance of God's power. These with

the little open book (which appears to mean known prophecy relative to the city and temple) are all of them features entirely agreeing with the approaching resumption of the Lord's relations with Jerusalem and the Jews, and the world in general, but not one of them, as it seems to me, in its full import like the gospel of God's grace. Heaven and the church are entirely unseen: it is a question of an earthly people, and hence of kings and nations; it is the recommencement, not of evangelising, much less of edifying the body of Christ, but of the prophetic testimony here below. The decree is declared. Jehovah's anointed King is about to take Zion, His hill of holiness, nay, the nations for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. He is no longer to ask the Father for the heavenly sons, but for the, world itself — no longer to set apart by the truth for association with Himself above, but to reduce people with a rod of iron, and to dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. "Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth." Such is the obvious connection of the scene before us. In view of this, it is a preliminary interference. Had the Reformers understood the high calling of the saints, or the nature, character, and consequences of our union with Christ in heavenly places, there would have been a contrast, not an analogy. In truth it was (I repeat) the effect of their lack of spiritual intelligence as Christians, and their approximation to godly Jews, which imprinted on their movement whatever assimilation there is to the scene we are reviewing.

Further, the attempt to make it the complete answer involves at least the ordinary amount of strain, and I might almost add of the absurd. For, in his haste to apply

the principle of allusive reference, as it has been called, the author of the Horae Apoc. does not even glance at the connection of the seven thunders with Christ. It was too good an opportunity to lose for an allusion to the thunders of the Vatican. But here, strange to say, and in opposition as it appears to me to the very principle invoked, Mr. Elliott wrests these thunders from Him who is the primary figure in the vision, and applies them exclusively to the Pope! The reasoning that is offered in support of the proposition, so monstrous to any mind not under the overwhelming bias of a system, appears to me wholly groundless, though not unworthy of Mr. E.'s well-known ingenuity. 1. The vocality of the thunders is not altogether unprecedented in this book (Rev. 6:1), and besides, the trumpets are said to have the same (Rev. 8:13). Compare also Rev. 16:7 for the altar. The supposed parallel in John 12:28 is certainly not in favour of papal oracles. 2. The reflective pronoun no doubt implies that the voices were their own, the sounds proper to the thunders spoken of; but that they were in opposition to the angel's crying as with lion's roar is the most unnatural of inferences. Whatever may be thought of the theory of an allusion to Leo X., even so the analogy of every other vision is in favour of the thought that the direct reference is the full expression of divine power, as God's seal upon the angel's assertion of title. 3. It seems to me almost awful to lay it down that the proposition, "write them not," implies that the voices were "not the true sayings of God, but instead thereof false, and an imposture." (H. A., vol. ii. p. 105.) The real reason is very simple. The general fact, that "the voice of Jehovah" echoes the claims of Christ to the possession of the world is given; the details are not to be written. The apostle Paul was caught up into paradise and heard

secrets (ἄρρητα ῥήματα) which it is not allowed for man to utter. The prophet John was about to write what the thunders divulged, but the voice from heaven commands the things to be sealed, not written — a mode of dealing most extraordinary, if the utterances are supposed to be the false decrees of Rome, but well harmonizing with the conclusion that other things were yet to be revealed, before the power of God was enforced and the earthly rights of Christ are made good by judgment. 4. Hence, I utterly reject, as a mere corollary of the last error, the idea of reference here to the seven hills of Rome. Hitherto the septenary usage of the Revelation has been entirely independent of that local sign, which occurs only in Rev. 17, where the context proves that Rome is in question. Here, for the same reason of the connection, the Roman hills are an intrusion, while the idea of completeness is the natural sense. 5. This also accounts for the prefixed article, as in the case of the seven angels (Rev. 8), who, I presume, have no special connection with that city. As to the opinion that there is nothing but the Papal bulls to which the seven Apocalyptic thunders have been made to answer, it is natural in the quarter whence it flows; but when the writer adds “or can be,” he passes, I humbly think, beyond the bounds of wisdom or modesty. None of us is the measure of divine knowledge nor of what the Lord may bestow. Further, I for one confess my inability to discern, even with the special pleading of the Horae, the peculiar suitability of the angel’s oath to the prevalent convictions of the Reforming fathers or their Protestant children. Savonarola and others before him seem to have been rather more full of the nearness of Christ’s kingdom than Luther and his coadjutors. What the great German expected was rather the destruction of the

Pope's kingdom by the word alone, and this founded on his construction of Daniel quite as much as St. Paul; i.e. it seems to me, in contrast with the open book and the angel's most solemn announcement. Nor did Melancthon improve on Luther, when he assigned Dan. 7 to Mohammedanism and Dan. 8 to the Papacy. Neither can I admit that prophesying, as addressed to John, and predicated of the two witnesses, or indeed ever, is the mere function of expounding the scriptures and exhorting from them, as fulfilled in every faithful gospel minister. The notion, too, that in the words, "Go take the little book," and "thou must prophesy again," we are to read (not now of course, an allusive reference, but) a sort of prefiguration of the deacon's ordination to preach the gospel or Christian ministry, and of the taking in hand the New Testament to translate it into the vernacular tongue; and yet more, that St. John's being made representative of the faithful ministers of the Reformation at this epoch intimates that they were all in the line of evangelical succession, is to me more like playing with feelings than a grave exposition of this chapter. It is the attempt to apply the details to the past, which betrays the unsatisfactoriness of the exclusive Protestant scheme: a bearing on it, definite enough to show that such a work as the Reformation was not overlooked of God, in the protracted application of the book, I have already admitted. The full literal carrying out of every word awaits the end of the age.

61 In the first clause of v. 4, the uncial MSS. A B C P, the majority of cursives, and almost all the ancient versions, besides Greek and Latin fathers, omit τὰς φωνὰς ἑαυτῶν, and the rendering would then be, "And when the seven thunders had spoken," for English hardly

admits of the absolute “had uttered.” I suppose that the phrase was assimilated to the close of verse 3, whereas the true form is corroborated by the latter clauses of verse 4. The difference in sense would be that these thunders not only emitted their own proper sounds, but conveyed something intelligible to the prophet. At the end of verse 4, μὴ αὐτὰ γράφῃς is supported by the overwhelming preponderance of manuscripts. The common text has ταῦτα with a few cursives, most of which, with the old Cappadocian commentator Andreas, read μετά for μή. This last, I presume, was the mere blunder of a scribe, who probably confounded a contraction of the former with the latter, and this might be the more readily, inasmuch as μετὰ ταῦτα (“after these things”) is a frequent formula in Revelation. It is curious that this obvious mistake, yielding a sense totally different from, and nearly opposite to, the one intended, has been followed in more than one of the old foreign editions, beginning, if I mistake not, with the Complutensian, though the fact is not stated by Tregelles, etc. There are also discrepancies as to the form of the last word, but there is the less reason to record them, as that which some authorities give is not even sense.

62 †The right readings here, I believe, are

χρόνος οὐκέτι ἔσται.... καὶ ἐτελέσθη. The former confirms the sense given in the text and evidently means that there shall be no longer space or delay, but in the days, etc. “The time shall not be yet” would require ὁ καιρός instead of χρόνος, and οὔπω rather than οὐκέτι, which, in constructions like the present, means “no more.” Others take it as “a [mystical] time;” but this also in scripture is always καιρός. The meaning which results

from the latter very accurately falls in with the sentiment, for ὅταν μέλλῃ σαλπίζειν avoids the indefiniteness of the mere future, and intimates that, when the seventh angel should just sound, the mystery of God should also be finished, or literally “was finished,” the Greek aorist being employed to express the summariness of its completion — its coincidence, as it were, with that seventh blast. Bp. Middleton (and before him, it seems, Piscator and Vitringa) suggested a Hebraism as the source of this peculiar use of the aorist; for the Hebrew preterite very frequently stands for the future when that tense goes before and is joined by the conjunction. Indeed, as Gesenius remarks (Rödiger’s ed., § 124, 6), the Pret. with Vau conversive relates to futurity, Also when it is not preceded by a future tense, but by some other indication of futurity, and even where none such appears. This solution, if it be true here, confirms καὶ ἐτελέσθη. Here, again, τελεσθήσεται would leave a vague future open, and another form is employed, which may appear harsh at first, but the propriety of which becomes apparent, the more the requirements of the passage are understood. Τελεσθῇ is good in sense, and fairly supported; but it is easier than ἐτελέσθη and may have been the correction of a copyist. The converse appears to me improbable.

Revelation 11

From the moment that God begins to deal with the earth in an open manner, Israel naturally comes forward and also the Gentiles as connected with them. (Dent. 32:8, 9.) We have had the twelve tribes scattered abroad and a measured number sealed; but the land of Judea and Jerusalem is the great foreground of the picture that we see here. “Rise,” it is said to the prophet, “and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.” The altar, I think, clearly refers to the brazen altar; for the golden altar was included in the temple. “They that worship therein” are persons who are characterized by nearness to God. The altar was the expression of true approach to God, and they have drawn near Him. It was the place of the burnt-offering which marked the acceptance of the person. Now this shows us that here we have God owning a certain number of people on the earth as capable of drawing near to Him. “Measure the temple,” etc., meant, I suppose, that God appropriated thus far Himself (verse 1).63 “And the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles; and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months” (ver. 2). The Jew is owned to a certain extent by God; and consequently their city is spoken of as the holy city, and the Gentiles as those who were defiling and treading it under foot. But it is important, before we go any farther, to enquire whether there is any reference in other scriptures to this same period, spoken of here as forty and two months. It will not be doubted that the prophecy of Daniel is the book which most nearly answers in the Old Testament to the

Apocalypse in the New. We find there a period mentioned of three years and a half, called in mystical language “a time, times, and a half.” Let us turn to Daniel 7. There we find the Gentile powers represented as wild beasts, having in part some resemblances in nature. There was a winged lion and a bear; and the leopard was presented as a four-winged witness to the swiftness of conquest men would see in the power represented by that beast. Every one knows there never was an empire in antiquity like the Macedonian under Alexander for spreading itself by rapid conquest; and not only this, but it had its roots deep, so that even to this day the remains of the Grecian empire are seen; and these, not exhumed as it were, but in living effects. The fourth beast was of a composite character, unlike anything that had been before. Upon its head were ten horns, and after them in their midst another little horn was seen by the prophet to emerge. This last takes the place of three others, and becomes the great object with which the Spirit of God is occupied, not of course because of anything good connected with it, but because of its deadly hostility to God and His people. Daniel looks at him more particularly in his political, and the Revelation in his politico-religious character. It is with this fourth Gentile empire, the Roman beast, and in relation to the Jews, that the period is given.

It does seem no slight hallucination of mind to divert these scriptures from Judea, and to transport Rome into them. But the cause is apparent. Men had been so occupied with the controversies between Protestantism and Popery, that they naturally looked through the scriptures to find something about the pope; and finding there was one person more wicked than any other (the

antichrist), they came to the conclusion that the antichrist and the pope were the same thing. Now, it is true that they both do similar things to a certain extent; but when you look into the scriptures, antichrist finds his place in Judea, and in connection with the Jewish people, in a way the pope has never done. I do not say the pope may not do so; but it is impossible yet to apply fully and exclusively what is said about the antichrist to the pope as such. There is a future system of lawlessness, and a future person at its head, who will rise up against Christ in His Jewish rights and glory, uniting political power with religious pretension, and this in the city of the great King. There are many antichrists, it is true, and the pope may truthfully be regarded as one of them; but not as the antichrist who is to come. That is reserved for the time immediately preceding Christ's appearing from heaven. He will personally affect and oppose the Lord Jesus, and will by Him personally be put down. People ought to be prepared for this; but they, on the contrary, imagine that Popery is the last antichrist, and that it is getting so decrepit as to be well-nigh sinking into its grave. But the Bible is clear that the most hateful development of lawlessness is yet to come; and that when it arrives it will carry away, not Popish countries only, but Protestant ones, and the Jews themselves, in its fatal delusions.

In Daniel 7 the little horn is said to speak great words against the Most High, land shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws; and they shall be given into his hands, until a time, and times, and the dividing of time." Now it appears to me perfectly certain that the "times and laws" in question here are those the prophet Daniel was familiar with.

These “times” had to do with Israel’s festivals, and the “laws” with the Jewish polity or ritual. The saints of the Most High were those whom the prophet knew and was interested in; just as in Revelation 12 “the children of thy people” (i.e., Daniel’s people) are intended. This shows that a special enemy of God’s people in Judea who will arise in that day is here spoken of. He meddles with the Jews when they have begun to be owned in a measure by God. This iniquitous power wears out the saints of the high places, and thinks to change times and laws; and they shall be given into his hand. Not that the saints should be so given, for God never relinquishes them to the enemy: He may permit saints to be worried for a while, but He never gives them up. It is the times and laws that are thus given for a season, because the nation is not owned thoroughly till the Messiah comes. As yet it is only a partial recognition of their worship. These are then to be abandoned to him “for a time, and times, and the dividing of time.” You have this same period referred to in the forty-two months, which is exactly the same length of time, taking “a time” as meaning a year.

In Daniel 9, you have another note of time, the famous seventy weeks (verse 26). “And after threescore and two (or rather, after the threescore, in addition to the previous seven) weeks shall Messiah be cut off and (margin) shall have nothing;” i.e., after sixty-nine of the seventy weeks Messiah is cut off. Then an interruption follows on account of this; all the weeks do not expire. There remains one, the last, to be fulfilled, which is kept separate, like a link wrenched off from the preceding chain. You will observe that, after the death of Messiah the Prince, another prince is alluded to as yet to come;

and he is evidently an antagonistic prince, a prince of the Roman people. The grave mistake is made by many, that this prince was Titus, who came and took the city of Jerusalem; but it is not so. The verse does not state that the prince should destroy, etc.; but “the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and sanctuary;” and so they did. The Romans came under that general. But when we are told of “the people of the prince that shall come,” it is a plain intimation to my mind that there was a certain great ruler to forlorn prince connected with the Roman empire. His people were to come first, which they did under Titus; afterwards the prince comes himself, which I believe to be still future. For mark well, that the past destruction of the city and sanctuary is not included in the course of the seventy weeks at all. It is after the sixty-ninth, and before the seventieth begins. There was a chain, so to speak, of sixty-nine weeks of years up to the death of Christ; then it was broken. There was an important link, the seventieth week, remaining. What becomes of it? The last verse takes it up, and is clear enough that this seventieth week has to do (not with Christ but) with His enemy who is to have a manifest connection with the Roman people, and also with the Jews. Observe that in the twenty-sixth verse, after the threescore and two weeks in addition to the seven, when the Messiah is cut off, there is no mention of the weeks. In what comes after, we have no date, till we enter upon verse 27; showing that what intervenes is not counted as a part of the continuous line of the weeks. “The end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end thereof desolations are determined.” The city and sanctuary were destroyed long since, but the desolations are “unto the end;” and they still go on.

Till lately, of all people of the earth a Jew had the greatest difficulty to get into the land. There is a change coming over the spirit of the nations towards Israel, I admit. Some of the Gentiles seem to forget that the Jew is under a peculiar judgment of God. This is no excuse for dealing harshly, of course, but it is a grave reason why men should not meddle with them politically. For the Jew to be so mixed up with the Gentiles is a sort of apostacy, and for the Gentile it is to despise God's judgment and eventually to incur it. It will be found that God cannot be with such an union. When the Gentiles have given up every thought of divine election of the Jew, I believe that the hand of God will confound their schemes, and that He will interfere to bring out His people distinctly and separately from all others, first for judgment and then for blessing. When all seems to be quiet and prospering, God will spoil what man thinks he is doing; for He has not finally cast off Israel. The Jew may have given up God and have amalgamated with the Gentile; but God will never forget that He chose the fathers and made promises as to the children. True, the Jews undertook to be His people and miserably failed in fulfilling their obligations; but God will not fail to accomplish His purpose. When the Gentile mariners had got Jonah in their ship, God was determined to have him out. If they did not cast him forth into the sea, God would break their ship to get His prophet out so as to be with Himself and His work. So it will be in the day that speedily approaches.

From Isaiah 18 we find that there is to be a partial restoration of Israel by Gentile power, chiefly through the influence of a certain maritime power "that sendeth ambassadors by the sea." They may bring some of the

Jews back to their own land, but the Jews will still be rebellious and unbelieving. All seems to flourish, but suddenly there comes a blight from God. Quite unexpectedly He allows the ancient enmity to break out among the Gentiles against the Jews. “The fowls,” as it is said, “shall summer upon them; and all the beasts of the earth shall winter upon them.” Every kind of unrelenting hatred is shown once more. They are the dead body; and where the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together. The Gentiles who seemed to be so kind will again stand aloof from them, and as of old unite for the purpose of crushing them. And what will be the end? The Gentiles having relapsed into their old hatred against Israel, God will espouse the cause of His people. He refrains while man is meddling; but when an immense host comes up against them, in that very day “shall the present be brought unto Jehovah of hosts of a people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto.” God, as I understand the prophet to say, will bring a present to Himself of His long-scattered and persecuted Israel.

This will show how naturally in the Revelation we have a reorganization of the Jewish polity and worship, after the church has been caught up to heaven and before the appearing of Christ. We see a little remnant in the midst of the mass which were to be given over to the Gentiles. For forty-two months the holy city is to be trodden under foot. The Lord allows a certain period to go on as far as the many were concerned, but He measures the temple, and the altar, and them that worship therein for Himself This remnant might be killed, but He values them. When some of the Jews are thus in their own land, but Israel as a whole is not yet thoroughly brought in by God, the

predicted Roman prince will come, who will “confirm a [not the] covenant with [the] many for one week.” I am aware that some apply this to Christ, But the Lord never made a covenant for a week or for seven years. It is impossible rightly to refer the words to any covenant the Lord ever made, much less to a covenant made since His death. “The everlasting covenant” is obviously the contrast, and not the accomplishment, of a covenant made for a week. Many apply it thus; but those who so interpret Dan. 9:27 have forgotten that Christ had been looked at as “cut off” in the previous verse.

“In the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease; and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate,” etc. Here we have subsequent events of a totally different nature. How and when, it will be asked, are we to suppose this arrest of sacrifice and oblation? Who and whence is the personage who causes them to cease? Messiah, the Prince, and “the prince that shall come” — are they the same person, or different individuals? The history ends as to the Messiah with verse 26. “The people” of that coming prince were the enemies of Israel. subject to an opposed power, and not Messiah’s people. In verse 27 the prince, whose coming was announced in verse 26, is himself come; and he it is who confirms a covenant with the “many,” or mass of the Jews, for one week; but in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations, etc. The language may be somewhat obscure, but at least it is quite plain that there is to be a certain prince after the death of Christ, — a Roman prince — whose people first come for a desolation lone, accomplished, and at length he comes. After that he

appears upon the stage, the last week of Daniel begins. This interruption between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks may seem strange, and people may ask, How can there be such a gap? But it is not without precedent. The same thing in principle occurs in Luke 4, when the Lord was reading in Isaiah. The portion read was the description of His own ministry in Isa. 61:1, 2: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me..... He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted..... to preach the acceptable year of Jehovah.... And he closed the book.” He did not finish the sentence. Why? Because, if one may reverentially answer, the prophecy went on with “the day of vengeance of our God.” Proclaiming the acceptable year of the Lord was what Christ did at His first coming, but it was not then the day of Jehovah’s vengeance; so that the whole of Christianity and the calling of the Church came in between the acceptable year of Jehovah and the day of vengeance. When Christ came in humiliation and love, it was the acceptable year of Jehovah, and therefore He closed the book; but the day of vengeance is deferred till the Lord comes again in glory.

So here in Daniel, the sixty-nine weeks run on till Messiah is cut off, and then we have an evident gap. The destruction of Jerusalem is not included in the course of the sixty-nine weeks, and as evidently does not take place in the seventieth week. For if you interpret the last week as commencing from the death of the Messiah, this would only give seven years, whereas Jerusalem was not taken till forty years after the death of Christ.64 The seventieth week had nothing to say to that siege, and in point of fact the wars and desolations were given before we arrive at the seventieth week, which is not named till the last verse.

In the last or 27th verse a covenant is made. Did Titus, did any Roman prince, make a covenant with the Jews for one week? And further it is said, “In the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.” This shows that there is to be a renewal of religious service by the Jews at Jerusalem in the latter day. Sacrifice and oblation will have been restored; and this prince, in spite of the covenant made with them, puts an end to all. And what then? Abominations, which means idolatry, are publicly set up and protected. They are to be brought into the sanctuary itself, which was not the case at the past destruction of Jerusalem. Then there was much appalling wickedness — every other kind of crime and madness, but no idolatry. Here, on the contrary, there is supposed to be the open support of idolatry in the temple. This does not answer to the capture by Titus, nor to the death of the Lord Jesus Christ; for at that time the unclean spirit of idolatry had departed out of the nation, which from the time of the Babylonish captivity, excepting the defilement of Antiochus, had kept clear of such abominations, and in that sense was “empty, swept, and garnished.” But we know that unclean spirit is to return in greater force than ever. (Matt. 12:45.) Christendom and Judaism will each contribute to the last form of evil-antichristianism. You may remember that the Pharisees charged the Lord, when He was upon earth, with doing His miracles by Satanic power, and the meaning of the parable then given to them is really the history of Israel itself. The old unclean spirit had gone away. The people or their leaders were full of zeal for their ordinances. But what does the Lord say? That the old and long-departed unclean spirit was to return. And when it does, it will bring with it seven other spirits worse than itself. The

Jews are to fall into idolatry, in union with antichristianism, and their last state will be worse than the first. (Compare also Isa. 65, 66.)

But let us now go back to the Revelation. There is this state of things in Israel — a measure of recognition on God's part, and worship going on, though the outward profession is given over to Gentile oppression. And remark, that the Lord says, "I will give [power] unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth" (verse 3). The Lord mentions them as so many days here, rather than as forty-two months, it would seem, to mark His value for their testimony. He makes, so to speak, as much of it as He can. He does not sum it together, as when speaking of the beast (Rev. 13:5). Lovingly he speaks of the time as days, as though He were counting them all out. "They shall testify a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth" — a testimony borne in sorrow. It is not Christianity, nor is it the state of things that will subsist after Messiah has appeared in glory. But it is the time of transition after the church has been taken away, and before it comes out of heaven with the Lord Jesus — the time when man will have brought in God's people to their land, at least the mass of them thoroughly unfit to be in relation with God. There is a little remnant of believing ones, there is worship, and besides a prophetic testimony, but evidently Jewish in its character. In Zechariah, though there are two olive-trees mentioned, there is only one candlestick; here there are two, because they are the two witnesses who prophesy of the coming earthly glory, but who do not bring it in personally. That is to say, it is not the regular order of

God, but a proof that His eye is upon His people for good before full blessing comes.

“And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed” (verse 5). This shows that it was not proper Christian testimony, nor the corresponding practical fruits. It was the very thing the Son would not do when He was upon earth (save, of course, in the figurative sense of Luke 12:49), and that He rebuked James and John for desiring. (Luke 9:54, 55.) Here, on the contrary, fire proceeds out of their mouth, and devours their enemies — a perfectly right thing when God is about to take the place of Judge on earth. But the Lord does not take that place now. He is saving sinners, and otherwise displaying full grace; and as long as He so acts, He does not desire His people to be the depositaries of earthly power. Thus, the miracles of His servants, during this time of the display of His grace, have not been of a destroying nature. The Lord might deal with a person now because of some sin, as with the Corinthian saints: I do not see why He should not at any time. But it would be foreign to Christianity and contrary to all that it breathes, if a saint, because another was evilly opposed to him, wished his death or injury. Christianity shows that the victory grace gives us is to show love and kindness to one’s enemy. It may be heaping coals of fire upon his head; but such is the Lord’s way — overcoming evil with good. Yet it is the Lord who here sanctions the destructive power which accompanies the testimony of His Jewish witnesses; for He says, “I will give [power] to my two witnesses.... And if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.” it is what He means them

to do — what evidently is to be done according to the thought of God. It indicates another condition, and not the Christian called to suffer unresistingly. It is the close of the age when Christianity will have done its work, and the Lord will again begin to act on the Jews.

Besides, their ministry and miracles have the same character as that which is attached to those of Moses and Elias. Thus they “have authority over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues,” as in the time of Moses; and “they have authority to shut heaven that it rain not in the days of their prophecy,” as in the time of Elias (verse 6). And in fact what will be found in these times answers much to what you have in Moses and Elijah. There was idolatry in Israel then and a remarkable testimony of Elijah against it. God Himself chastised His people — the heavens were as brass towards them. So will it be found again. The person who then sways the destinies of Israel will be an apostate who admits and enforces idolatry. Again, Israel will be found in subjection to Gentile authority, as they were in the days of Moses; yet there will be a little remnant set apart for God. But although these two witnesses are guarded for a certain time by miracles, yet the moment the days are over they have no power, so to speak. The beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit makes war with them, and they are killed like others.

“And their dead bodies [shall be] on the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified” (verse 8). It is perfectly plain that this is Jerusalem. Many think it is Rome, because as has been said before, Protestants are absorbed in, and biassed by, their controversies with Popery. God attaches the greatest possible interest to

His people Israel, when His rights as to the earth are in question. But why is there not more said about Popery in the scriptures? Because God never acknowledges His church as an earthly people. The politics, pursuits, and interests of this world are well enough for those who have nothing but an earthly portion and want no earthly intruder; but to strive with the potsherds of the earth is beneath those of heavenly birth.

We have now come down in this chapter to Jerusalem, the centre of God's dealings and testimony, and of the opposition from the abyss. Their great antagonist is plainly mentioned here, for the first time in the Revelation, as "the beast," just as if you had known all about him before. It is a remarkable power, not merely arising, as in Rev. 13, out of the sea, but here, as in Rev. 17, said to ascend "out of the bottomless pit." This empire does not arise out of the earth, the symbol of a state of settled government, as the second beast in Rev. 13:11, nor only out of the sea, which sets forth an unsettled revolutionary condition. There is the extraordinary and awful feature added in this passage, that it rises out of the abyss. Satan has to do with its last state. It has been a darling project of men from time to time to form a vast universal empire. Charlemagne tried it, but he failed. He never got the old Roman earth under his hand. And some can remember another who had the same thing near his heart, but he too failed and died a miserable exile. But the time hastens when that very scheme will be realised. In other empires there has always been the providence of God overruling. There was God above them, God calling on His people to show allegiance to the powers that be, no matter how they were formed. The Christian was not to meddle with

them, but to acknowledge them and to pay tribute. But there is an empire about to be formed, that will be as thoroughly under the immediate power of Satan, as all past empires have been under the providence of God; and God will withdraw that care and cheek that He has hitherto kept over the kingdoms of the world and will allow all to ripen to a head under Satan. Justly, therefore, is this empire said to arise out of the bottomless pit.

This corresponds with what we have in Daniel. The person that would specially meddle with the Jews (Rev. 7:25; Rev. 9:27) is the Roman beast, the leader of that very empire which in its last state God does not own. When Jesus was born, the fourth or Roman empire was there, and God took advantage of its decrees to bring the heir of David to Bethlehem. It was “the beast” that was there. In Rev. 17 it is written, “the beast that was, and is not, and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit” (verse 8). But observe a notable feature that Daniel does not furnish, and that John does. He gives three successive stages of the Roman empire. It was existing in John’s time; then it was to cease; and last of all it should arise out of the bottomless pit, special Satanic influence being connected with its final state. The beast “that is not” describes exactly its present condition of non-existence. The Goths and Vandals came down upon it, and the old Roman empire came to ruin. Since then, men have never been able to re-organize it, because God has another thought. He has laid it down in His word that it is to be re-organized, not by man, but by Satan’s power. Its sources will be from beneath. How remarkable is all this! We have had the decline and fall of the Roman empire, but there is one thing that no

historian could trace — that prophecy alone could and does give; viz., the restoration of the Roman empire. May we see it, not as being on earth, but as looking on it from heaven!

I believe that those who reject the gospel now will, if then alive, be carried away by the dreadful delusions of that day. They will receive the ‘ mark of the beast in their right hand or in their foreheads; they will worship his image; and it is written by God that those who do shall be tormented in everlasting fire. The world may fancy, from all the increase of grandeur and prosperity and luxury which will be brought in then or previously, that the millennium is come; but it will be Satan’s millennium. That is the fate reserved for these countries; for it is part of the righteous judgment of God, that where the gospel has been preached, and the world has trifled with it, even allowing idolatry for political purposes, He will withdraw the light and send them strong delusion And then Satan will bring out the man of sin. There is immense practical importance in all this. People may ask, “What is the good of it all to us as Christians, if we are to be taken away before?” Such a way of speaking slights what God has been pleased to reveal to us. When God spoke beforehand about the destruction of Sodom did Abraham say, What has that to do with me? God would have our hearts to be drawn out in praise and thanksgiving for His grace and His love to our own souls, but He tells us also the sad doom which awaits the world, and awakens the spirit of intercession as with Abraham for Lot for unfaithful saints who may be mixed up with it.

I would just remark, as to the two witnesses, that there is no necessity to take them as two persons: they might

be two hundred. They are viewed as two witnesses (whether literally so or not), because it is a divine principle that “out of the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established. God was giving a sufficient testimony. These maintained Christ’s title to the earth, that He was “the Lord65 of the earth,” and this excited enmity. “The beast” might not so much have cared if they had said “the Lord of heaven;” but they claimed the earth, not for themselves, but for Him, and men will not bear it.

Unbelief likes present enjoyment, and anything which interferes with this and makes conscience uneasy is hateful and unwelcome. And so, when the testimony is finished, and the witnesses are overthrown, not only the beast but two great parties of mankind are affected by their fall. “And some of the peoples, and kindreds, and tongues, and nations, see their dead bodies three days and an half, and do not suffer their dead bodies to be put into a grave; and they that dwell on the earth rejoice over them... and shall send,” etc. (verses 9, 10.) It is not the first or the only time that we have this distinction drawn between “peoples, and kindreds, and tongues, and nations,” and “those that dwell on the earth.” The latter does not mean men in earth merely; it carries a moral force with it, and means those who are essentially earthly-minded, who do not in heart and ways rise above the earth. The dead bodies of the witnesses are on the street of the great city; and they of the people, and kindred, and nations see them there three days and a half, and do not suffer them to be put in graves. This was bad enough — being the malice of man against those who witnessed for God. But “they that dwell on the earth” go much farther. For in their case, there is

positive rejoicing and making merry, and sending gifts one to another. And why was all this? Because it is said, “these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.”

This is not a mere imaginary distinction, nor only founded upon one passage. If you look elsewhere, you will find the same thing. Thus in Revelation 14:6, “And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,” there is the converse of what we have here. We first find the mass of the Gentile people, who show out their evil against the two witnesses by not allowing their dead bodies to be buried. But the special rejoicing is on the part of the dwellers on the earth, or the earthly-minded. But in chapter 14 we find God sends a solemn message, the everlasting gospel. And with whom does He begin? With the worst — “them that dwell on the earth,” τοὺς καθημένους, literally “that sit,” which seems stronger than τοὺς κατοικοῦντας, and then the message is extended to men generally. And on examination you will find this thoroughly confirmed by other passages. In other words, to “dwell on the earth” is not a mere vague description of men, but it expresses a moral condition.

But to return: God interferes. “And after three days and an half, the [or a] Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them. And they66 heard a loud voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in the cloud; and their enemies beheld them” (verses 11, 12). It is not merely in a cloud (as in the authorised version), but in the cloud. I suppose it

was the cloud seen in the beginning of Revelation 10, which encircled the mighty angel. The cloud, the known especial emblem of Jehovah's presence, was that which received the witnesses and proved that their Lord, the Lord of heaven as well as earth, was for them. They ascended up to heaven in the very face of their enemies. "And in the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven." One word I would say, before going farther, on a remarkable distinction that occurs in this same verse. The witnesses testified for the Lord of the earth; but the people that were affrighted, when they saw how the cause of His martyred servants was vindicated, gave glory to the God of heaven. It will be then an easier thing for men to acknowledge God above in a vague sort of way, than to own Him as the Lord of the earth, concerning Himself about what men do here below. The former might be merely to regard Him as One seen in the distance; though in a higher sense I may know Him as One that comes down to give me a portion with Himself above. Thus God in heaven is either exceedingly near to His people, or far off to those who are merely acted upon by transient terror. The worldly man can well allow the thought of God afar from himself; and this is just what we have here. They were alarmed by what was near. But there was no reception of the testimony, no conversion. They should have bowed to the Lord of the earth. They gave glory to the God of heaven. But it is too late. There was slain in the earthquake "seven thousand names of men," as the margin gives it literally.

First of all, we have seen the priestly remnant occupied in the worship of God — His holy remnant in the midst of the Jews in the latter day. After this we have the witnesses, who did not bring out on God's part what He is manifesting now, but asserted His rights with regard to the future, as prophecy naturally implies. Another remark I may here make. In the Revelation an expression occurs that has often been misunderstood. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." The meaning is not that all prophecy refers to the Lord Jesus Christ (which in a certain sense may be true), but that the witness of Jesus such as this book contains — what Jesus testifies in the Revelation is the spirit of prophecy. It is the Holy Spirit as He is shown us throughout the book; not bringing into present communion with the Lord Jesus in heaven, but communicating what He is to do by and by. They, the witnesses, asserted the title of Christ to the earth. Whatever men might say, the Lord was the one to whom it belonged, and He would soon come and make good their record.

There is a third thing that the end of the chapter contains. Besides a priestly place, and then a prophetical testimony, there comes the kingdom. The trumpet sounds. And now it is not, as in the case of the witnesses, a proclamation fenced by miraculous power — that has come to a close — their own blood has sealed their work. But if it looked as if the beast had played an easy part in their death God points to another thine,: "The seventh angel sounded, and there were loud voices in heaven," etc. There is the announcement of a kingdom, heard not upon earth, but in heaven, and therefore, as soon as it is made, those that had the mind of Christ, "the twenty-four elders, who sit before God on

their thrones, fell upon their faces and worshipped God." A little word I would desire to say upon this verse 15. As it stands now, it has a very weakened turn given to it: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ." The true force is: "The world-kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ is come." This gives, in my opinion, a very different and weightier meaning to the verse. It is the world-kingdom; and why? Because this book has shown us from the very beginning that there was another order of kingdom altogether. In Revelation 1 John spoke of himself as a "brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience in Christ." Thus the kingdom of Christ is there, and yet characterized, or at least accompanied, by tribulation and patience! But the angel heralds in the kingdom of the Lord and of His Christ, as to this world. Previously it had been one only known to faith and calling for patience — a thing consequently that the world would not believe. Talk to them of a kingdom where people suffer, and where Christ allows them to suffer, instead of maintaining His rights! And this is exactly what God's children have been called to go through from that day to this.

But let me here say that this shows the extreme error of many good people who think it quite right to use earthly power in seeking to establish the cause of Christ. For, not to speak of Romanism but to look at Puritanism, they completely forget that the kingdom of Christ now is the kingdom of patience, and not of power. They judged because theirs was the right as they believed, therefore they ought not to suffer; whereas the only thing that God insists on is, that because the world is wrong and they right, therefore His children must suffer. Hence Peter

testifies, “If, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.” There evidently you have the great moral consequence of Christ’s kingdom in practical things: a Christian is not buffeted because he is wrong, but because he does well. There is such a thing, even among God’s people, as the being buffeted because they have gone astray. What was the trial of Lot? And what that of Abraham? It was to prove that the latter was faithful; but Lot’s was because he was unfaithful. Not that Abraham was always true to God; but unfaithfulness with him was the exception, whereas I am afraid it was too often the case with poor Lot. No doubt, Lot was more happy in his outward circumstances. He was in the gate of the city, as we are told — sitting where he ought not, though where the flesh would like to be. We are not to suppose that he was drawn into the ungodliness of the community wherein he dwelt. No doubt he could expostulate very well as to the evil they were doing; but evidently he was in the place of dishonour, as far as God was concerned, though not in the commission of open sin, if we only think of moral conduct. He was delivered through God’s mercy, but ignominiously. His sons-in-law remained behind; his wife was made a lasting monument of her folly and sin.

Abraham knew another kind of sorrow, the sorrow of a man that knew God, and that had come out at His word. We do find failure in Abraham, as for instance in Genesis 12 and 20. But though there were slips, still — looking at his spirit and walk as a whole — Abraham was a most blessed man of God, and a sample of faith to all, as God Himself puts him before us in Heb. 11 and elsewhere. He knew trial, because he was true to God and to his calling. Lot knew it, because he was grasping after some

present thing, a place in the world. And what was the issue? A blow comes on that part of the world, and Lot was carried away by it; and all that he had set his affections upon was swept away, and only restored to him by Abraham's timely succour, to be lost for ever when the judgment of Sodom came. At the close a dark spot of shame fastens upon that man, and he had bitterly to learn that for the believer a worldly path is one of frequent pain and disappointment, which, if persevered in, ensures present sorrow, and leaves behind it alike seeds of misery and fruits of shame. We must have one or other kind of suffering, if we are children of God at all; either the suffering that comes upon the world, if we are unfaithful to God, or the sufferings of Christ because we confess Him.

Thus the seventh angel gives the signal that the mysterious form of the kingdom is at an end. Heavenly voices proclaim that this world's kingdom is become that of the Lord and His Christ. Instead of merely having a kingdom open to faith, and that none but believers value — a kingdom whose earthly portion is tribulation and waiting for the Lord, the only place that hope can take now — instead of this we have an entire change. God will no longer allow the world to be the camp, and parade, and sport of Satan; and when the seventh trumpet sounds, it is announced that this world's kingdom of the Lord is come. If it be objected that the Lord Himself in John 18 declares that His kingdom is not of this world, I reply that this is beside the mark This world is never the source of His kingdom; but is it not destined to be its sphere? It was not His kingdom then, but this does not prove that it is not to be His kingdom at some future time, when He will fight and His servants

too, though in a new way. Here you have the positive word of God that the world-kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ is come. The sovereignty of the universe is transferred to the Lord Jesus: “And he shall reign unto the ages of the ages.” Of course such a phrase as this must be taken in connection with the whole subject. When eternity is spoken of, it must be taken in its full and unlimited extent; but here it can only mean “for ever” in the sense of as long as the world lasts. And I feel, though it is not the brightest thought which our souls can enjoy in connection with the future, yet that the Lord Jesus is to take the throne of the world is a very great rest to the heart in all the present confusion. It lifts one out of the spirit of the present; because if I know that this is not the place of the church, but that I am now in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, I shall not be wanting honour or power in this world. We are to have a much better place in heaven, and the saints who will be on earth, when the Lord appears and we are with Him in glory, will be in the place of subjects. But what is the place of those who are in the kingdom and patience in Christ Jesus? We shall not be subjects merely of Christ when He thus comes, but kings reigning with Him. Even now those who are rejected for Christ are rejected kings. They do not merely sing, “He loveth us,” but “hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father.”

The Lord will have a kingdom suited to the earth; but the Jews are not destined to be kings. They will have on earth a very honoured place; but even when the nation is converted to Him, they will never have the nearness that belongs to every soul, Jew or Gentile, who believes in Christ now. Our portion may seem to unbelief to be a

most trying one, and trying it is now. But the Lord Jesus has trodden the path before, and known suffering such as none other could. He has gone through it all, and when He comes and takes the kingdom, He will assign His sufferers their place. They will be like the near companions of David when he came to the throne; there was David in the cave of Adullam, and David hunted about upon the mountains by Saul; but it was David's faith, as a means, that had kindled the flame in their hearts. They caught the tone of David's soul; and though they had a time of sorrow, and there were many foolish men like Nabal who could taunt him with being some runaway servant, yet while David was rather quick to feel and too ready to gird his sword to his thigh, he takes a word from even a weaker vessel, and retreats into the better place of grace — the place of doing well, suffering for it and taking it patiently. And soon came the throne. What then? The poor ones that had known his path of suffering, and had shared his sorrows in the day of his rejection were now to share his honours. Where was Jonathan in that day? It is true that his heart clung to David, but his faith was not equal to the trial. And what was the consequence? He fell on the mountains of Gilboa with his miserable father; and he whose heart would willingly have given the first place to David, and who had already stripped himself for David's sake, now falls with the world with which he had outwardly remained to the last. Thus whatever may be our affection for Christ, if I remain in a false worldly position, it will never be to my honour in the day of Christ, when they that suffer shall reign with Him. May we wait for that kingdom with hearts exercised by the truth!

It will be found that there are many persons who hear reluctantly about the kingdom of Christ, professing always to like something touching more on the immediate need of the soul. But does not God know better what we want? What we most need is not to trust ourselves, but the living God. Always giving the first and last place to the cross of Christ, may we not forget that His kingdom is coming. Though the cross is the only resting-place for the sinner, the kingdom is what cheers and encourages the saint in his path of faith and patience. There were those that followed David in his sufferings — separated, wherever they went, from all around. They were gathered from all conditions, and out of all parts; but it was being round David, and sharing God's thoughts and purposes about him, which sustained them. Though God has anointed the Lord Jesus Christ for it, still He has not yet taken the kingdom in the sense of the world-kingdom that I have been speaking of. Having been rejected and crucified, He is gone above and we wait for Him, suffering meanwhile. But the day fast comes when it will no longer be tribulation and patience, but power and glory. All will be brought under subjection to Christ, and He will reign for ever and ever.

When this is heard in heaven, the twenty-four elders rise from their thrones (verse 16). How sweet is this! Before, when glory was ascribed to God, or the Lamb appeared, they rose and cast themselves down before Him. They were ready for everything that exalted the Godhead. If it be as the Creator (Rev. 4), they prostrate themselves before Him that sat on the throne; or if they hear of the slain Lamb who is about to unveil the secrets of futurity

(Rev. 5), they fall down before Him and proclaim Him worthy.

So here now the last trumpet sounds, “the world-kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ” is announced, and forthwith the twenty-four elders are on their faces, giving God thanks, because He had taken to Him His great power and had reigned. It is true that it must be through much sorrow for guilty men. For the sword of judgment has to clear the way, that the sceptre of righteousness may have free course. “The nations were angry, and thy wrath is come,” etc. But they knew well that, though man must come down with a crash, he will be exalted in the only true and enduring way in the kingdom of our Lord and of His Anointed. And so they give thanks to the Lord God Almighty, “that art, and wast [and art to come]” (verse 17). I beg leave to omit the last clause, “and art to come” — not as a conjecture (for conjecture on scripture is presumption), but because of what the best witnesses for the word of God really maintain. The clause, “and art to come,” was put in to make it square with other passages which contain a similar phrase.

In the first chapter you may remember that the salutation was, “Grace unto you, and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come.” All these three clauses are from God. They assert that He is Jehovah, the One that is, and was, and is to come; they are almost a translation into the Greek of the name Jehovah — One who is always the same. A similar phrase appears in Revelation 1:8, only there it is not John’s salutation to the churches, but the direct word of God Himself: “I am Alpha and Omega, saith the Lord God, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the

Almighty," evidently pointing to the unchanging continuity of His being. In Rev. 4 there is a little departure from the order given in the previous passages, and quite rightly: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come;" not "which is, and was," etc., but here, "which was and is." It may seem a slight change, but it is not without meaning. The emphasis in Rev. 1 is thrown upon the words, "which is," because God is presenting Himself as the ever-existing One. "Which was" is put first in Revelation 4, possibly because the living creatures (who had been the instruments of God's judgments in past dispensations, as they will be in the future) may look back upon the past, and therefore do not lay stress upon "which is," but begin with what God had been all through the past. Certainly they had been seen first at the garden of Eden as Cherubim (Gen. 3); next they formed a sort of representation of the judicial power of God in the tabernacle and in the temple (Ex. 25; 1 Kings 6); and then finally they were active when Jerusalem was swept away, and judgment came upon Israel. In Rev. 4, Ezek. 1, Ezek. 11 these living creatures, which had been the witnesses of God's ways all through, begin with what God was, the perfection of His being as, if one may so say, it had been historically unfolding. In Rev. 11 there is the omission of the words, "and art to come," perhaps because the arrival of the world-kingdom of the Lord is here celebrated, so that there was no need to add anything. Before He came in His kingdom it was appropriate; but it would be hardly suitable here. As I find that the best authorities reject the words, it is surely legitimate to try to show how the better reading harmonizes with the truth of God in the passage itself.

The general meaning of the next verse (18) is plain. “The nations were wroth, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged,” etc., all which was to be executed afterwards. It is a sort of comprehensive view of what would take place from the beginning of the kingdom, when the various corruptions should be judged, and during the millennium up to “the end,” when all judgment closes.

The three great thoughts then of this chapter, as we have seen, are priestly worship; next a prophetic testimony; and finally the kingdom announced in heaven as come. The Lord grant that our hearts, brought into the enjoyment of such privileges, may be with Christ, not merely because of the blessing, but for His own sake! Christ is better than all the blessings that come even from Him; and we shall never rightly enjoy what He gives, except in proportion as we enjoy Himself.

That the greater part of the chapter refers to the antipapal witnesses, crowned by the Reformation, though urged with confidence and with no lack of ingenuity, I cannot but regard as a total failure, involving in some places a sense not only different from, but the reverse of, the express language of the prophecy. Thus the giving of a reed like a rod to John is supposed to denote the royal authorization of the Reformer whom the prophet here impersonated. This is said to have been fulfilled after the death of Frederick, the Elector of Saxony, when his brother and successor John assumed to himself supremacy in ecclesiastical matters, and exercised it resolutely by forming new ecclesiastical constitutions, modelled on the principles of Luther, the example being followed elsewhere in Germany, Denmark, Sweden, and afterwards in England. How

singular that men of God should be so prepossessed with Protestantism, and so enamoured even of its blots, as to turn the word of God into a sanction of the very things in which the Reformers departed from scripture as widely perhaps as they did from Rome! I am aware that the application of the rod in this passage to the intervention of civil authority is at least as old as Brightman; but this ought to have given time for considering, and rejecting so unworthy a notion. Nothing can be simpler, it seems to me, than the truth intended. In prospect of the approaching divine government of the earth, Israel and their land become as ever the central object. The Lord therefore takes special cognizance of them, marking what He owns and what He leaves out. The outside multitude are disowned; account is taken only of those who worshipped within — a distinction far indeed from being true of Protestants in contrast with Papists. The reed was the instrument of measurement, not of gold (as for the heavenly Jerusalem), but "like a rod." There seems an allusion to Zech. 2 (and Ezek. 40:3), with just such differences as in the reference of verse 4 to Zech. 4. There it is a measuring line (σχοινίον γεωμετρικόν), and the entire city is to be measured. Here it is but a special part, measured by that which was not longer than a staff, which the Lord reserved as His portion during the crisis, the rest being profaned by the Gentiles for forty-two months. It is very far from being the due re-establishment of Jerusalem, but it is the little pledge of all that is to follow. A similar remark applies here as before. Precisely so far as the Reformers slipped into Jewish ideas and order, instead of falling back upon the true and heavenly peculiarities of the church of God, there may be an appearance of definite fulfilment. Had they walked in separation from the world, the author of

Horae Apoc. must have lost a large proportion of his apparent identifications.

In the two witnesses, which is the next subject of importance, this comes out very clearly. Their earlier history is supposed to be retrospectively given, along with what remained to be fulfilled. As to their personality, we are agreed: they are not things or books, but persons who testify. But the testimony of Jesus, it is well to note, means not merely for Him, but the spirit of prophecy proper to this book. The gospel is not the subject. Further, the two olive-trees and the two candlesticks have nothing to do with the churches (or ἅ εἰσιν). That theme is completely closed, as we have seen repeatedly; and we are here avowedly in presence of the proclamation of Christ's title to land and sea. Hence, as it is added, these stand "before the Lord of the earth." In a word, the connection is not with the church-state, which then will have long past, but with the order predicted in Zech. 4, which undoubtedly refers to the millennial provision for the light of God in the midst of Israel.

Doubtless, there are points of distinction; for our chapter belongs in its full meaning to the interval after the rapture of the saints and before the thousand years. There is one candlestick all of gold in Zechariah, with its bowl, its seven lamps, its seven pipes, and an olive-tree on either side; perfect unity and perfect development. Whatever may have been the then historical accomplishment in Zerubbabel and Joshua, the two anointed ones of the Jewish prophet point in their fulness to the kingly and priestly offices of Christ, the grand means of dispensing and maintaining divine light in "the world to come." Here it is only a testimony to

these things; and therefore, as the least sufficient testimony according to the law, there were two witnesses. The oil here is associated, not with joy, but with mourning; and the witnesses are clothed, not with the garment of praise, but with the sackcloth of affliction. Avenging power is theirs, like that of Moses and Elijah. How vain to bend all this to the witnessing Christians, Western or Eastern, earlier or later! Their calling practically was to resist not evil, to love their enemies, to bless those who cursed them, to do good to such as hated them, to pray for their persecutors; and this, as the Lord expressly illustrated it, after the pattern of their heavenly Father, who, instead of shutting heaven that it rain not, contrariwise sends it in indiscriminate mercy on just and unjust.

Of course, on the historical view (which in a general way I allow), the days of their prophecy are years, and the judgments must be taken figuratively. But how, if it be pretended that this is all fulfilled? Had the Paulicians and the Waldenses (supposing them to be true witnesses untainted by heresy) authority to withhold the dew of grace all their days, or to smite with plagues as often as they would? To curse the earth with a spiritual drought is still more tremendous than if it were in a physical sense, even though their power embraced heaven, earth, the waters, and their enemies. I perceive, however, that an effort is made to escape the difficulty of the devouring fire that issues from them, by referring to the final fiery judgment on the adversaries (H. A., ii. pp. 203, 407); but what can be lamer than such shifts? Present judicial power, continuous or occasional, against all opposers is the true and full meaning: like Elijah’s in the midst of an apostate people, and like Moses’ in the midst

of a people oppressed and enslaved by the Gentiles. But as their testimony is prophetic and not the gospel, so it is armed with judgment instead of breathing grace. Righteous vengeance guards the claims of the Lord of the earth. Heaven is the source, centre, and home of grace. It is in the vaguest conceivable way that a delineation like this can be made to suit proper Christian witnesses; and it is chiefly the mixture of Jewish feeling and conduct, found alas! too often and especially in dark times, which lends a colour to such applications. I hardly like to notice the fancied coincidence of the black goatskin of the Vaudois and the sackcloth, or of the motto of the Counts of Lucerna (lux lucet in tenebris) and the candlestick.

But now comes another obvious and grave objection to the scheme of the Horae Apocalypticae. The natural meaning of verse 7 of course is, that when their 1260 days of testimony have expired the beast kills the witnesses. But this does not fit in with past facts. Criticism is therefore summoned to substitute an ambiguous word, so as to convey that after their death many of the days may yet remain to run out. Difficulties are pressed, but they are not insuperable. For the witnesses have an exceptional place, and therefore might be miraculously maintained for their allotted period, while saints generally were suffering and slain. And the beast's forty-two months might coincide with the 1260 days of the witnesses consistently with the brief interval of three and a half days' exposure and their rise and ascent to heaven, the earthquake, etc. For what act against God or His people is attributed to him afterwards? I know of none. So that it might still be true that their testimony and his "practising" close together,

while a short space might intervene before the execution of God's judgments on the beast in the height of his triumph. In other words, the forty-two months define the epoch not of the beast's destruction, but of his being permitted "to work." Daniel entirely strengthens this conclusion; for we find in Rev. 12 an interval of some length after the three and a half years before full blessing comes.

It is extraordinary that a learned person should cite Gal. 5:16 and Heb. 9:6, as parallel with Rev. 11:7. For it is plain from the absence of the article that the first passage goes no farther than fulfilling flesh's lust. That is it could not mean the termination of the whole career of lust. The anarthrous usage here is, in fact, the strong and needed assurance that walking in the Spirit is the divine safeguard against fulfilling anything of the sort. In our text it is a definite testimony, of which the length had been carefully specified; and whether you translate it finished or completed, the full time is, it seems to me, necessarily involved. The passage in Heb. 9, every scholar must know, has no bearing on the case, because the tense implies a continued or habitually repeated action; while the tense in Rev. 10 implies an action complete or concluded. Indeed, it is plain that to the interpreters in general this word has proved an insuperable difficulty. Hence the rendering of Mede, "when they shall be about finishing," and so Bishop Newton. Equally offensive to mere grammar is that of Daubuz, "whilst they shall perform their testimony;" or the earlier view of Mr. Elliott,67 "when the witnesses shall have been fulfilling." The truth is that, interpreted with simplicity, according to the regular meaning of the word and in harmony with the context, the witnesses are

divinely protected the 1260 days of their testimony. Then, their mission having been completed, and not before, God permits that the beast should fight, overcome, and slay them. But this, applied strictly on the year-day scale, completely destroys Mr. E.'s interpretation in particular, if not the Protestant school generally, save that some of them refer a part as being yet unfulfilled to the future.

Manifestly the previous dislocation of the prophecy leads to the next error, that "the great street of the city," or "the street of the great city" (verse 8), refers to Rome and not Jerusalem. Now, I am not disposed to deny that, on the prolonged view, such an application is left room for, especially considering the peculiar way in which the city is here alluded to. But this is the utmost which can be fairly granted, and it not at all excludes the closing fulfilment in the actual city wherein the Lord of the witnesses was crucified. The context seems to me quite decisive that Jerusalem is intended; for nobody doubts that, whether literally or figuratively understood, the holy city of the opening verses (the centre of the testimony, though in the face of profaning Gentiles) is not Rome but Jerusalem. It is agreed that the beast is Roman, but this in no way strengthens the theory that Rome is the city here intended. His making war upon the witnesses is, on the contrary, much more naturally applicable to a locality not under his own immediate jurisdiction. No doubt Babylon is the symbolic designation of Rome in Revelation 17, where Rome is confessedly the great city, and so of course in Revelation 14, 16. But Babylon has not been named as yet, and there is no reason why Jerusalem also should not be so styled; especially as the figurative terms, Sodom and

Egypt conjoined, are nowhere else connected with Rome, and the fact which winds up the description ("where also their Lord was crucified") points to Jerusalem.68 If it were said ἐκλήθη historically (or κέκληται, the present result of the past), there might have been more difficulty; for, though scripture had already likened Jerusalem of old to Sodom, it had not to Egypt. But the reference is to the moral features of Jerusalem, as it is to be in the days of the witnesses, and so καλεῖται is strictly correct. And certainly if Nineveh had the title as well as the Chaldean Babylon in the Old Testament, it is hard to see why, in the Apocalypse, Jerusalem might not have it as well as Rome, supposing that the context looks that way. Thus the question to what city our chapter refers must be judged by the conclusion to which we come as to all this part of the Revelation, and as to Revelation 10 and 11 in particular. The grand point is that the things which come to pass after "the things that are" do not belong (save in the general moral bearing already and so often acknowledged) to the present order of things, but to the transitional epoch when God is about to bring the First-born into the inhabited earth. Therefore He will then be busied with the provisional government of the world, and hence specially with the Jews, who are the prominent object and direct instrument of His earthly rule. Accordingly the witnesses, as we have remarked before, are said to stand before the Lord of "the earth;" for this is in question, not His ways with the church.

Hence, whatever may be thought of the coincidence in mystic reckoning between the not very truthful speech at the Fifth Lateran Council, ("Jam nemo reclamat, nullus obsistit,") which in the skilful hands of Mr. E. is

made to denote the extinction of the witnesses, and Luther's posting up his theses at Wittemberg three and a half years afterwards, which denotes their resurrection, I cannot but regard the interpretation as forced an unnatural. The only unbiassed way of taking the account is that the 1260 days were fulfilled when the prophets were slain. What more absurd than to imply that, in spite of their death, they are still safe and sound for centuries afterwards, and that the sackcloth testimony on earth can co-exist69 with their ascent to heaven, understand heaven as one may? But once the Protestant scheme is made the exclusive fulfilment, can one be surprised that the marvellous explanations given to the earlier part of the chapter are only surpassed by increasing wonders in the latter portion? Certainly few councils had less claim to be considered made up of delegates from the peoples, and kindreds, and tongues, and nations, than that almost exclusively Italian assembly. Dean Waddington, who did not write for the purpose of illustrating Rev. 11, records that the Bohemian heresy "was again rising into formidable attention" at this very time. Who can think that the breath of the orator slew them? If they refused to answer the summons to Rome, John Huss had done the same before them, and Luther did so after them. It may have been want of courage; but Prague, Augsburg, and Worms were not the same thing as such a council held in Rome. I need not dwell on the enactment refusing Christian burial to heretics, the Pope's extraordinary donation of — not the golden rose only, but — the sovereignty of half the Eastern world to the King of Portugal, the grant of a plenary papal indulgence, the singing of the Te Deum, or the splendour of the dinners and fêtes given on the triumphant close of the Council.

But the deductions from verses 12, 13, must not be passed over. The call to the witnesses is made a summons from the highest authorities to ascend “the heaven of political elevation and dignity,” and was fulfilled first by the pacification of Nuremberg (1532), and yet more by the Peace of Passau twenty years after. The cloud is conceived to imply that these political triumphs were the terminating result of Christ’s special intervention, and to identify the cause of the witnesses with the Reformation. The effects of this mighty revolution in the overthrow of the tenth part of the city, and the slaying of seven chiliads,70 are set forth as the fall of papal dominion in England, and in the seven Dutch United Provinces. And the ascending Protestants gave glory to the God of heaven, as on Mary’s death, Elizabeth’s accession, the destruction of the Armada, and the reign of William III. Thus, commercial and maritime and colonial power crowning Protestant England and Holland, it began to appear why the covenant angel planted his right foot on the sea, his left only on the mainland. Insular, missionary, England was to be the principal instrument of asserting Christ’s claims to universal dominion and gospel truth against papal usurpation and lies. Could one ask for more palpable evidence of the absurd and mischievous effects of a wrong system? To refute such trifling with the word of God appears to me hardly called for. And what can we say to the delusion that the loud voices in heaven, under the seventh trumpet (verse 15), proceeded from “the religious world of the great Protestant powers?” Or that its general indications coincide with the more prominent characteristics and concomitants of the past French Revolution? (vol. iii. p. 338.) We must impute these extravagancies to the necessity of the case; for the text

requires that the last woe should follow quickly after that of the Turks (verse 14). Hence the desire to make out something in the seventeenth century, because of the great Reformation of the sixteenth, so as to fill up the great gap that follows. It is the more strange, as Mr. E. had already (vol. ii. p. 474) made the seventh trumpet to include not the events alone, that are preparatory to Christ's reign, but the millennium itself, and even all other revealed events beyond it.

In verse 19 I think that the opening of the temple in heaven marks a new portion of the book, and that it is therefore connected, not so much with what went before, as with what follows; for it is clear that the verses before (15-18) gave the sounding of the last trumpet, and the announcement of the consequences of God's taking to Him His great power and reigning — not the mere sway of man, but the power of God put forth in an altogether new way. There was a sample of His power, but not in connection with Christ, at the time when He fought the battles of His people and put down the Canaanites. But then it was exercised within failing, guilty Israel, without their Messiah; and consequently that power was often obliged to be put forth against themselves, and not against their enemies only, because God can never have alliance with sin. But now, under the last trumpet, the kingdom of the Lord God and of His Christ was come, and this is what the earth looks for, and the Lord Himself too; for He is waiting "till His enemies be made His footstool" Then the whole scene here below will be changed. He will come and execute wrath as terrible as His patience has been divine; and the effect will be that, "when His judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn

righteousness.” There will be the presence of the Lord Jesus and the absence of Satan; there will be, not only the execution of wrath on the living, but finally also she judgment of the dead. And these things seem to be brought together under the same trumpet. All is anticipated from the beginning of the kingdom to the end of it — all the main displays of divine glory in the government of both quick and dead. And there evidently the subject closes; for the opening of the temple of God in heaven (verse 19) ushers in another and wholly different vision, which has not directly to do with God in His kingdom, but here first of all it is a new theme that comes before us.

63 The received text gives

καὶ ὁ ἄγγελος αἱστήκει, the Complutensian, following several MSS., has the same words, thus — καὶ αἱστ. ὁ ἄγγ. Erasmus and R. Stephens had more rightly left them out, as do the Alexandrian MS., more than thirty cursives, and all the ancient versions, save the Arm. and Syr., which in the Apocalypse are not seldom encumbered with glosses. The present addition was probably drawn from Zechariah 3:3 through the scholiast Andreas. The elliptical construction perplexed people, and disposed them to adopt some such interpolation. Beza was the first. after the Complutensian editors, who sanctioned the clause in the common printed copies; and this to avoid the absurdity of the reed’s seeming to speak. But there is no necessity, as he himself admits, for such a meaning, if we do adhere to the best authorities. At the same time it is a mistake to say that the words are wanting in all the most ancient Greek MSS.; for A P omit and B has them, while C being deficient cannot therefore be cited.

64 If, with Ussher, the death of Christ be put in the midst of the seventieth week, it appears to me that the confusion is only increased. For, in all fairness of interpretation, the last week does not begin to be accomplished until the city and the sanctuary have been destroyed by the Romans, not to speak of a course of subsequent desolation. So that the Ussherian view of verse 27 really puts the death of Christ at least three and a half years after the destruction of Jerusalem, if the latter part of verse 26 is duly considered. The truth is, the right understanding of the prophecy itself leaves room for, and supposes, a gap of undefined length after the Messiah is cut off, before the last week commences. It is certain that the Roman invasion and the Jewish sorrows that follow, exclusive of the closing dealings of the coming prince, are not in the sixty-nine weeks any more than in the seventieth. The text itself therefore proves this long interval.

65 The received reading

θεοῦ is not without the support of some cursives, AEth., Slav., etc. But all the uncials and most cursives, versions, and fathers read κυρίου. The former was probably due to the tempting antithesis τῳ θεῳ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, in verse 13.

66 The four best ancient uncials that are known as yet, ‘ A C P, with very many cursives confirm the received reading, which is rather strengthened, it seems to me, by the fact that elsewhere the book has ἤκουσα. For assimilation, under such circumstances, whether by accident or design, is far more probable than the introduction of a difference. If this be so, the sense is

that the witnesses had a public and glorious vindication in the sight and hearing of their enemies.

67 Is it right to refer to Hippolytus, as if he agreed with Mr. E.'s idea of the witnesses making complete their testimony, long before the whole period assigned, or their own death? The very reverse was his belief.

68 Were the reading such as Mr. E. repeatedly represents it (of course through oversight), πλατειᾳ της π. της μ. (H. A., vol. ii. p. 409, note 4, and yet more incorrectly in vol. iv. p. 579, note 1), there had been no room for this rendering, which some very competent judges prefer.

69 The alleged case of Rev. 7:1, 2, has nothing, to my mind, in common.

70 Some readers will be curious to learn by what process of legerdemain these slain chiliads can be metamorphosed into the Protestant Dutch provinces which threw off the Spanish yoke. Cocceius threw out the notion first, but it was rejected by Vitringa and the more sober commentators, till Mr. E. re-asserted it. It is said that the Hebrew equivalent, alaph was used in the course of Jewish history for a tribal subdivision, without reference to that number, and even for the district in question. On this very slender basis, in conjunction with the old error of the Christian twelve tribes of Israel, all is founded. The fact is, that χιλιάς in the Apocalypse and the New Testament generally, is used in no such contradistinction to the numeral adjective. It is applied, in the simplest possible way, to soldiers, believers, and Israelites. It is said of angels, of men, and of a measure. Nor is there in the Septuagint the least real ground that I can see for taking the word in even one instance as a

province, or territorial subdivision. Yet the substantive occurs more commonly than the adjective. The truth is that, according to the meaning of the verse, the seven thousand (or complete body devoted to death) fell with the tenth part of the city, not those there, and these here. And the affrighted remnant consists of the other inhabitants of the guilty city, in contrast with the complement of the slain in the sphere of the earthquake’s ravages.

Revelation 12

Under the seventh trumpet the elders anticipated the effects of the throne being actually established over the earth. But now the temple is again seen, so that we go back here, for we have God's purposes in connection with the Lord Jesus from the very beginning — the man child who was to rule all the nation with a rod of iron being clearly, as I think, Christ Himself. It is God reverting to His purpose in Christ, born as the heir of the world — not in relation to the calling of the church, but as the man of might, destined to govern all, and with no feeble hand. It appears to me that this accounts for another remarkable feature of the vision. Christ's death and resurrection are not alluded to, but His birth and His rapture (not His death) are given in a summary manner. We have the woman in pain to be delivered; and the man child is born; and then we have Him taken away to the throne of God above. Of course this is not given as history. The Lord Jesus had been born and had died long ago: if it had been history, His all-important death would not, could not, have been passed over.

Here it is plain the Holy Ghost connects the birth of Christ and His rapture to the throne of God in heaven with Israel and the purposes of God about them. The birth of Christ is of special importance to Israel. The genealogy of the Messiah is therefore carefully given in Matt. 1; and in Matt. 2 we find all Jerusalem was troubled at His birth. This was the working of the dragon. Herod was a sort of expression of the dragon's power, who would gladly have devoured the child as soon as it was born. through that evil king as his

instrument. The child was delivered; but in the history, instead of being taken up to the throne of God, He was carried down into Egypt. So that our chapter cannot be regarded as historical, in the early part at least; and even where historical facts are alluded to, they are not arranged in order of fact at all, but simply linked with God's thoughts about Israel. The church as such is passed over. It may be involved mystically in the person and destiny of the man child, but there is no gradual unfolding of the thoughts of God as to His having a heavenly bride for His Son. Nothing is said about a bride for the man child. We have the mother, but not the Lamb's wife here. Israel was the mother of Christ. It was of them, as concerning the flesh, that the Christ was born. This is the great point which the apostle Paul urges on the Jews in Romans 9, because the Jews thought he made light of their privileges, and was against them, in consequence of the strong way in which he brought out God's mercy to the Gentiles. But it was not so at all. He demonstrates, in fact, that they overlooked their highest distinction. To them were given the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises. They had the fathers too, and last of all, to them was given a Son, the man child, whom they knew not — the Christ; for of them as to the flesh He came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Far from lessening the just glory of Israel, the apostle had a much more exalted view of it than themselves.

As in Rom. 9 Paul does not go on to speak of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, so it is here. Accordingly these two thoughts are connected in Rev. 12. The man child is brought forth, but leaves the scene

where the dragon was opposed to Him, and takes His place upon the throne of God, which none but a divine person was entitled to do. By and by He will sit on His own throne, but that will be when He governs the earth in a direct and public way; for God will never give up the right and title of the Lord Jesus to the earth as well as to the heavens. He has acquired a title by redemption, besides His essential one as Creator. But then He is going to do much better than to rule all nations with a rod of iron, or even bless His earthly people. His heart is to be shown. He must have a free course and a due object for all His love. Christ wants to have those that deserve nothing but judgment as the sharers of His glory above. What is done by Christ and for Christ, whilst is He is upon the throne of God, is not alluded to here. Israel is in question. These few thoughts may be helpful to understand the proper place and bearing of this new vision.

The temple of God then is opened in heaven,71 and there was seen in it the ark of His covenant, the pledge of His faithfulness to His people. For, as we have observed in the last chapter, there was a certain measured remnant that drew near to God in the way of worship, and to these witnesses was given a testimony to the Lord's rights over the earth, as finally there was the announcement of the kingdom. Now we have another train of idea. There was the throne, and a rainbow round about it in Rev. 4. Here there is the temple, and the ark of God's covenant seen in it. This may prepare the way for the difference between the two subjects. There it was God's power over creation. Providential judgments were about to fall upon the earth, and the rainbow was to show, before a judgment

was experienced, that even then God would remember mercy. The rainbow round the throne in Revelation 4, and round the head of the mighty angel in Revelation 10 before the sounding of this last trumpet, guaranteed that God was working, not for the destruction, but for the deliverance of the earth. But now we come to a further point; for blessed as the throne is, it does not bring us into such depths of God's character, as do the associations of the temple and the ark. Displays of divine power are not so much what draw out our hearts in worship, as when we draw near to the dwelling-place and home of God Himself; for though there is no one thing we have so truly to be ashamed of as our poor and inadequate answer to His holiness, yet it is just there God has met us in His grace.

Now He is going to show us not merely creation and mankind smitten, but Satan's connection with the final apostacy of this age. There had been a figurative allusion to his influence in Rev. 9:2, where smoke issues out of the abyss or bottomless pit; then, in Rev. 11:7, the beast ascends out of that pit; but here the evil source is thoroughly disclosed. And is it not precious to find that, before God discovers to us the tide of full evil, and shows us not merely the development and the instruments among men, but the great hidden spring of it all, and the person of him who puts himself at its head, and who is yet to work out this tremendous conspiracy against God — to find that before all this the temple of God in heaven was opened, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His covenant?72 For the heart under such circumstances wants not the manifestation of God's power merely, but to know that His holiness is secured, and that in virtue of it His people stand. Accordingly we

find that when the temple is opened above, it is not a rainbow that is seen, but God's connection with His people is set forth in the ark which now appears; for the ark was always nearest to God, and what faith therefore most clave to. Israel showed themselves to be dead to all right and godly feeling, when they were willing to expose it even in the hope of deliverance from the Philistines. The dying grief of Eli, and the living transports of David, alike show what the ark was in the eyes of the true-hearted. Here it is the ark of God's covenant in heaven; not merely that of Israel which might be taken away. Even the wise king did not adequately value the ark of old. And this shows the superiority of David; for faith is always, if I may so say, wiser than wisdom. If we had the largest human intelligence, and even the highest natural wisdom that God can confer, it never rises up to the height of simple faith. Solomon appears before the great altar. It was a magnificent spectacle, and he was an august king, and brought suited offerings. But David showed his faith in this, that it was not the altar merely which he prized, but the ark most of all. The ark was a hidden thing; not even the high priest could see it, save wrapped in clouds of incense. One had to walk by faith and not by sight, in order to appreciate the ark of God. Therefore David could not rest until the ark had its settled place in Israel; and he never had deeper joy than when the ark came back to Jerusalem. It is time that the ark brought judgment upon all who despised it, and even David's heart was afraid for a time, and the ark rested in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. But David regained the spring of confidence in God, which generally so marked his career; for we find him afterwards rejoicing when

the ark was welcomed back more than ever he did in all his victories put together.

Here, it is not the ark of man's covenant at all, but of God's covenant; the temple of God in heaven is opened, not on earth yet (i.e. it is only the purpose of God about it); and associated with this the ark of His covenant is seen, the sure pledge of mercy, and sign of faithfulness to His people. But still the circumstances were such as called for judgment; and accordingly "there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail,"73 all of which were the tokens of God's judgment. The day of peace and glory was yet to come. Thus you get these two things united: first, the pledges of God's interest in, and triumph for, His people; and then the signs of His judgment upon the evil that must be set aside before the time of full blessing.

"And there appeared a great sign in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars" (verse 1). I think it probable there may be an allusion here to the well-known dream that Joseph had of the sun, moon, and stars, explained by himself as alluding to his parents and brethren. Here the symbols are more general, and naturally refer — the sun to supreme glory, the moon to that which is derived, and the stars to inferior or subordinate authority. All this is seen in connection with Israel; for God intends, as far as this world is concerned, all power and glory to circle round Israel. As for the church, she will have all in perfection with Christ, and in Christ; but as far as the earth is concerned, Israel will be the centre. The woman is the symbol of God's purpose as bound up with Israel.

In the next verse we have another thing; it is the man by the woman. And so we find that “being with child, she crieth, travailing in birth, and pained to bring forth;” and a little after we read (verse 5) that “she brought forth a man child who is to rule all the nations,” etc. Thus we see it was not the woman who was of such importance for her own sake, though clothed with all these symbols of glorious power; but the reason is because from her comes the man child. And we shall find this thought is not at all foreign to scripture. Take for instance the Psalms, where the same thing is alluded to in a mystical way. Thus in Psalm 87 the word is that the Lord is exalted; His foundation is in the holy mountain. He is challenging the world to compare their best with what He can produce. “Jehovah loveth the gates of Zion,” etc. He chose Zion out of all the cities of Israel, because God’s sovereign choice must be carried out, even among His people. “I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me.” Rahab was the figurative name for Egypt, and Egypt and Babylon were the most famous nations in the Psalmist’s time. Philistia, with Tyre and Ethiopia, were, no doubt, powers of inferior order, but extremely celebrated for their trade, commerce, skill, etc. Of them it shall be said, “This man was born there.” And of Zion, “This and that man was born in her, and the Highest himself shall establish her. Jehovah shall count,” etc. I believe there is a dim allusion to the birth of the Christ, where God and His people glory so to speak, (whatever other men may have been,) that this man was born there. The reference is, I think, to the Lord Jesus chiefly, if not alone. Let others boast of their great men, but “Jehovah shall count when he writeth up the people, that THIS man was born there.” When He writeth up the people, of whom does

He think? Why of Christ; of the One that was born of the woman, born of Israel, and now caught up to heaven. When we are on the look-out for Christ, passages will be found to bear upon Him, more or less distinctly, all through scripture; for He who wrote the scriptures had Christ ever in view. It is not the death of Christ we hear in this Psalm, because this would have brought the sin of the Jews prominently before them. But it is His birth, which was or should have been unmingled joy. And therefore when Jesus was born, the heavenly hosts broke forth in praises, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will in men.” There was no trouble among them, whatever might be the feelings of Herod and all Jerusalem. Their great joy was what Christ would be for God and men, and especially for the city of David: in other words, just the suited feelings of those heavenly ones, that were not occupied with themselves, permitted to see the counsels of God as to His people.

There is another scripture or two I would briefly refer to, where we may get help as to the meaning of this woman and her child, not merely as to the fact of the birth, but in its connection with prophecy. Micah 5 furnishes a passage that both acquires and gives light when compared with Rev. 12. “Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops; he hath laid siege against us; they shall smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek.” The last words set forth, what we have not in the Revelation, the rejection of Christ and the dishonour done to Him by His own people. Then the Holy Ghost interrupts the course of the chapter by a parenthesis; for such is the whole of verse 2. “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth

unto me that is to be the ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting." It is Christ after the flesh who is God over all, blessed for ever. There you have the two points of the glory of Christ: His glory as a man, as Messiah; and withal, the One whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. Then having shown who this was (the man to be smitten but a divine person, which had made the sin of smiting Him unpardonable, if it had not been for infinite mercy), He takes up again what we had in the first verse. "They shall smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek... Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth; then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel."

Mark the term of their being given up by God — "until the time" of the birth. This shows that we are not to take the allusion to the birth of the man child as a literal reference to Christ's birth into the world, but rather in conjunction with the accomplishment of the purposes of God respecting Israel. Christ was born (Micah 5:2): then comes His rejection, and, as it were measuring His rejection on earth and His exaltation in heaven, the calling of the church. But the prophecy here passes by all that has to do with the church and takes up Christ's birth figuratively, connecting it with the unfolding of the divine purposes, which is itself symbolized by a birth. The Judge of Israel is smitten with a rod upon the cheek, and therefore Israel is given up until the time when, to use the language of Jeremiah, Jacob's trouble is come, but he shall be saved out of it. Here it is put figuratively, as Zion travailing till the birth of this great purpose of God touching Israel. "Then the remnant of his brethren

shall return unto the children of Israel." All the time the church is being called, the remnant of the Jews ("those who should be saved") are taken out of Israel, cease to look for Jewish hopes as their portion, and are absorbed into the church. But when God's earthly purpose begins to take effect in the latter day, the remnant of that time will form part of Israel and will resume their ancient Jewish place. The natural branches shall be grafted into their own olive-tree.

Another scripture speaks of Zion's bringing forth; but it is of a very different kind. In the last chapter of Isaiah the allusion is to a birth, but there it is said to be in one day. "A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of Jehovah that rendereth recompence to his enemies. Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child. Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith Jehovah: shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb? saith thy God. Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her." It is evidently not the time spoken of in Rev. 12. So that it is plain that there are three chief critical points connected with Israel's history. First, there is the birth of the Messiah; secondly, the passage in Micah, the ripening and effect of God's counsels regarding Israel, which is to be connected with Rev. 12 where God brings out His purpose concerning Israel, before the beast and antichrist are shown fully; and, thirdly, this passage in Isaiah 66 which is a sort of contrast with the others, the circumstances mentioned

being the express reverse of those that accompany natural birth and of the figure used in our chapter. The three passages may be put together thus: — first, Micah 5 shows us the birth of Christ, and Israel given up till the result of God's counsels as to them shall appear by and by; next, Rev. 12 unfolds the time of sorrow74 just before the last tribulation, when Satan, losing his old seats, attempts new plans in order to frustrate God's design to bless and magnify Israel; and then, lastly, Isaiah 66 is the time when all sorrow is past, and when before Zion travailed she brought forth — Israel's full and sudden blessing after the Lord has appeared. All previous sorrow flees away by reason of the joy that fills the city of Zion, or is only remembered to enhance it.

But now, going back to our chapter, we find that, besides the woman and the man child, there is another sign; a great antagonist of God appears — not the beast, but a much more serious power — "a great red dragon." And there is this remarkable circumstance — the same description which is applied to the beast is used of the dragon. How comes this? That Satan is the great red dragon there can be no doubt; this very chapter tells us so in verse 9: and yet he is described with the various characteristics that we find in the Roman empire (Rev. 13:1), "having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns." I believe the reason is, that Satan is viewed in connection with earthly power. Just as the woman was seen invested with symbols of power from above which God has given her, so here Satan is clothed with the fulness of earthly authority. He has seven heads, the symbol of deliberative power, that which rules and guides, and ten horns, the symbol of kings or kingly dignities. He is the prince of the world, who

surrounds himself with all power connected with the earth. The Roman empire is the grand representative of the power of Satan. But when we look at that empire in Revelation 13 we see this difference. The crowns were upon the heads of the dragon, but upon the horns of the beast. That is, in the Roman empire we have the exercise of the power represented as a matter of fact, but in Satan's case merely as a matter of principle or the root of the thing. Satan is the great moving spring, though unseen. It is a question of source and character, not of history.

First, then, we have had the thought and plan of God in respect to Israel and Christ. And it is plain that it is the destiny of the man child, not as yet the exercise of His dominion over all the nations; for if it were the latter, the woman would not have to flee to the wilderness, nor would the dragon be permitted to make war on her and the rest of her seed. To apply this historically is to entirely miss the teaching of God, who is here showing out His purpose, and no more as yet. Then the dragon appears, the one that God looks at as the ruler of this world, the prince of the power of the air, clothed with the same symbols of earthly power as we find later on in the Roman empire, save that in this last the crowns are upon the horns, or those actually swaying the power. (Rev. 13.) "And his tail draweth the third of the stars of heaven" (verse 4). This seems to be his malignant power in the way of false teaching and prophesying. In Isaiah 9 we are told that "the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail." The tail of the dragon does not set forth his earthly power, but his influence, through false teaching, in misleading souls, and specially those that were in the place of rule and authority — "the stars of heaven." "And

the dragon stood before the woman that was about to bring forth, that when she brought forth he might devour her child." How wonderfully all scripture hangs together! For if you begin with the very first portion of scripture that speaks of the serpent, the woman and that subtle foe are seen face to face; and more than this, God appears on the scene where Satan had apparently gained a great triumph, and then it is that He gives the blessed revelation that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head." Here, at the close of scripture, the same parties reappear, but with marked differences. In the garden of Eden it was the serpent's success, but here the certain triumph of God; there it was the devil's craft, but here it is God's power, long displayed in patience, but all-glorious in the end. God permits the dragon to stand before the woman, ready to devour her child as soon as it was born. The dragon shows out his spite and wickedness to the last degree and in the next chapter his plans. Meanwhile, God turns even the suffering into more positive blessing for the faithful. The very certainty that He could crush the dragon gives Him patience to wait, and He wants His people to be like Himself.

I would just observe that we must not take the chapter as if it were all consecutive. Verse 7 begins a new division. And a proof that all does not follow in immediate order is this; the casting out of the dragon from heaven unto the earth precedes the woman's flight into the wilderness, and is in point of fact the reason of it (see verse 13), though only stated afterwards. The truth is, that the first six verses give us the complete picture. In the divine purpose, there is the woman clothed with the heavenly orbs, setting forth the power

which God alone can confer. But there is another side of the picture. When the man child is brought forth, the mother is seen in weakness, and is obliged to fly for her life into the wilderness, where she had a place prepared of God.75 God thinks so much of the time she spends there, that He does not call it “a time, times, and a half,” but counts up, so to speak, every day she is there, “that they should feed her there a thousand, two hundred, and threescore days.” Then comes a new scene in verse 7. It is no longer what takes place on earth, but in heaven, as it is to many a new thing, and startling. A war is intimated on high. How is that? A war in heaven? It is an easy thing to imagine the enemy of souls upon the earth, and a war with him there. But the war begins elsewhere. “And there was war in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.”

If the Bible is implicitly believed, its intimation is distinct that Satan has power to draw near, and to accuse the saints before God. People may be staggered, and say, it cannot be; but it is better to be guided by the word of God than by the notions of men. The book of Job shows it; 1 Kings 22 also, and perhaps Zech. 3. You may say that these are visions; but we take the Epistle to the Ephesians, and there we are told by St. Paul that our conflict is not like that of Israel, who fought with the Canaanites. “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world (or the world-rulers of this darkness), against spiritual [powers] of wickedness in heavenly places.” Some use this verse in order to justify Christian persons resisting the powers of

this world, in plain contradiction of Rom. 13 and other passages. But the principalities and powers in high places, in Eph. 6:12, do not mean men at all. They are evil spirits, in contrast with men. The conflict of Israel was with living men on earth, while that of Christians is with wicked spirits in heavenly places. Of course, Satan cannot draw near into the immediate presence of God, into that light wherein God dwells, which none can approach unto; but he can draw near enough to accuse God's people before God Himself. The heavenly places here mean the heavens in general, and not merely what is called the third or highest heaven. As far as the lower heavens extend, Satan has access; there can be no doubt that he is prince of the power of the air.

Israel had to fight in order to acquire possession of their inheritance. The land was given to them in title, and before Moses was taken away from this life, the Lord Himself took him to the mountain-top, and showed him all the land of Gilead unto Dan, etc., calling the districts by the names of the tribes of Israel, as if they had been already there. But in order to enjoy their possessions, they had to fight for them; and so have we now. There is no such thing as enjoying the heavenly portion of the church without conflict with the enemy, and that is the reason why so many do not enjoy it. If the Christian does not enter his full heavenly portion here below, it is because he is occupied either with himself or with the world, or some other idol of the enemy, and then he cannot enjoy it. The great object of Satan is to hinder our enjoying, tasting, and living on our heavenly blessings in Christ; and in the same proportion that the world or the flesh is allowed, and so the door is left open to Satan to darken our eyes, we cannot see the goodly

land. There must be victory over Satan before we can enter in. The adversary has not merely power through men's lusts below, but specially in connection with the heavenly places — power of hindering Christians from appreciating their portion here. But there is an end coming to that, though not without a struggle. God will put a stop to all Satan's means of access to heaven.

There is a text, often found obscure, that I cannot but connect with this. In Hebrews 9 where the various applications of the death of Christ are spoken of, there is the following allusion to the heavenly places: "It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these." One reason, I suppose, is because Satan was allowed so long to have access there as an accuser. God would long since have shown His own sense of the defilement produced there by the foe, if it were not for the death of Christ. But as He bears with the rebellion of the world, so does He also with another rebellion, the audacity of Satan, who ventures to intrude himself even into His own presence, to carry the accusations of His people before Him. But let us not forget that if there be one who loves to accuse, there is another to intercede, the Advocate, who never slumbers nor sleeps. There may be the devil against the saints, but there is Christ for them, who ever lives to make intercession. By and by God will not allow Satan any longer to taint the air of heaven. He is forcibly cast down thence, and has only power to deal with mankind in an earthly way. "Woe to the earth and to the sea! for the devil is come down to you" (verse 12), etc. — that is, to those nations who are in a settled or in an unsettled condition. Satan is henceforth entirely

prevented from usurping his higher place, as prince of the power of the air. The heavens will then be cleared of him and his angels, never to regain their place above. He may come out on the earth again for a little season, after he has been bound, but he will never more appear in heaven as the accuser of the brethren before God. The momentous difference in the ways of God with His people is very marked here. All through the present time the accuser has a place in heaven, but at the predicted epoch he is cast out, and his place is not found any more there. Now, you will observe that this naturally, not to say necessarily, supposes the removal of the church to heaven before the change takes place; and for this reason, that if we suppose the church to be still on earth, when the devil and his angels are cast out of heaven, it would no longer be true of us that we wrestle with wicked spirits in heavenly places. Such will not be the condition of the saints, either during the millennium or in the great tribulation that precedes it.

Three years and a half roll on their course, after Satan is cast down to the earth, during which the woman and her seed (that is, Israel) are the objects of his persecution. “And the great dragon was cast [out], the old serpent that is called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world; he was cast unto the earth, and his angels were cast [out] with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast [out] that accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life unto death” (verses 9-11). “The blood

of the Lamb;" this was what kept their conscience good, and gave them confidence before God. Their conscience was purged by the blood of Christ, and, besides that, they had their testimony for God. He gave them the blood of the Lamb as well as the word of their testimony, and they overcame by both. The one cleansed them before God, the other they held before men. "Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them." There are at this time dwellers in heaven, and they are to rejoice because Satan is cast down from heaven. The church is on high at the time of which John speaks; the saints are already taken away from the earth. "And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman who brought forth the man child. And to the woman were given two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent" (verses 13, 14).

Now, it is plain that this brings us back to verse 6. The important link given us in verses 7-13 was needed, and after that we have consecutive order. We are brought down to the fact of the dragon's persecuting the woman and her child, and the woman's flight into the desert; and then the Spirit of God goes back to show us the deeper reasons, and higher source of all. Satan will have to leave his place in heaven, and now in a rage, "knowing that he has but a short time," he comes down to the earth to do his worst. He hates the woman, well knowing her seed is to crush him; so that all his long-cherished enmity is concentrated upon the woman and her seed. This is what leads the woman to flee into the wilderness. The enmity of Satan, not merely because she has brought forth a child destined to rule all nations

with a rod of iron, but because Satan is cast down to earth. Satan was once innocent, but he departed from the place of a creature, admiring himself, and setting himself up against God. Now when Satan is cast down from heaven, he shows out all his evil feeling against God, by persecuting the woman and her seed.

“To the woman were given two wings of the great eagle,” etc. Observe the difference here (analogous to Rev. 11), “where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time.” In a former verse the time seems to be made, as it were, as long as possible, because, as I conceive, God’s care for her was then the grand point. She had a place prepared for her of God, and when His care and preparation are in question, He lengthens out the time as much as possible; but where it is a question of the devil’s power, He foreshortens it. It appears to be the same period, only put in a different way.76 The serpent, so spoken of because of his subtle enmity, now adopts a new device. He “cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman,” etc. (verse 15, 16.) This sets forth some providential means used of God to deliver His earthly people and purpose from the instruments of the enemy, then put into a state of great commotion. These last are represented by the waters issuing as a river from the dragon’s mouth (people that are under the immediate influence of the devil); while evidently the earth helping the woman means the more settled parts of the world, used providentially to resist the efforts of Satan to overwhelm the Jews. “The earth” in this book may have morally a guilty character; but God can create a

diversion where He sees fit, and so bring to nought that which is calculated to overwhelm His people.

“And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went away to make war with the remnant of her seed, that keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus” (verse 17). It might be a difficulty to some that a Jewish remnant should have the testimony of Jesus. But if you have followed me in former chapters, it will not be insuperable; because “the testimony of Jesus” in the book of Revelation is always of Jesus coming back again as the Heir of the world, and not of His relations in full heavenly grace that we know now. The Jewish remnant will not enjoy the same communion with the Lord Jesus that the church actually possesses; but they will stand in faith, and they will have the testimony which Jesus is rendering in the Apocalypse. In Revelation 1 we read, “The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass,” etc. It is, we have often seen, a certain revelation which God gave to Jesus, connected with events that were shortly to come to pass. This in the next verse is called “the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ.” So in Rev. 19:10, “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy,” which shows clearly that it is a prophetic knowledge of Jesus. Thus the testimony rendered in this book, though equally divine, differs from the blessed way in which God unfolds Christ now to the church which is His body. The remnant will have such a knowledge as the saints in the Old Testament times possessed — greater probably in amount, but similar, it seems to me, in kind. They will be waiting for Jesus to come. They will say, with penitent hearts, “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of

Jehovah." They will plead, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood?" I do not deny that they may have the New Testament before their eyes; but there will be no power to apply the New Testament facts to their own souls, as far at least as present peace and communion are concerned. What a proof that not merely the word is required, but the Holy Ghost to open it out, for the rest and enjoyment of the soul!

Some of us, even as Christians, have had no light as to certain truths, until in the grace of God He was pleased to remove the film from our eyes. And God does this ordinarily by specific means; for it is not His way to enable persons to take up the Bible and understand it, independently of His provision for the perfecting of the saints. God teaches His children, but in general it is through those He has given for the good of the church, and, though never tied down to that order, He does not set aside the wise and gracious arrangement that He has formed and will perpetuate as long as the church endures. Nourishment is ministered by joints and bands, and thus all the body knit together increases with the increase of God. What would enable us to do without one another is a thing that God never gives or sanctions. Supposing a person were cast upon a desert island, God would bless him in his solitary reading of the word with prayer; but where there are other means and opportunities, such as assembling ourselves together for instruction, for reading the scriptures, for public preaching, exhortation, etc., to neglect or despise them is the will of man and not the guidance of the Spirit of God.

These saints, like those of old, will fear Jehovah, and obey the voice of His servant, but withal must walk in darkness, and have no light, till the Lord returns in glory. Our place is identified with that of Christ Himself, risen and glorified. Compare Isa. 50:8, 9, with Rom. 8:33, 34, for the latter, and Isa. 50:10, 11, for the former. Christians may not always act according to the light, but they walk in the light, as He is in the light. “He that followeth me,” says our Lord, “shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” The remnant of that day will trust in the name of Jehovah, and stay upon their God; but it will be after another sort. Thomas in John 20, as compared with the other disciples, may illustrate this.

And now let us briefly notice the historical theory, as stated by one of the latest and ablest of its advocates. The woman is, of course, the Christian church, which is actually said to be not merely united as one, but morally bright and beautiful in the days of Constantine! ascendant for the first time in the political heaven; with the sunshine of the highest (Constantine) of the three imperial dignities, and the light of the second (Licinius); and with the chief bishops as a starry coronal, the heads, now imperially recognized, of the δωδεκάφυλον of the Christian Israel. (Horae Apoc., iii. pp. 17, 18.) Three pages after, the civil authorities are viewed as the moon, perhaps because of Licinius’s apostacy and subsequent death. And the great red dragon with seven heads and ten horns is the old Roman paganism, concentrated for the time in Maximin’s prohibiting the Christian assemblies, and even killing their bishops in his third of the empire. Again, Constantine reappears as the man child — a baptised (?) emperor, the son of

Christ's faithful church, elevated over the whole empire to an avowedly Christian throne, that might be called the throne of God like Solomon's. And the ruling with an iron rod means the discountenance of pagans increasing almost to oppression, till at length, under Theodosius, all toleration ended, and their worship was interdicted under the severest penalties. But Mr. E., apparently not quite satisfied with this exposition, offers us the alternative of Mr. Biley, who thinks that the question here was one of fundamental orthodoxy, rather than of political eminence, and that the birth and exaltation of the man child refer to the solemn public profession of Christ's divinity, and its dogmatic establishment in the general Council of Nice.

Where is one to begin, where end, in unravelling this tangled web? Almost the only thing consistent is the melancholy result (God forbid that I should say intention) of degrading the living word of God. If something like the real point of the chapter is glanced at, it is to discard it summarily. Thus, it was too plain to be quite overlooked, that Christ is destined to rule all nations with a rod of iron (Psalm 2), and that this is made part of the promises to the Christians who overcome. (Rev. 2.) But all such reference Mr. E. considers excluded by the context. For, argues he, the woman is shown immediately after to be persecuted by the dragon, and then to spend 1260 days in the wilderness. But how does this set aside the other — the figure of Christ, take it personally or mystically, as the destined governor of all the nations? On this view, what can be clearer? The woman is Israel, first seen in heaven in the glorious purpose of God, and hence arrayed with that supreme power which is to rule the day, with the

moon — which, from the context, may here be a symbol of legal ordinances — under her feet, and with the perfection of administrative authority as her crown of glory. It is not a question of historical fact, but of divine counsels. Accordingly, in spite of such a view on God's part, the woman is seen the object of Satan's enmity in the Roman empire, who, foiled in his wishes against the raptured Man of might, directs his efforts against the woman, or Israel, fled into the wilderness, desolate but preserved of God for her destined time of sorrow. I do not deny here, more than elsewhere, a vague analogy to the imperial overthrow of the power of the enemy in idolatry. All I insist on is, that the past accomplishment in no wise meets all the features of the case, and that the system which sees nothing else really makes God Himself the author of that judaizing of the church which, kept in cheek by the apostolic power, soon became doctrinally rampant in the writings of the early fathers, and from the time of Constantine was the established mould in which the Christian profession was cast. Hence, historically, the date does not at all answer. Mr. E. seems to be shy of defining the 1260 years of the woman's place in the wilderness. He considers the time soon after Constantine when the true orthodox church became insulated, invisible in respect of its public worship, and more and more straitened for spiritual sustenance: the latter a most unusual effect of persecution; the former an unaccountable result, if the eldest son of the true church had the chief power in the empire, and the old paganism of Rome showed itself — not in a thousand years and more of persecution, but — in the mere transient efforts of Maximin and Licinius first, and of Julian somewhat later.

And if heathenism and Arianism are strangely put together to make out the war of the dragon and his angels in heaven, what can serious Christians think of the notion that Eusebius's extravagant flattery of Constantine, and the unwarranted joy and expectations of the dominant party of that day, are the exact echo of the prefigurative voice heard saying, "Now hath come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ?" Certainly I do not wonder that the eye which can see in Zech. 3 compared with Ezra 4 a reference to the accusation of the Jews before the Persian king's court by their Samaritan foes, should read the fulfilment of "Rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them," in the imperial edict which proclaimed liberty to those who had been enslaved or condemned to the mines. (Horae Apoc., vol. iii. pp. 29-32.) Of similar character is the criticism, borrowed from Daubuz, that the use of the uncommon plural from heavens, instead of heaven, indicates the then union of elevation in heart to the spiritual heaven, and elevation and dignity to the heaven of worldly rank.

Then again, when we turn from the parenthetic heavenly war, and its consequences (verses 7-12) to the dragon's doings on earth, we are told that the two wings of the great eagle were fulfilled in Theodosius the Great, whose lot it was to unite the Eastern and Western divisions of the empire under his own sway, and use all his power as a protector and nursing father to the orthodox church. Under these wings Augustine's ministry is said not only to have furnished present food, but nourishment for its long long sojourn in the wilderness. How the dragon, or old Roman pagan power, should now have the seven heads and ten horns, from

Constantine to Theodosius, does not appear. It is to the historicalist an obviously insuperable difficulty, as to which I see not a word of explanation, even in the most voluminous commentary that defends the view. And supposing e.g., that Theodosius could be the sun, the male child, and the great eagle's wines all at once, it is hard to connect the dragon with the governing power of the Roman empire in that day. Does ',the pagan remnant" answer to the persecuting dragon, as our chapter describes him? I do not wonder also that it is found convenient to combine all possible ideas of the flood from the serpent's mouth, and to make that a mixture of foreign invaders and heresies, of physical force and doctrinal error, employed to overwhelm the true church, so as to pass off a hazy application to the hordes of Goths, Vandals, etc., who inundated the empire after the death of Theodosius. But "the earth helped the woman," i.e., according to Mr. E., the Roman population, superstitious and earthly as they are confessed to have been, did service to Christ's church; and in their bloody wars the barbarians were so thinned, that their incorporation with the conquered followed, and their religion passed through Arianism into orthodoxy. The flood was thus swallowed up! If some very few stood forth as witnesses, like Vigilantius, etc., against such the dragon proceeded to plot, and so procure their destruction. To state the scheme is in my judgment a sufficient refutation.

On the other hand, the fulfilment in the crisis is sufficiently intelligible, whatever measure of partial resemblance there may have been in past events. The seventh trumpet has brought us down in a general way to the very end. From Rev. 11:19 we begin an entirely

new subject, of which that verse is as it were the preface. The ark of His covenant is seen in His temple above: it is not yet the actual bringing of the house of Israel and the house of Judah under the efficacy of the new covenant but it is its pledge. The sources of all, whether on God's part or the enemy's, are disclosed; and hence, as there confessedly is retrogression, so I think there is nothing harsh in the supposition that the birth and rapture to heaven of Israel's Messiah may be shown the special object of Satan's hatred, and the occasion of his intensest and ever-increasing hatred to the Jews and to God's counsels about them. I can also understand that the rapture of the man child may include that of the church — like a binary star, the two-foldness of which appears on adequate inspection. It is thus in the Old Testament that we find the church involved. so to speak, in Christ. The first great act of our Lords kingdom will be, I believe, the dejection of Satan and the wicked spirits, from the heavenly places (cf. Eph. 6:12, and Rev. 12:7-12). On earth the question of Israel, God's chosen people, is raised at once; and whether as dragon or serpent, all his resources are put in requisition against God's purpose in that people (yet in abeyance), and against the godly remnant who have the testimony (prophetically, I conceive) of Jesus, as the man of God's right hand, the Son of man whom He made strong for Himself. The development of his plans we shall find in the chapter which follows.

71 The true reading may not improbably be

ὁ ἐν τῶ οὐρανῶ which is in heaven. At any rate so the Alexandrian, and the Paris rescript, the Leicester, a Vatican cursive (579), the Middlehill, the Mortfort and one of the Parham (17) manuscripts say, not to speak of

the Cod. Coislin. of Andreas and Victorinus: not so the Sinai, Basilian-Vat., and Porphyrian uncials, with the mass of cursives. Mr. E. is also quite wrong in saying that “according to Tregelles this is a mistake.” It is true that, in his first edition, he inadvertently omitted to name this various reading, though long before noted by Walton, Mill, Bengel, (Wetstein probably,) and even adopted without question in the text, not of Wordsworth only, but of Lachmann, Tischendorf, Green, and it appears Tregelles also, judging from the new edition of 1859. How it was that Mr. E. did not find it in the critical editions of Griesbach and of Scholz, it is not for me to say: but there it unquestionably may be found by any who examine them. In Hahn’s slight manual one could not rightly expect it given. To cite Rev. 15:5 where there is no difference of reading cannot decide one way or another as to Rev. 11:19, where there is such weighty testimony on both sides. The chief bearing of the later occurrence would perhaps be to encourage assimilation in a bold scribe. Besides the article is often dropped carelessly, and especially might be in such a form as this, where its force is not at first sight apparent.

72 Mr. E. remarks (iii. 308, note 4), “It is clear that this word ought to have been here translated covenant not testament. Indeed so I think, always in the New Testament specially inclusive of Heb. 9?” I should say in every place, except in Heb. 9:16, 17, where the reference is clearly to the “inheritance” just named in verse 15. This, it seems to me, furnishes occasion to the inspired writer to found a fresh illustration of the all-important death of Christ upon the idea of a will or testament, which comes into effect only on the demise of the testator, τοῦ διαθεμένου. The latter word never

means covenanting victim, nor do I believe it possible that it could. It was technically used for disposing of property. If these two verses be read parenthetically and with this sense, all is clear. I have no wish to speak dogmatically on a point so nice; but such is the view which commends itself most to me.

73 It is amazing that the true relation of this verse escaped the notice of so many able Christian men, owing perhaps to the mere fact of its being unfortunately tacked to the end of Rev. 11, instead of opening the new division commencing with Rev. 12. if Mr. Elliott had only observed it, he might have been spared much trouble; but then he would have lost the coincidence of the "great hail" with the storm in July, 1788!! and the "earthquake" of the French Revolution in 1789. But the hailstorm he had hitherto interpreted as an invasion from the cold north-east. Where is the consistency of this vaunted scheme? And what had the opening of the temple of God, or the sight of the ark of His covenant there, to do with the French democrats?

74 Some, shrinking from the hypothesis that the birth of Christ is here alluded to, as being at variance with the exclusively future bearing of the Apocalypse incline to the view that the parturition of the woman means, in symbol, the formation of Christ in the hearts of Israel, or a certain part of them, before the final crisis. (Compare Gal. 4:19.)

75 It is true that

εἰς may be translated unto or towards, no less than into: to decide which is meant, we must carefully examine the nature of the case, and the context. But Luke 9:56, 57, in no wise proves that the woman was fleeing merely

towards the wilderness; because we have various occurrences related immediately after the evangelist says that they proceeded unto another village — occurrences expressly said to be while they were on their way. So with Acts 8:25; Acts 18:18, etc. The two wings of the great eagle convey the very reverse of a gradual movement thither. Nor does the parenthetic account of the war in heaven confirm the notion of progressive stages.

76 Dr. M'Causland (Latter Days of Jerusalem and Rome, pp. 314, 326) conceives that the 1260 days, forty-two months or three and a half times, are but abstract indices of the indefinite period of the present dispensation during which the Jewish body continues, like its type Elijah, in the wilderness, unvisited by the dew of the Spirit. Primasius in early days contended for a somewhat similar view; but while he thought that the dates were intended to include the period of the Christian dispensation, he also allowed their literal application to the find tribulation.

Revelation 13

We have seen that Revelation 12 goes back as well as forward, and connects the purpose of God which is to be brought out in the latter day with the Messiah and even with His birth. Thus, while the Lord Jesus Christ is to my mind clearly referred to as the man child, yet it is not His birth merely or historically, but His birth as it is linked with this future plan of God, which the book reveals here. The moment Christ is thus referred to (that is, Christ evidently viewed as the Head, not of the church, but of Israel ruling “all nations with a rod of iron,” and taking the government of the world into His own hands), Satan appears in personal opposition. It is no other than might be looked for; for God Himself had said in the garden of Eden, that He would put enmity between the serpent and the woman, between his seed and her seed. This was revealed at the beginning, and here we have it fulfilled at the very close. Without telling us the least about His humiliation, the man child was caught up to God and to His throne. Thus it is clear that it is not a bare statement of the Lord’s life, but such facts are referred to — the two great cardinal ones of His birth and of His rapture to the presence and throne of God — in order to furnish connecting links with what God has to do by and by with Israel. All the intermediate workings of God in the church are left entirely out, except as we may suppose the church to be involved in the destiny of the man child, who is now hid with God, but is yet to reign. Just as what is said about Christ in the Old Testament is applied to the church or the Christian in the New Testament; but still, most true and blessed as that is, it is an indirect use. Here then we

have the Messiah in relation to the future purpose of God as regards Israel.

Then follows the vision of a war in heaven. Not the Lord Jesus Christ, but angelic power is seen used of God to put down the rebel angels, Satan and his host. And from that moment Satan loses his power above (that is to say, the most important part of it, the most serious in itself, the most dishonouring to God, the most dangerous to the people of God) — his power in heavenly places, which is referred to in Ephesians 6 and other passages. Accordingly, when Satan loses that place, there is joy in heaven, and a voice proclaims that “Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ.” But yet, as far as the earth was concerned, the kingdom was not actually come: only Satan had lost his place above.

So we find a little answering to this, that our Lord alludes to Satan’s fall from heaven in the gospel of Luke; and I notice it because some have thence supposed that Satan had been expelled from the heavens long ago. It is in Rev. 10, when the disciples return to the Lord, full of joy because the devils even were subject to them. The answer is that He “beheld Satan, as lightning, fall from heaven.” Now a person might set the words in the evangelist against the fall of Satan that is described in the Apocalypse as still future. But evidently this would be a misuse of scripture. We may always rest assured that the Bible agrees with itself. It is ignorance and unbelief to set one part of God’s word against another. To an unbiassed mind, I think it is certain that the fall of Satan in the prophecy is described as a prospective event, which is to take place three years and a half (however that may be taken) before the destruction of

the beast and the binding of Satan himself. Consequently it is a fall that in St. John's time at least was yet future. The immediate effect was to be a dreadful persecution against the woman and her seed. Again, I have endeavoured to set forth a variety of considerations, from which it is clear to me that before this event the church must have been taken to heaven. Such the reader will remember has been the uniform deduction I have drawn all through our former chapters (Rev. 4-6); so that the fall of Satan, intimated here, must be an event subsequent to the removal of the glorified saints to heaven. What then does the Lord Jesus Christ mean when He says, "I beheld Satan, as lightning, fall from heaven?" When He sees and hears the effects of the disciples' service in His name, then the vision of Satan's catastrophe passes before His eyes, and the full consequences of His power are hailed in the then earnest of it. He looks on to the final crisis and the downfall of the Evil One, when the disciples announced so notable a sample of "the powers of the world to come." It was the first great blow struck by men at Satan's power; and therefore He anticipates the end from the beginning, and, so to speak, in a sort of musing, contemplative vision, He beheld the adversary fall from the highest scene of his usurpation.

Nor is this an uncommon thing in scripture. In another gospel, when the Greeks come up to the feast desiring to see Jesus, what does He say? "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified." He was going to the cross and to death; yet He declares that the hour was come that He should be glorified. How was this? If you take it in a mere literal way, it seems to me that the force of the passage is lost. Jesus sees in the Greeks that

were before Him a sample of the ingathering of the Gentiles; and the Lord perfectly well knew that the only thing that would draw the Gentiles must be His own cross and His glory in heaven. So that He looks through all the intervening scene that was before Him, for He had to accomplish redemption and to ascend on high. But from this little sample He connects all with His glorification, and speaks of it as of a present fact.

Again when Judas goes out, and the Lord Jesus Christ repeats similar words, it is, I presume, on the same principle. (John 13:31.)

Is not Rev. 5:13 analogous? A remarkable movement was seen in the vision affecting the universe, when the sealed book was taken in hand by the Lamb. It is not merely that we had the living creatures prostrate, and the elders taking up the new song, and the myriads of angels with their loud voice of praise; but there is a chorus in which the whole creation joined. “And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.” It was like striking a key-note that would never cease to vibrate, till the remotest bounds of creation would be filled with the glory of God and the Lamb. But the time of full blessing was here anticipated; it was in fact the Lamb’s receiving the book of the inheritance which called forth these overflowings of worship and joy. After this followed the opening of the seals, which was but the prelude of the latter-day judgments; and these would go on increasing in severity till Christ Himself comes executing wrath. (Rev. 19.) Not till then would the glory appear, and these

anticipations be realised. (Rev. 21, 22.) From the first event, however, that was a link in the chain, the end is welcomed. This is the mind of Christ.

And so it is in Luke 10. The Lord does not there refer to Satan's fall as a fact actually accomplished then; but He looks on through what was true at that time to his future and more complete humiliation, which we see here. And even this fall of Satan is by no means the last exertion of the power of God against the enemy. For until then Satan had scarcely been touched, save to faith. It is true that in the cross of Christ he had been judged in principle (John 12:31); but, as a literal fact, he was not yet shaken from his throne of the world. Doubtless, in the cross, the great work of God in virtue of which he is to be cast out from heaven was accomplished, so that it only remains a question of time and of the will of God. And first of all, he loses the heavenly part of the power which he has usurped. Then he comes down to the earth in a rage, knowing that he has but a short time. This brings us to Revelation 13; for there we get the detail of the doings of Satan here below, i.e., upon the sea and the earth (the sea, as we have before seen, symbolizing what was not under regular government, and the earth that part of the world which enjoys a state of order). The two together make up the world as a whole, or a given sphere of it, under whatever condition.

The prophet,77 it in said, was set or stood upon the sand of the sea. In a later portion (Rev. 17) he is carried in the Spirit into the wilderness; and afterwards (Rev. 21) to a great and high mountain. Here, as everywhere, all is in keeping with the scene. "I stood upon the sand of the sea." The reason is manifest. John is about to see a great beast emerging out of the sea, and accordingly he takes

in the vision a suited place. “And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea.” You must remember that all these visions were like a great panorama that passed before the eye of the prophet. What the meaning of the symbols used is, we have to find out by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. The sea sets forth the unformed mass of the people under a troubled state of the world — people in great agitation, like the restless waves of the deep. It is that which represents a revolutionary condition among men. And it is out of that mass of anarchy and confusion that an imperial power rises. This power is called “the beast,” The same thing appears in Dan. 7; but with this difference. The Jewish prophet sees successively four beasts emerge from the sea; not one merely, as we have in the beginning of Rev. 13. There was the first beast like a lion, the second like a bear, the third like a leopard, and a fourth beast of a peculiar kind. And then, before the explanation is given, one in the form of a son of man comes with the clouds of heaven, in contrast with the powers that came up from a tumultuous sea. It was a kingdom heavenly in its source, and a king who was to use the power of God which is to be established over the earth in the person of the Lord as Son of man, instead of being left in God’s sovereignty to those successive and ferocious beasts. The rising of the beasts out of the sea, upon which the four winds of heaven strove, portrays probably the vast commotion of peoples that preceded the formation of the four great empires. And it is an interesting fact, that the foundations of those states which afterwards became possessed of the imperial power were all laid about the same time. They emerged from obscurity and political chaos pretty nearly together. God in His sovereignty gave power to each in succession. First, there was the Babylonian, then the

Medo-Persian, then the Greek or Macedonian, and lastly the Roman.

In this case John sees but one beast rise. The sea sets forth a troubled state of nations, and the fourth and last beast mentioned by Daniel is seen by the prophet coming out of it. The first three beasts had had their day, and they were gone. The fourth or Roman empire had followed, and was then in being, and power. It was the authority of the Roman beast, which had at this very time cast John into Patmos. It seems to be its final rise, previous to its destruction which John sees here, but what was to take place between its first appearance as an empire and this reappearance is not yet described. There can be no doubt, from the description given, that it is the Roman empire. It is said to have "seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns;" the same things that we saw in Satan (Rev. 12:3), where he was regarded as the possessor of the power of the world, and specially that of Rome. We all may remember how he said to the Lord Jesus, when showing Him all the kingdoms of the world, "All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them; for this is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it." Now here he gives it to the Roman beast. Satan was, of course, an usurper; but still he was the prince of the world in fact, and as such he has seven heads and ten horns. But as Satan, he does not present himself openly before men. He must have some representative or agent. He must disguise himself, and work through another, and take a human form and instrumentality; even as God was pleased to do the same to accomplish His blessed purposes of grace. And so does Satan — awful counterpart in malice of God's goodness in Christ! The agent described, through whom

he works. is the Roman empire in its last phase. He took advantage of men's lust for power, because that which is the object of ambition in the world is power. And here you have a vast imperial power, which was at first owned of God. As far as rising out of the sea was concerned, God could still have owned it; but when it is said to arise out of the bottomless pit, the source is in no way providential, but expressly of the enemy.

But besides these seven heads and ten horns, there were upon the latter ten crowns. Let me just say that I have no doubt the ten horns ought to be mentioned before the heads: "having ten horns and seven heads, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads names of blasphemy" (verse 1). Not that one would attach undue importance to the order, save that we ought always to be right; but the two clauses of the verse agree in putting the horns first, perhaps because the beast is regarded here as having these powers in actual exercise, whereas Satan had them virtually only. Blasphemy, not mere heathenism, characterizes his heads.

"And the beast which I saw was like a leopard." This was the general resemblance of its body, and it refers to the Macedonian empire, so notoriously marked by its swiftness of conquest. "His feet were as the feet of a bear," which refers to the Persian, and implies great tenacity of grasp; "and his mouth as the mouth of a lion" denoting its voraciousness, as in Nebuchadnezzar's career and kingdom. Thus the Roman empire. in its last stage at least, would unite in itself the several characteristics of the former empires. And indeed such was the ordinary policy of the Romans. They did not interfere with what they found in the various nations they conquered. They endeavoured to incorporate into

their own system whatever had helped on the power of those nations. They did not force their own customs upon others, but cultivated whatever they found advantageous, and turned it to their own use. So this beast, as we see here, was made up of the diverse qualities of power that had given weight to its imperial predecessors.

But there is one remarkable difference from all of them, and even from its own original condition. “The dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority” (verse 2). This notable distinction is subsequent to Satan’s fall from heaven. He wants to have a medium for acting universally upon men, in the centre of the world’s civilisation and activity, for the short time that he is allowed to do as he pleases on earth. Accordingly, to the Roman beast which had imperial authority providentially from God he gives his own peculiar dragon power. This is a thing that has never yet been seen on the earth in the full sense of the word — this union of the imperial authority with the positive impartation of Satanic energy. But the prophet sees more than this connected with the beast’s investiture by the dragon. “And [I saw] one of his heads as it were slain to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and the whole earth wondered after the beast” (verse 3). I am inclined to think that the wounded head was the imperial form of government. (Comp. Rev. 17:10.) The heads that were, as we have seen, connected with the dragon (Rev. 12:3) as well as with the beast, represent the different forms of power which had existed successively. Of these one was to be lost, as it were wounded to death, but at this time was to be revived again through Satanic agency. All the world is

surprised, and no wonder. They will be seized with extreme astonishment at the revival of the Roman empire, with more than its ancient splendour.

And now, if we look at Daniel, we find a remarkable fact introduced there, connected with its divided state at the close, and of course also with its previous divisions after it had ceased to exist as an empire. The image in Dan. 2 has got feet, “part of iron and part of clay.” There is weakness consequently. That metal represents the original Roman element in its strength, while the clay was a foreign ingredient, which brought in weakness when it sought to coalesce with the iron.78 “And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men; but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay” (verse 43). This exactly accounts for the state of things found in Western Europe. The history of this part of the world was completely changed by the inroads of the barbarians about the fifth century after Christ. There was a time when one vast consolidated power had universal and undisputed sway — the iron power of Rome. But at the epoch named swarms of barbarians, near about the same time and from the north and east, came down on the empire and assailed it at almost every point. It fell. But mighty as these barbarians were in overthrowing, they could only establish little separate kingdoms; and since then no hand has been able to gather up the broken fragments and put them firmly together again. It has not been for want of the disposition to do so; for, on the contrary, all sorts of expedients have been tried — sometimes the sword, sometimes policy, sometimes intermarriage-but in vain. And thus it has remained under the providence of God.

There has been no unity, so that the prevailing and favourite expression of modem policy has been and is "the balance of power." It means really keeping a respectable distance among the scattered members of what was once a united body. Mutual jealousies and the spirit of independence in each have ever effectually hindered re-union. The ordinary aim has been, by the formation of parties among the powers, to cheek and prevent the preponderance of any one.

But though that wound seemed to be unto death, it was healed notwithstanding. "I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed." That is, at the period of which the vision speaks, the Roman power is to be consolidated afresh: not as formerly, with God's good hand over it and controlling all, whatever might have been the ways of individual emperors; but all is abandoned to the will of the beast as the immediate instrument of Satan. Satan can no longer accuse the saints before God, but now he is at work on the earth to produce open blasphemy against God. And this is first done by means of political influence. There is the Roman empire reorganised, and the imperial power revived, and a head over it that gathers everything under his own control, so that all the world wonders after the beast to whom the dragon had given his power, and throne, and great authority. In the next verse we have not merely this; but "they worshipped the beast saying, Who is like the beast? and who is able to make war with him?" (verse 4.)

What a fickle thing is man! No doubt, just before there had been a state of anarchy and confusion, and thence the beast arose and becomes an object of wonder and worship to men weary of all their previous turmoil, and

strife, and insecurity. Something like it was seen in a neighbouring country. Men were convulsed by a revolution which tore up all the landmarks and filled their minds with anxiety and restlessness. And what came out of that? A strong hand takes the reins, a military despotism, a quasi-imperial power. And what was enacted on a small scale, because in one country only, will prevail in all the western powers of Europe. So that instead of men having things to themselves, some vigorous chief will take the rule. but it will not be the hand of man merely, but the dragon's power. God will permit him to have his own way; and so for a short time he is allowed to do his very worst. Then, besides distinct governments and rulers, each over his own country, there will be an imperial unity under one great head, who will wield their power and preside over all. Thus will be accomplished those desires of men that have hitherto proved but idle dreams, or at most abortive efforts.

There is a passage in an early epistle I would briefly notice, which refers to what has hindered, and hinders still, the development of this and other allied wickedness. It is in 2 Thess. 2:6, 7: "And now ye know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work: only there is one who now letteth until he be taken out of the way. And then shall the lawless one be revealed," etc. There is a restraint that God puts upon the lawlessness of the world; and I conceive the Holy Ghost who acts here below is the One spoken of here as "he who now letteth" or hindereth. Still, after the church has been taken away, God will carry on a testimony, though of another sort, and Satan will be kept in cheek for a

season at least. This restraint will be maintained by the operation of the Holy Ghost in a providential way. When this dealing of God ceases, the Holy Ghost will no longer “let,” as the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth; that is, the power which the Holy Ghost exerts over the world, and not merely in the church, will no longer be put forth as now to keep Satan under. “He who now letteth” will “be taken out of the way.” People do not know how much they owe to this restraint of Satan from doing his worst. But the time will come when God will cease to hinder; and then Satan will for a season carry all before him on the earth. He raises up a person as head, and men are charmed with the grandeur of his energy, exercised as it will be without conscience towards God — charmed with the comparative ease that will result from having one person supreme over all. In short, they will have in many ways what is suited to meet the idolatry and pride of the heart. For men are, like children, constantly disappointed with their own schemes and even successes. Besides, having refused the love of the truth, they will readily fall into whatever snare Satan may put before them. So that, after a previous storm of revolutions, they will gladly fall down and worship the beast and the dragon that gave him his power. But further, the worship of the beast in the day that is coming will be of a different character from common idolatry. They will not merely be adorers of him, along with gods many and lords many, as the heathen of old. There will be an utter denial of any god above the one who is adored as such on earth. This miserable being whom Satan fills will be the object of their worship; and the dragon shares it.

“And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemy: and power was given unto him to practise [or continue] 79forty-two months” (verse 5). Nobody doubts, I suppose, that this is connected with Dan. 7. The same kind of language is heard applying to and for the same time. If we examine that chapter, some of the thoughts I have uttered will be found to be confirmed. It is said (Dan, 7:7) that the fourth beast differs from all its predecessors. “It had ten horns. I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up another little horn” (verse 8). There is nothing of this in the Revelation. The little horn, at least as such, is not mentioned there. But this is not all. Before him “were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots.” He takes possession of the territory of three of the horns, so that but seven remain out of the ten. “In this horn were eyes like the eyes of man,” — the symbol of intelligence, “and a mouth speaking great things,” — the utterance of pride and blasphemy against God. (Compare verse 25.) This is what brings on judgment from God — not of course the white-throne judgment of the dead, but the judgment of the quick, and of the habitable world. And so it is written in the eleventh verse: “I beheld, then, because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake; I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed and given to the burning flame.” Now observe that there is this difference between Daniel’s prophecy and John’s — what Daniel says about the little horn John says about the beast. (Compare Rev. 13:5, 6, with Dan. 7:8, 25.) The reason is this: John gives us the character or principle, and Daniel the detail of historical facts. The fact was to be, that in the Roman empire there should arise ten kings, three80 of whom disappear before the force or fraud of another king, the little horn

— a power obscure in its first origin, but acquiring actual possession of three kingdoms, and then becoming the real director of all the rest. In the Revelation (where of course it is assumed that what had been disclosed in Daniel is already known), the Holy Ghost does not go back to the historical details, but speaks as if the emperor and the empire were one.

We are bound to acknowledge “the powers that be;” but when Satan has given the beast his authority, it is another thing altogether: we owe no allegiance to Satan. In point of fact, he is the one who leads on the beast into all his own depths and heights of sin. For the beast “opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name and his tabernacle, [and]81 them that dwell in heaven” (verse 6). The Roman empire is the chariot, so to speak, in which this furious rider is driving.

But let us look further at Daniel 7. “I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them (verse 21).... And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the high [places], and shall think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hands until a time, and times, and the dividing of times.” It is the same period of forty-two months that we have here in Rev. 13: — “a time,” which means “year;” and “times,” two years; “and the dividing of time,” half a year. I have no question that it is the person referred to in Daniel, under the name of the little horn, who here appears under that of the beast. There he is the “horn,” because Daniel gives us the gradual succession of the history, and adds the special Jewish part, the gift of times and laws into his hand; here, because he is viewed as having

all the power and authority of the imperial system, he is called “the beast.” He opens his mouth “in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, and them that tabernacle in heaven.” For this was the great object of Satan, who uses the beast as his mouthpiece. It was from heaven he had been cast out; and God in heaven, and those whom He calls into relationship with Himself there are peculiarly odious to Satan and to this self-exalting beast. “They that dwell in heaven” are unbearable to them. There is no one thing that stirs the world even now so much as this. It does not always dislike godliness when connected with things on the earth: it can appreciate love in a measure, for men can selfishly profit by it. But the moment there is a godliness which cares not for the things of the earth — not merely in the refusal of evil things, for they could understand this — but in deliberate separation even when men are doing their best, (i.e., seeking to be religious and to honour God in their own way,) nothing so excites men’s hatred now; much more so when that day comes. For then Satan will have lost all power and place in heaven, and have only the earth to work in, and the thought of blessedness above is hateful to him. He endeavours to make men think that the beast is God, and takes advantage, I suppose, of the prophecies in scripture to make them believe that the predicted good time is arrived, that God is come back to the world, that men have nothing to do but to enjoy all the blessings of the earth and of the day spoken of when God was to scatter His enemies. Satan seeks that men should antedate this under himself and without God. He will know what is at hand and his own torment when that day arrives. He will endeavour to turn to account the very promises of God, for cheating the world into the

belief that these times of chiefest evil are the days of heaven on the earth. This is the time described here, when conscience towards God will be completely null and void, and what was true of Pharaoh on a small scale will be verified in entire Christendom. It will be given up to judicial hardening and then destroyed. It is just what the Spirit shows us in 2 Thess. 2:11, 12, when God, grieved with this world because of their rejection of the truth, will allow man and Satan to do their worst together. “For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” And I most fully believe not only that God will do so righteously, but that the righteousness of it will be apprehended by any soul who is subject to His word.

Here, then, we have the means by which Satan accomplished his purposes. He has given his vast power to the beast, and now he makes him an object of worship. “And it was given unto him to make wax with the saints and to overcome them: and authority was given him over every tribe, and people, and tongue, and nation. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him of whom the name is not written in the book of life of the slain Lamb, from the foundation of the world” (verses 7, 8). Here is the same distinction that I have alluded to before. “All that dwell on the earth” are a worse class than the tribes, peoples, tongues, and nations, meaning those that have abandoned heaven and heavenly hopes, and are fully committed to the latter-day delusions. In the case of “every tribe, and people, and tongue, and nation,” authority was given to the beast over them; but as to “those that dwell on the

earth," they are completely subject to him and to his malignant influence. "All that dwell upon the earth shall worship him." That is not said about the others, but these are completely given up. When it says, "whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," the idea is. not that the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world, though people commonly draw from it the inference, as in 1 Peter 1:19, 20, of the purpose of God. But the true meaning of the verse, I apprehend, is that their names were not written from the foundation of the world in the book of the slain Lamb. And, comparing this with Rev. 17:8, we find that the Spirit has left out a portion, which makes all clear by removing any doubt of the true connection. "And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world." The Holy Spirit has left out "of the Lamb that was slain," and puts together the writing in the book of life, with "from the foundation of the world." The language of Peter, etc., (1 Peter 1:20,) where he speaks of the Lord Jesus as an unblemished, spotless lamb, "who verily was ordained before the foundation of the world," has quite another bearing.

Then comes a solemn word of warning, on which I need not dwell at length. "If any man hath an ear, let him hear." If any man leadeth into captivity, into captivity he goeth: if any man killeth with the sword, he must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints" (verses 9, 10). That is a general maxim, true of any one; true even for the beast. If he has been leading others into captivity, he is to go into that or worse himself: if he has killed with the sword, he must

also be killed, But it is specially intended for the guidance of the saints, who might naturally infer, from the wickedness of the beast, and his league with the dragon, that they were at liberty to resist him. And there is, I believe, the reason why this is said, lest the saint should be tempted to forget his place or God's supremacy and sure judgment. Their place was not to take the sword in their own defence. If they did so, what would be the result? Even then, whatever their character, whatever the beast's, God would hold to His principles. They must expect what they sought to inflict. It is the law of God's retributive government. The apostle Paul, in Eph. 6, does not scruple to use the voice of the law as to the honour due to a parent. "Honour thy father and mother.... that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." Of course he does not mean that a Christian should look forward to living on the earth as a reward for honouring parents. It was a principle laid down of old by God, and the apostle, referring to the earthly promise, merely shows that even under the law there was a special blessing attached to it. It was the first commandment with promise. So here the Spirit of God gives a general principle, true at all times, applicable alike to foes and friends. "If any man," etc. — it does not matter who. It is a false position for the Christian to assume the place of power in the world. What makes it the more striking is that the saints spoken of here are Jewish, who of all others might think it very right to resist with all their might. If the beast blasphemed and persecuted grievously, they might say, "Surely we are entitled to stand up in defence of our religion and our lives." But says the Lord, "If any man have an ear, let him hear.... he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword." If He lets him

have his way for a season, what is our calling? “Here is the patience and the faith of the saints” — faith as regards God, and patience as regards the enemy. Thus God will so much the more appear on behalf of His sufferers. And if the place of faith and patience belongs to those Jewish saints who have a comparatively earthly position, how much more to us who have nothing but a heavenly one? (Comp. Matt. 26:52.)

Our great business, next to enjoying Christ and delighting in His love, should be to cultivate what is according to His will: so that we should not give a false witness of what He is and has done for us. We are not of the world; and the moment we fall back upon the resources of nature, upon our own personal power, influence, or authority, we have deserted Christian ground. In family relationships, to act according to our place of authority is a perfectly right thing. Nor will the blessing of God be with those who do not maintain the relative place that God has set them in: as of a father or child, a husband or wife, etc. The affections, most important as they are, are not everything. God is to be respected in the order that He establishes and sanctions. These are things which are not touched by our heavenly place; on the contrary, this gives us an opportunity of showing we have got in Christ a fresh power for every legitimate relation. But to take our part as having an interest in this world is quite another thing, and not the place of the Christian; but rather to pass lightly over it, as those that know their portion with God in heaven. Christ is coming to judge the world, which God regards as guilty of the blood of His Son, and only ripening for judgment. This truth habitually before our

souls would preserve us from much that dishonours the Lord in us as Christians.

May all we learn be used to our blessing in separating us from what is to end so dismally! The outward effects of conduct are not enough. The church is regarded as having the mind of Christ, and we are responsible to God to keep out of the secret snares and springs by which Satan is bringing about this evil. For we have to do with his working in a still more subtle way than his acts in the world. May we not forget what God is to us for the present claims of His glory! We have the most blessed opportunity of being faithful to Christ now. It is vain to look wistfully at others, and to imagine what we could do if in their circumstances. God is equal to all the difficulty of our own position and time, and would give us the needed strength if we waited on Him. The only reason why we are apt to magnify the strangeness, etc., of circumstances, is because our eye is not single to Christ. When we see Him in everything, the danger, difficulty, and temptation are all at an end.

Verses 11-18. The rise of the second beast is strongly distinguished from that of the one already noticed. First, there was the beast out of the sea; now we read, “And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth.” The earth we have seen, all through the Revelation, to be the symbol of that which politically is established and in order — the proper scene of the testimony and ways of God and of settled human government. Its privileges may be abused; it may lapse into a state of frightful moral darkness; for it is just where there is any blessing from above that there is the danger of corruption and apostacy. The sea on the contrary is a loose, disorganised aspect of the world. Chronologically, too,

this might intimate that the rise of the second beast is subsequent to that of the first. When the seven-headed monster rises, all is in a state of agitation; but when and where the second beast comes up, things are consolidated after a fashion. The land now is spoken of — no longer the water, the sport of every wind. But the personage described as “coming up out of the earth” is not a mere individual. It is a political, oppressing power that acts without conscience toward God — a beast.82 It may be, and I doubt not this is, one particular individual that exercises the power, as with the first beast. But “beast,” as a symbol, does not mean an individual as such, but an imperial power, sometimes with revolting satellites subject to itself.

Next, this beast was evidently of an extraordinary kind; for it is characterized by an imitation of Christ. It has “two horns like a lamb.” The Lord, we must have observed, through the Revelation, is often spoken of as the “Iamb.” While seated upon the throne of God, while described as Himself the great Sufferer, actively sympathizing with the suffering people of God, He is seen as a “Lamb.” But when the saints slip out of and abandon their proper lot of earthly rejection, the Lord ceases to be thus symbolized. He seems ashamed of them and retreats to a distance, and is seen as an angel and not any longer as a Lamb. The extraordinary thing that we see here is that this beast assumes to be like Christ. He has two horns like a lamb. He makes a sort of pretension to be like Christ in official power. While the horn is used as a symbol of a king, it may also mean simply power. It was so used when speaking of David, “the horn of his anointed,” etc.; but still more is this meaning of it apparent if we look at the Lord Jesus, who

is seen in this book as having seven horns and seven eyes. Clearly the seven horns there cannot be seven kings; so that the horns, according to the context, either might mean kings, or they might be simply power. In the former beast we are told they signify kings; but per se they need not, and here they seem not to mean more than power. It is not the perfection of power as seen in the Lamb, but only pretension to it; there were two horns. The Spirit of God has been pleased to show us in chapter 17 of this book, that the ten horns of the first beast are ten kings. (Rev. 17:12.)

So far, then, all is plain about this second beast. It is a corporate power that grows up when all was formed and orderly, and consequently arising after the appearance of the first beast. More than that. He arrogates to himself the power of Christ (he has two horns like a lamb); but his speech betrays him — he speaks as a dragon. Out of the abundance of the heart, we know, the mouth speaks. Whatever he may appear to be outwardly, when he does give utterance to the real sentiments of his heart, it is the voice of the dragon. Of this the draconic voice is the expression. It is the great active power of evil in the latter day; and this is one difference between these beasts. The first beast is the one for show: it catches the profane world through the display of power and glory. The second beast is much the more energetic of the two. It is the one that most takes the place of Christ — is a false Christ, or rather is antichrist — i.e., the very expression of Satan in his direct opposition to Christ. When Satan was seen (Rev. 12) waiting to devour the man child as soon as it was born, he is not as the serpent, but as the dragon. And here, in

order to the ripening of his last designs, this beast speaks as a dragon.

But it may be interesting to look at some of the scriptures that apply to the second beast, for there is often a good deal of confusion about them; and it is not to be wondered at, for these two beasts are so closely bound together in the last days, that it is a difficult matter to determine which of them is the antichrist. The word “Antichrist” is only found in the Epistles of John. And there we must look if we would see what is implied in that name. In 1 John 2 the Holy Ghost writes as to this to the babes of God’s family. For it is not at all a true principle that the young in Christ are only to know Him for the salvation of their own souls. The reason, I suppose, for thus writing to them was, because they were in special danger from the snares and deceits of the enemy; and the Lord, while He preserves, does not want us to be kept blindfold. Christian guidance is not unintelligent. It is not the blind leading the blind, nor even the seeing leading the blind; but it is the seeing leading the seeing. God does give help and instruction; but the Holy Ghost takes particular pains to show that He appeals not to the saints’ ignorance, but to their knowledge of the truth. “Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that the antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.” There we learn with certainty what was working from and in the time of the Apostle John, what has been increasing ever since, and bearing a terrible harvest up to the present time, though the fruit of it, the antichrist, may not yet be fully ripe. “Even now are there many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time.” That was the proof — not

good, as men think, but the deep evil of antichrist spreading. “They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.” What a solemn thing!

The persons displaying the spirit of antichrist were individuals that had once professed the name of Christ. In fact, there could not be an antichrist unless there had been some previous profession of Christ. There must necessarily be some truth; for Satan cannot invent. He can imitate; he can corrupt God’s truth, and use it for his own purposes, and put it in new and evil forms, so as to give the appearance of truth to what is positive error: “for no lie is of the truth. Thus the great antichrist is to come: but even then were there many antichrists. These persons, painful to say, had once been in the family of God. There they had been, outwardly in the place of children, but not of course in reality. Then “they went out form us, but they were not of us.” Next he says, “Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?” But he goes farther. To deny that Jesus is the Christ is the first feature. But there are greater abominations. “He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.” There are two states spoken of here. First, there is the denial that Jesus is the Messiah, the last degree of that infidelity which every unbelieving Jew shows who rejects Christ from that day to this. But the terrible thing is, that it is found in those who had once taken their place in confessing Jesus to be the Christ. Of him who will finally be the leader in giving it up and renouncing, it is said, “he is a liar.” But more than that. He is not only a liar, but an antichrist “that denieth the

Father and the Son.” Jesus was the Messiah, and much more: the Father was displayed in Him. If I look at the Messiah as suck, I do not necessarily and fully see the Father there. In Him is the truth of the kingdom of God; in Him the display of His power and faithfulness to His people. But there is something far more blessed than the kingdom; for when I have the thought of the Father, I rise not merely into the region of divine power, but into that of the highest, holiest, most intimate affections. It is evident that what we know in the presence of God now is an infinitely nearer thing than the glory that He will give or display by and by. This will tell others what His feelings are toward us, proving the love we are brought into now. We do not wait for the kingdom to know this; but by the Holy Ghost we draw near to God now, in the most blessed way in which He here reveals Himself. Of course when in heaven we shall have a more unalloyed knowledge of His love, an enjoyment never interrupted by the workings of a carnal mind or by worldly influences. Every hindrance will be removed — all idols will vanish; for every present thing which becomes an object to the mind, instead of Christ, is really an idol. We shall be out of and above all this when we are taken to be with the Lord. But the love of the Father is just as true and perfect now, and we by the Holy Ghost are privileged to enjoy it. We shall enter more fully into the love then, but the love itself is the same even now. It is the rejection, then, not merely of the Messiahship of the Lord Jesus, but of His divine glory as the Son, that brings in antichrist. All the love of the Father has come out in Christ, witnessed by the Holy Ghost. That involves, not merely the Jewish revelation, but the Christian; and it supposes too that Messiah has not only come and been rejected, but has brought out all His

divine and heavenly glory. For His being the Son of the Father has nothing to do with the earth. His eternal Sonship is evidently a truth transcending entirely His Messianic rights and position. It would have been equally true if there had been no earth or providential dealings. It was His eternal relation and glory; and therefore, when the Holy Ghost wants to bring us into our full place of blessedness, it is the Father that He brings out. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings.” Where? Here? Not at all. “In heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.” So that the seat of our blessing is entirely outside and above the whole scene of the lower creation. And if a man utterly rejects and despises that, renouncing His glory whom he had once owned, what is he? An antichrist. What he does on a small scale, the antichrist will do on a larger one.

I refer to the Epistles of John, because there we have the antichrist mentioned, not as a beast as in the Revelation, but as the end and chief of those who had once been in the family of God outwardly, had gone out from it, abandoning and denying the blessed truth about the Father and the Son, which they seemed to have received. “He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son.” On the other hand, we read, “Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.” God always makes the utmost account of His Son. If you deny the Son, everything is gone; whereas “he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.” When I possess the Son of God and my heart finds satisfaction in Him, I know the Father. “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father also.”

Then, after exhorting them to let that abide in them which they had heard from the beginning, that so they might continue in the Son and in the Father, John closes the matter thus: “These things have I written unto you concerning them which seduce you.” It was an evil that was at work from the very beginning. And what mercy is there even in this! As the evil did exist, and must be manifested at some time or another, God allowed it to break out then, so as to put His own revealed sentence upon it. We should never have dared to have said such strong things of those whom we had even known as friends or as brethren so-called. Call them liars! How shocking and uucharitable! men would say. But the moment that any men set themselves against (or rather deny) the full revelation of the Son of God, the Holy Ghost knows no quarter; and I believe that we ought not. If the heart is unprepared for this, you will find another thing that goes along with it. Wherever unbroken self-love, sensitiveness, and tenacity reign about what touches ourselves, there is but little care for the Lord Jesus. You cannot have two master affections. When the heart is single to Christ, He lifts us above personal feelings; but where the heart’s care is for ourselves, there will not be found much devotedness to Him, nor jealousy for His name.

In 1 John 4 the apostle refers to the spirit of the evil. “Every spirit that confesseth not Jesus Christ come in the flesh is not of God: and this is the [spirit] of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world.” Why does the Holy Ghost introduce it here? There are many false prophets, as had been said in the first verse, gone out into the world: and so I believe there are now. But it is a

most difficult thing to realize it at the time in which we live. We can see it in times that are past; but the great difficulty is the discerning of what is at work now. We are in the very same circumstances that the saints were in then. For as surely as the Holy Ghost continues to work, so surely will the subtle power of Satan be there to oppose. “Every spirit that confesseth not,” etc. Such is the power or principle of antichrist “whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world.” It is not the antichrist fully developed yet, but the spirit of it working among men, just as much as the Holy Ghost was working also. The earliest sphere is not in the profane world; it must begin with those who had once borne the name of Christ. Satan could not forge such a rebellion against God, but among those who profess to believe the truth.

Again, there is a notice of this in the second Epistle of John, where it is said that “many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not Jesus Christ come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.” It is no longer a question of justification by faith simply, or of the law, but a more serious thing still. It is Satan, not only attacking the work of Christ and seeking to get persons to add something, and so to take away from its glory, but deprecating and denying the person of the Son. Important as the work of Christ is to us, the person of Christ is the centre and substance of all truth and glory. In presence of such a theme, I desire not to discuss but to worship. The reason why persons care more for the work of Christ is because they rightly feel they cannot be saved without it; but once we have got peace of conscience, Christ’s person becomes the most precious object of our hearts. He is God’s delight; and

what is most precious to Him, we shall find to be the most blessed, and full of blessing for us. It is not merely he that denies Jesus Christ come in the flesh, but he that does not confess Jesus Christ coming in the flesh: this is a deceiver and an antichrist. The Holy Ghost becomes, if we may so say, bolder in His statements. Does He lower the standard, because Satan apparently gains ground, and becomes more and more audacious against Christ? And are we to say, “We must not be so particular now, because there is so much evil;” and “there is no hope, because the church is in ruins?” On the contrary the Spirit, making provision for the latest time, uses stronger language than ever. He says (verse 10), “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him good speed [greeting].” We are to have nothing to say to him. Not only was he not to be received into the church, the house of the living God, but not even into a Christian’s house. He must have no sanction nor footing among the saints; for the Christian’s house ought to be a fortress for the name of the Lord, a reflection of what the Lord loves and produces — where He is owned and honoured. Even ordinary greeting is to be refused. No matter if it be only to the lady that he is writing — one who is not called to teach or to rule. But when it is a question of Christ, it is in vain to talk about her being a woman, as an excuse for laxity. She wants Christ; she owes all to Christ; and if she is a woman, is she not bound to make Christ the first question, the object of her soul? Therefore, if any person touches Christ, no matter who or what she may be, her allegiance to Christ calls for promptness and decision. That at once becomes the governing motive to faith, and the one grand responsibility of her soul. Whether it be persons who

have the spirit of antichrist, or the great antichrist himself that is coming, antagonism to Christ is there; and this decides all to a true heart.

In the Revelation antichrist is described, not merely as a deceiver, but as a “beast,” as an earthly power which has a subject kingdom — an imperial system. in fact, rather than a purely spiritual malignant influence, as in the Epistles of John. If we look a little at some of the Jewish prophets, we shall find more about him. I refer more particularly to Daniel 11. Towards the close (verse 36) we read these words: “The king shall do according to his will;.... and he shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods.” Who can deny you have a self-exalting personage in the land of Judea? This is very plain; for lower down it is said that “in his estate shall he honour the god of forces: a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things. Thus shall he do in the most strongholds with a strange god, etc..... And he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain.” Now, I think that wherever the Holy Ghost speaks of a land in this way, as the land, it refers to the land of Israel. He speaks of it as the Lord’s own land. This is confirmed a verse or two afterwards (verse 41). “He [the king of the north] shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown.” Thus a great northern antagonist is to come against the king (verse 40) “like a whirlwind, with chariots and with horsemen,” etc. Most evidently, then, the glorious land spoken of here is the very country which “the king” had been distributing to his favourites. In short, he is a king in the land of Judea, and

it is expressly said that the period, policy, and conflicts described are “at the time of the end.” Then “shall the king of the south push at him [the king in Judea]; and the king of the north shall come against him,” etc.

If this be so, several points are cleared in these verses. First of all a king, who does according to his own will, establishes himself in the land of Palestine. But while you may find the moral features that link him with the “antichrist” of John, he is viewed here as an earthly power, and is thus connected with one of the beasts of the Revelation. But more than that, he is to exalt and magnify himself above every god. This was a novel feature. The Roman emperors had honours paid to them in life and after death as divine; yet never above every god. But “the king” shall magnify himself supremely; and this in a land that was specially Jehovah’s above all others, and amongst a people whom God had called out to be a witness against all idolatry; and yet this man claims a new and most audacious worship, as the Most High in God’s land and temple. (Compare 2 Thess. 2.) For bad as Israel had been of old, enflaming themselves “with idols under every green tree,” here we have the sight, hitherto unknown, of a man setting himself up as the supreme God. And yet he has an object of worship himself: for man must have an idol which enslaves him, unless he is truly exalted, as alone he can be in bowing down before the true God. In reality he is most elevated when most subject to God. For man, unlike God, cannot suffice in and for himself without another. He must either raise his eyes to the true God, or degrade them on a false one. Even the very person who will try to get all beneath him, as supreme object of worship, will himself have something to which he is subject. And so we find

(verse 37) that while he does not regard the God of his fathers (which confirms his being a Jew), nor the desire of women (which probably refers to the Messiah), nor regard any god, for he shall magnify himself above all; yet the Spirit of God shows us this apparent self-contradiction (verse 38). “In his estate shall he honour the god of forces.” All others are to honour him, but he has this false god whom he himself honours “with gold, and silver, and precious stones, and pleasant things. Thus shall he do with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory..... And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him, and the king of the north shall come against him. He shall enter also into the glorious land.”

Now here plainly we have Palestine. The kings of the south and north are so called with reference to the land of Judea. The king of the north, described as coming against him with this large force, is the enemy so familiar in the prophets, while the king of the south is the then sovereign of Egypt.

These two powers come up against “the king,” who, I apprehend, is the antichrist of scripture. The Holy Ghost does not here describe his rise. There was no need to say who he was, but he is brought in quite abruptly. Thus, if verse 35 be examined, one sees clearly that it speaks of some who had understanding, referring to what took place in the time of the Maccabees, when a celebrated and most wicked prince, Antiochus Epiphanes, persecuted the Jews, many of whom then withstood him in a remarkable way. There might have been a good deal of nature and the spirit of the world in their feelings and actions; nevertheless they resisted all efforts to turn them away from Jehovah to idols. Some of

them fell, and this was in order to try others, and “to purge and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed.”

Here precisely comes in the space where the Spirit of God drops the past history. He first gives us the struggle between Antiochus and his adversaries, followed by the exploits and the sufferings of those who had understanding in Israel. The history of Israel is then in abeyance, and we are at once carried on to “the time of the end.” Between these two points there is a suspension of their history.

What is the next thing? “And the king shall do according to his will.” We are not here told anything about his origin or progress; we hear nothing whence he comes; we have only that peculiar phrase, “the king,” as if this would be intimation enough who was intended. Nor is it the only place in Scripture where “the king” is spoken of. Look at the close of Isaiah 30 and you will find “the king” introduced there in no less singular a manner. The reason, I believe, is this; that the Jews, while they were looking for Christ, were also looking for antichrist, a great prince who should trample down the godly among them in their final tribulation. It was plain in prophecy and so understood by them. In this ch. 30 the Spirit of God describes two enemies of Israel. First in verse 31 it is said, “For through the voice of Jehovah, shall the Assyrian be broken down which smote with a rod.” This is the king of the north that figures in Daniel, typified in the early prophet perhaps by Sennacherib, who was the Assyrian of that day, but of course only a foreshadow of the great northern enemy at the close. Then again it is said, “And in every place where the grounded staff shall pass, which Jehovah shall lay upon him, it shall be with

tabrets and harps; and in battles of shaking will he fight with it." Thus, although there will be such sorrow and trial, there will be joy too: "it shall be with tabrets and harps." "For Tophet is ordained of old: for the king also it is prepared." This I believe to be the force of it — "for the king also." Thus, if the statement made be correct, you have at the closing scene the judgment of God on these two great enemies of Israel — the Assyrian, and "the king" who is introduced here without a word of preparation.

In Isaiah 57 the same thing appears. I refer to it the more, as some might argue that in Isa. 30 "the Assyrian" and "the king" are identical. But in Isa. 57 it would be impossible to maintain this. The prophet has just been describing the appalling moral evil of the last days among the Jews. Then suddenly he says (ver. 9), "Thou wentest to the king with ointment," etc. It is plain from this, that "the king" is some special antagonist of God, not attacking the Jews from without like the Assyrian, but setting himself up within as king over the people of God. It was not necessary to define what king, because it was a familiar idea to Israel, so that the Holy Ghost could introduce him without a word of preface. They knew there was the terrible king to come — the last great enemy of God and the Jews in the land. The Assyrian is an enemy of God and of Israel too, but not in the land; for he fights against "the king" who is reigning there. The last wilful king is the object of attack to the last mighty Assyrian. Outrageously wicked as both are to be, they do not at all agree in their wickedness. They stand in each other's way. There never can be lasting peace between them, and this is exactly what Daniel 11 shows us. The forty-first verse is not at all a description

of “the king.” He seems to be lost to view, and there follows the account of the proud king of Assyria. The Holy Ghost presses on to the end of the Assyrian’s career, leaving that of “the king.”

Looking now at the New Testament, we shall find some new features about this king. In 2 Thess. 283 we have the fullest account of him that the Epistles of St. Paul afford. In verse 3 it is said, “Let no man deceive you by any means: for [that day shall not come,] except there come the falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.” There is first the falling away, that is the special apostacy. The man of sin is another and subsequent thing. The apostacy prepares the way for the revelation of the man of sin. Thus the French revolution answers to the apostacy rather than Romanism, which confesses truths, but all of them put out of their right place. There will be a further and more terrible development of the apostacy, though this illustrates it. But there is to be more than that — the man of sin. Who is he? The Lord Jesus Christ was the man of righteousness. This is the antagonist — the man of sin — “the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped.” Just the Fame sort of moral features that we see in Daniel about “the king,” we have in this man of sin. “So that he sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.” Here we have another point. He is evidently one reigning at Jerusalem. He sits “in the temple of God,” which, I see no reason to doubt, means the literal and well-known temple there.† At the same time, if anybody likes to apply the principle of this scripture to one who may pervert the place of the church, and make it an engine and sphere for exalting

himself in now, I have nothing to object. I dare say that it may legitimately be so applied — at least in part; but I think that it looks on to a person who arrogates to himself the honour due only to the true God. “Remember ye not,” the apostle says, “that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work.” Only there is one that hinders. When that hindrance is removed, the lawless one will immediately be seen, and in due time his judgment come when the Lord appears.

Bp. Ellicott avoids the error of Mr. Elliott, who doubts whether ὑπέρ ever bears what he calls the “adjurative sense;” but, while admitting that it is “grammatically tenable,” he contends that it is by no means “exegetically probable,” and that it is without precedent in the New Testament. But the latter is an unreasonable objection; because there in no other instance in the New Testament, that I know, of ἐρωτὰω, or an equivalent word, with this preposition (save 2 Cor. 5:20, which Wahl takes as = per, Mr. Green as “on behalf of,” which is inapplicable here; but I wave this as doubtful); and therefore we must be regulated by its ordinary force in such constructions. But we have frequently ἐπ. with περί there, which carries a sense entirely different.

Again, the real source of the difficulty is owing to the exegetical mistake that the presence of the Lord is the same thing as His day. It would be most unnatural, as Dean Alford argues, that the apostle should conjure them by that concerning which he was about to teach them. But the apostle does no such thing; on the contrary, he entreats them by “the coming” of Christ with all its cheering associations and its bright hope —

the gathering of the saints to their Lord, that they should not be agitated by the terrors of “the day,” which false teachers pretended was actually present. Both the Dean of Canterbury and Bishop of Bristol agree with me that ενέστηκεν means “is already come,” not merely “at hand,” as very faultily represented in the English Bible. St. Paul in the first Epistle had already taught the Thessalonians their hope, as he had also in his oral ministry respecting the man of sin, and the hindrance which actually operated against his manifestation. He now puts these truths in their order, and beseeches them by Christ’s coming, as a known motive on account of which they should not be moved by the false alarm that this familiar and dreaded day of trouble was arrived. It is the presence (παρουσία) of the Lord which gathers the saints to meet Him above; it is the epiphany or shining forth of His presence which destroys the lawless one below — a manifestly subsequent event, spite of Bengel, as appears beyond a doubt from comparing it with Rev. 19. The saints are already with Christ, and follow Him out of heaven for the judgment of the beast and the false prophet and their adherents. The document on which the errorists rested was a pretended letter of the apostle, not the first Epistle to the Thessalonians, as some wrongly assert: and the feeling they sought to excite was not the hope of Christ’s coming, but the fear of His day. The criticism and the doctrine of the Horae Apoc. as to this are unfounded.

Others are no better. Schleusner who is quoted writes loosely; and the words of Hesychius (vol. i. col. 1233, ed. Alberti) do not warrant the inference that the same word in the same tense means either present or future; for προκείμενον seems only a following up of πάροντα, not

another variety of signification. The verb is generally used for what lies stretched before, as (meats) ready laid, the question in hand, things already settled and agreed on. I am not aware of its ever distinctly meaning the future. But so emphatically the contrary is ἐνεστώς that, as is well known, grammarians have selected it as the proper term for the present tense (χρόνος ἐνεστώς). The latest (sixth) edition of Liddell and Scott's Lexicon shows their statement modified as to this; as in fact none of the three instances cited from classical authors (Ar. Nub. 779, Isaeus, 88. 40, Dem. 896. 49) necessarily means impending, Lat. imminens. Dr. Scott has himself acknowledged to me that they may all, as I believe they all do, mean "present," and thus harmonize instead of clashing with the regular force of the word everywhere else, both in the Sept. (including the Apocrypha) and the New Testament. Thus the passage in the Clouds means "while one suit was still pending," i.e., actually going on, not impending or future. Again, Mr. E. does not appear to have hit the force of Isaeus on the estate of Hagnias; and here, though I have no doubt whatever, I prefer for obvious reasons to cite from the celebrated Sir W. Jones's version, p. 139 (London, 1779). "Moreover the inheritance of Hagnias is not yet well secured to me, since some actions brought against the witnesses for perjury will make it necessary for me to obtain a second adjudication," This is a very different thing from an "impending trial;" and confirms the general rule instead of being an exception for which we have to account. In the demurrer in reference to Apaturius, the third alleged exception, the suits were already begun when they came to arbitration.

So the argument on

πάρεστιν, John 11:28-30, is invalid for Mr. E. and rather strengthens what he contends against. For our Lord had actually quitted the place where He was when the news of the sickness of Lazarus arrived, traversed the considerable intervening distance, and was only just outside the village. Πάρεστιν is strictly true there, and in no way modifies ἐνέστηκεν in our text. If the false teachers at Thessalonica taught that the Lord had left the right hand of God and begun the judgments of "that day," without having yet caught up the saints in Thessalonica or anywhere else, it would be quite parallel to the case of John 11. The word therefore retains here also and everywhere its characteristic sense.

†The allusion is obvious and undeniable to Dan. 11, which has the Jews and their land in view, not the church. This I consider entirely confirmed by Matt. 24:15, which certainly refers to a thing and time subsequent to Christ's rejection by the Jews and His rejection of them; but as clearly, to my mind, looks on to a time when He will again have a godly remnant, in the midst of an unbelieving generation governed by a false king under Roman influence. If, under such circumstances, the temple can be called the "holy place," why way it not be also "the temple of God?" The reasoning from what the house of God is now, while the church abides here, is quite nugatory. Compare also "the holy city" in Matt. 27:53. God's purpose is not revoked, spite of Israel's guilt.

Just as the apostle John says, "Even now are there many antichrists;" so here the mystery of iniquity was already working: only one was holding things in abeyance just now. "He who now letteth [will let] until he be taken out of the way." I do not the least doubt that the hinderer is

the power of the Spirit of God, not merely dwelling in the church, but acting in the way of control in the world, as the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. If it were simply the Holy Ghost dwelling in the church, the moment the church was taken away, the man of sin would be revealed. But it appears that the lawless one will not arrive at his full stature and manifestation immediately on the rapture of the saints. There will be an interval and a testimony which God will give. When this testimony disappears, or is put down by violence, the man of sin comes out full-blown. This seems to be the hour when the Holy Ghost ceases to restrain. He lets men show out then just what they are; and all their wickedness comes forth. The Holy Ghost thus no longer controlling the earth, Satan will be allowed to mature his worst plans for a very brief moment.

This, I think, is the time, and such its character, when the hinderer or hindrance will be taken out of the way. The early Christians used for many years to pray for the continuance of the Roman empire, because they thought it was the letting thing; that gone, they expected the lawless one to be revealed forthwith. And as its diabolical form is assuredly to arise after a previous existence and extinction, there was a certain measure of truth in their thought. But the Roman empire has long been extinct, and yet the man of sin in his full development has not yet been revealed. The re-appearance of the empire, not its extinction, is the critical epoch; and that will depend on the Holy Ghost's ceasing to restrain. When it does take place, all the evil of man and of Satan comes out without measure or disguise. "Only he who now letteth [will let] until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that lawless one be

revealed, whom the Lord Jesus shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the shining forth of his presence."

Revelation 19 describes this destruction. In that chapter (verse 20), after a previous description of the coming of the Lord in judgment, it is said, "The beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him.... These both were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone." They are, without doubt, the same systems or persons already characterized as the beasts from the sea and the earth in Rev. 13. Now it is plain that one or other of these two beasts is antichrist. The question still remains, which of them is that man of sin? Is it the great power of the world, the beast that rises out of the sea? Or is it the other energetic beast that rises out of the earth, imitating Christ in royal and prophetic power? Disposed to think it is the latter,84 I can frankly allow that I see difficulties, and believe it is not a thing to be dogmatized upon. Indeed these beasts are so closely linked together in their actions and objects, and also in their final doom, that we cannot be surprised if many find it hard to decide, or if intelligent minds come to different conclusions. But the more that I weigh what is said in St. Paul about the man of sin, and in St. John's Epistles about the antichrist, my mind looks out for the beast that has most appearance of rivalling and opposing Christ. This I find emphatically in the beast that rises out of the earth.

Let us now consider a little what the chapter further gives us, bringing the light that we have gathered from other parts of the scriptures to bear upon our enquiry. After the description of the beast in verse 11, we read of

the exercise of his power (verse 12). “He exerciseth all the authority of the first beast before him,” that is, in his presence. He is the energetic power, the one that cares much more for real influence and energy than for outward show which was what the first beast most valued. “He caused the earth and those that dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.” Observe again here that those that dwell on the earth are abandoned to his delusive power.

Some, seeing that the second beast works to procure worship for the first beast, have conceived that 2 Thess. 2 negatives the idea that the second beast is the same as the man of sin; because there he is represented as allowing no other object of worship than himself. But it is manifest that there are three persons who are closely connected together in this scene — the dragon, the world-power or first beast, and the politico-religious or second beast. It appears from Rev. 13:4, that the dragon is worshipped as well as the first beast; so that whether we suppose the first beast or the second to be the antichrist and man of sin, the difficulty would remain nearly the same. In either case the worship is shared by another. In point of fact, they are the anti-trinity, and find their bond in the unseen power of Satan.

The second beast is very important. He is the really active power in the Holy Land. The beast out of the sea has his dominion over the west, with large influence beyond it; but Palestine or Jerusalem is not his sphere, save that he destroys the witnesses and falls there. It is the second beast that is the great power known to the Holy Land. “He doeth great signs, so that he maketh even fire come down from heaven unto the earth in the sight of men” (verse 13). What imparts such deep and

painful interest to the miracle is this: it was the special sign whereby Elijah confounded the false prophets of Baal. When the whole question lay between God and Baal, what was the turning-point that decided the claims of Jehovah against the false god? It was this very thing — fire coming down from heaven. It had been a familiar token in Israel, and one that they might justly connect with the direct approval and power of God. For He had caused fire to come down from heaven at various times, as a signal proof of His approbation. Fire came out from before the Lord when the priests were consecrated; the same thing too when the temple was built and hallowed by Solomon. (2 Chron. 7.) "Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house." It was the crowning evidence of Jehovah's presence connected with Israel — of His presence filling the scene and accepting their sacrifices.

Here then is this frightful imitator and antagonist of the Lord Jesus, who sets himself up to be the God of Israel as well as the Christ. The true Messiah was the God of Israel, and here we find His majesty and claims and power emulated; the antichrist too must cause fire to come down from heaven. I do not say fire really from heaven, but the appearance of it; in the sight of men it was fire coming from heaven. As Satan could imitate, so here was this wicked power, whose presence was after the working of Satan, doing apparently what Elijah had done. The same proof that Elijah had given for Jehovah, against Baal is the one that he offers here in his own name. It is an awful scene, and still more so if compared with the passage in 2 Thess. 2:9. For, sad to say, the very

same words that are used in speaking of the miracles of Christ, in Acts 2:22, are applied here by the Holy Ghost to the man of sin. “Jesus of Nazareth,” said St. Peter, “a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs.” So in 2 Thess. the lawless man is one “whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders.” The peculiar signs of Christ, that men should know the truth, are imitated by this impostor. He performs for falsehood similar things, and men are completely taken in and deceived.

What prepares the way for such an end is the dissatisfaction that men will feel with Christendom as it is. I acknowledge that they justly speak evil against the state into which Christianity has got. When it loses its heavenly separateness, and is mingled with worldly principles, confusion is the result. They forget that Satan is the god of this world. Hence he has blinded them entirely as to what the church of God is, and what is due to the name of His Son here below. Christ is plainly left out of the question, and even the truthfulness is wanting which would be required by men in the commonest things of this life. It is not that one would desire to say a word against others; but God forbid that we should not judge, with all heart and conscience, a thing that is even beneath common honesty in the things of this life. When the church, or the individual Christian, ceases to judge, or if it condemn in heart, allows in practice, in the holiest things, that which a natural man does not in human and social relations; so that even the very world can see that what clothes itself with the name of Christ is all wrong; — when such a time as this arrives, can God longer refrain? Judgment is coming

apace; and what a mercy it is that God has given us something sweet as our hope and happiness, and not the perpetual dark foreboding of most certain judgment! Our portion is outside the sphere of the world. Judgment there must be before the world, can be fully blest. If a person were merely to dwell on evil and its judgment, do you think it would give Power to act for good? It is not the showing up of what is wrong, but bringing grace and truth to act on our souls which gives power: otherwise it might only be getting out of one form of evil to fall into another. The only real security is the getting near to Christ: we help other souls just so far as we put them in contact with Him.

We have seen, then, that this great enemy of God will be permitted to do wonders in imitation of the power of Christ, and in support of his claim to be Jehovah. It is not surprising that he deceives those that dwell on the earth. And what rapidly prepares the way, and ripens men for all, is that they are now listening to Satan, who has been dissolving confidence in the miracles of Christ, and the scriptures which relate them. Thus, when men not only review but see the horrors of what has taken place in Christendom under their eyes, and when they are left without the love of the truth in their hearts, they will be at the mercy of Satan. Then, when men's desires are gratified without conscience, and God Himself in righteous retribution sends strong delusion that they should believe the lie, (saying to them, so to speak, "You have refused the truth that you might be saved: now, then, have all you like,") — then this personage comes forward, and these wonders are done that affect to be signs from heaven. Is it amazing that they fall down and worship the beast and his image?

It is Satan, of course, who is behind the scenes; but his slave, the second beast, “deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast: saying to them that dwell on the earth,85 that they should make an image to the beast which had the wound by a sword and did live. And he had power to give life [or breath]... that the image of the beast should both speak and cause86 that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed” (verses 14, 15).

Observe, by the way, a further proof that this second beast is after the final rise of the first beast; for he causes an image to be made “to the beast which had the wound by a sword and did live.” “And he caused all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive87 a mark on their right hand or on their forehead. And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, the name of the beast, or the number of his name” (verses 16, 17). That mark was a seal of subjection or slavery to the beast.

“Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man, and his number [is] 666” (verse 18). I do not pretend to solve any, such question as this. It would be easy to repeat what others have thought. Some of the early Christians, especially the pious Bishop of Lyons, Irenaeus, supposed that it was “the Latin man.” Others have found various names, in accordance with their polemics and prejudices. Romanists discovered in it the enigma of Luther Protestants, the name of more than one Pope. Mahomet in ancient, and Napoleon in modern times have been imagined. But are such notions better than conundrums? It is not the way of the Spirit to

occupy God's people with reckoning letters or numbers after this vague fashion. May we not be satisfied that this is one of the points of detail left for "the wise" of the latter day, and that when the time comes the clue will be given, and all the light that may be required? For there is in the ways of God a sort of economy, at least when we come to matters of detail and application. Just as He does not give a saint the strength to bear him through a special trial till it is at the doors, so the Lord may only vouchsafe the needed instruction about this number when the man himself appears.

The application of the prophecy to a particular person will be the point then. It seems premature and useless to discuss such a question till the parties are on the stage. The wise shall understand then, and all will be as clear as day to them, but not to the wicked. (See Dan. 12.) The general truth, however, is plain. There is this second "beast," the active, energetic power that opposes Christ; but when the day of reckoning comes, and the judgment of the Lord is upon him, he will be no longer spoken of as a beast, but as the "false prophet" that wrought miracles. (Rev. 19:20.) Supposing the second beast to be antichrist, I am inclined to think that there is a spurious imitation of Christ in his causing the first beast to be worshipped. The Lord Jesus spake and wrought for the purpose of exalting God the Father, while the Father Himself makes Christ the special object. "Let all the angels of God worship him" [the Son]; and again, "that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." So it is with the beast. He will help to exalt the great world-power; but withal he equally, and yet more in spiritual things, exalts himself. He has horns like a lamb. That is, he pretends to the power of Christ. But he

speaks as a dragon (i.e., the expression of his mind is Satanic). Being a beast, it is intimated that he is invested with temporal authority; while he is also expressly designated a false prophet. Thus it is a personal antagonist of what Christ was and will be, rather than of what He is. Popery — Anti-Christendom, if you will — is a travesty of Christ's priesthood, and will perish with all that partakes its sin in the gainsaying of Korah. But here (when Christ, having closed His heavenly work, is about to assume His earthly royal dignity) is one who opposes and exalts himself in the city of the great king. For it is the Holy Land that is the central seat of his power and deceits. He is, I think, the person that the Lord Jesus referred to in contrast with Himself in a passage just quoted in part, where He sums up all in a few little words (John 5:43); "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." The Jews would not have Him who came from the Father. His sent One and servant, though His equal in honour and power, had so come and been refused. But there was one whom they are to receive, one who will flatter and exalt man in sin; for he will own no authority higher than his own, and this is the echo of man's will. Him I believe to be the personage we have here — one who, as to actual territorial dominion and external splendour, may have a superior, but who in point of spiritual energy and weight is pre-eminent.

Having already given so fully that which seems to me the true view of the very important chapter which has just occupied us, I need not say much of counter-expositions, many grounds of which have been already set aside by anticipation. Mr. Elliott is perhaps more

than usually confident in his hypothesis that the beast from the sea represents the character and history of the Roman Popes and Papal Christendom, and the two-horned beast the Papal clergy, with the image of the beast as the Papal councils. It is impossible to call this, at least, the Protestant interpretation. For even Luther made the first beast to be the Latin secular, the second the spiritual, power; while Bullinger viewed the former as the Pagan Roman empire, as did Foxe. Brightman, no doubt, was even more zealous than Mr. E., for he makes both beasts to set forth the Popes. But what is of more consequence, the learned Joseph Mede, and, as far as I can collect, Dr. Cressener, Jurieu and Daubuz certainly rejected these notions, regarding the first beast as the Roman secular empire, and the second as the ecclesiastical beast, though with characteristic points of difference. So, in the main, Sir I. Newton. If we enquire of their successors nearer our own day, the case is no better by Mr. Elliott's own account. "The explanation of this first beast as the secular Emperor and Empire of Western Christendom, and of the second beast as the Pope and Pontifical Empire, so as most of our modern English expositors have taken it; (e.g., Faber, Cuninghame, Bickersteth, etc.;) but I conceive to have been one of the most plain, as well as most fatal, of Protestant expository errors" (vol. iii. p. 109, note 2). Surely then, if so plain and fatal, Mr. E.'s elaborate array of evidence, and acute correction of the Protestant expository error, have been successful with every fair mind! Alas! no. Perhaps the chief independent exposition, since the Horae Apoc., is the Rationale Apocalypticum of Mr. Alfred Jenour (2 vols. 8vo, 1852); and there I read that the wild beast from the sea "must symbolize an empire about to rise after the ancient

Heathen empire had been destroyed, and which would be, as it were, that empire revived. It must represent too, I think, obviously a secular empire, not a spiritual or ecclesiastical dominion. There is nothing to indicate that it partakes in any degree of a spiritual or ecclesiastical character. And I cannot, therefore, but express my astonishment that so many commentators should have acquiesced in the interpretation which makes this sea-born wild beast the Papacy. There is not a single feature in the description of the beast itself that can with propriety be so applied. It is, as I have said, a secular not a spiritual power we have here delineated" (vol. ii. p. 75).

On the one hand, then, I agree with Mr. Elliott that it is impossible fairly to interpret the beast from the sea of the empire founded by Clovis and completed by Charlemagne. Neither the seven heads nor the ten horns, neither the dragon-character, nor in any sense the duration, can bear a reasonable application to it. On the other hand, I am compelled to agree with the earliest down to the latest, and including some of the very ablest of Protestants, that not the Papacy is meant but the secular Roman Empire. The conclusion is irresistible. Allowing an inconclusive accomplishment in the Papacy and its clerical supports, I steadily adhere to the conviction that the future alone can exhibit the fulfilment of all the features predicted, without constraint and in all their strength.

It is not true that the Papacy has the command of the Western powers which is here supposed, still less practises for 1260 years with such unlimited dominion. It is not true that the Pope has authority given him over every kindred and people and tongue and nation, even if

you confound this with (instead of distinguishing it from) the dwellers in the Roman world. It is not true that the Pope is the object of all the world's wonder, nor that the confession is extorted, "Who is able to make war with him?" Nor do all, save the elect, in Western Christendom worship him. Need I show how palpably inapplicable is the second beast to those wolves in sheep's clothing, the Papal clergy? Do they exercise the enormous power, all the power, of the first beast? And in what fair sense do they perform great miracles or signs, so as to make fire come down from heaven in men's sight? Is it possible that any person, save blinded by system, could be content with such an accomplishment as the wicked and idolatrous figment of the mass, or the lightnings of the Vatican?

The Lord grant that we may deny ungodliness and worldly 1usts, and this not only for wrath, but for conscience' sake! Yea, may we be separated to Christ in a spirit of heavenly grace! How base to think we can take care when the time comes? Baser still, if possible, to plead that the church of God will be previously taken out of the way to heaven — that because all will be right then, we can afford to do wrong now! Remember, that Meanwhile, as the apostle said, are there many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time. Now, if you are allowing the spirit of the world, or are trifling with any of the influences of antichrist at the present moment, what would you do if exposed to all the fearful persecutions on the one hand, and to all the temptations on the other, of the day when the man of sin will be revealed? God's grace might strengthen me to face all danger, and to refuse every blandishment, rather than abjure the true and worship the false God and

Christ. But is it not most solemn and humbling if I join (no matter what the motive) in any fellowship with known evil?

And here is the great, moral, present value of prophecy. I see the frightful fall at the end, and can trace the stream that runs down to it. Perhaps the way is long and winding, and the river does not seem so perilous; but look a little lower down, where the word of God lifts up the misty veil which shrouds the future, and behold the fatal speed with which all, who float there are engulfed to their utter destruction! There are many currents connected with the world, and I may not see in their sources and first flowings the full extent of the evil which is the inevitable result. In prophecy God graciously shows me the end from the beginning; so that, if I heed it not, I am dishonouring the warning of His love, who would have me "knowing these things before." Let us also beware not merely of one evil, but of its every form: especially let us not meddle with it wherever it assumes a Christ-like form in association with the world. Here we have the end of the open, blasphemous power, as well as of the more active and subtle spiritual evil of the crisis.88 Men will be caught in one or other of these snares-the bold infidelity or the religious pravity of the last days. However they may differ in appearance, they are found in the strictest, saddest, most fatal union at the close. The Lord grant that our hearts may be kept looking to Christ and waiting for Him from heaven! There is no full comfort or blessing, except so far as the eye is single to Him.

77 The reader should know that this is one of the most contested readings in the book. The difference in Greek is but a letter more or less; but in the one case John is

meant, in the other the dragon. The Alexandrian, Paris, anti Porphyrian uncials, with the Middlehill and Montfort MSS., are confirmed by most of the ancient versions and two old Latin commentators in the latter sense; and all other known MSS., including the Sinai and Vatican uncials, with the Coptic, etc., and the Greek commentators, give the former. Modern editors and commentators are not less divided. The comparison of our text with Rev. 10:5-10 will perhaps suffice to show that there is no internal incongruity in assigning such a position to John. Dan. 10:4, 5, Dan. 12:5, ought to be borne in mind. On the other hand, if it be “he stood,” I do not see that it attributes providential power to Satan, which would be very objectionable.

78 Dr. M’Causland (Latter Days of Jerusalem and Rome, pp. 336, 353) interprets the miry clay of the spiritual power exercised by the Papacy, and the iron of the temporal power of Rome; but this is, for obvious and conclusive reasons to my mind, wholly untenable.

79 Grammatically speaking the authorised version is good here. Compare Acts 15:33; Acts 18:23; Acts 20:3. The Hebraistic absolute sense is according to the analogy of Dan. 8:12, 24, and Dan 11 passim. Bengel, Griesbach, and others, doubted as to the word in any sense, and considered it probably an interpolation from verse 7. I believe, on the contrary, that the peculiarity of the expression, to those that did not bear in mind the phraseology of Daniel, led some of the scribes to insert πόλεμον before or after ποιῆσαι, as B, most MSS. (14 πολεμῆσαι), and led other authorities, as the Armenian version, Irenaeus, etc., to omit ποιῆσαι. 4 Dionysius Alex. (ap. Euseb.) has καὶ μῆνες. On the whole I conceive that Erasmus and R. Stephens rightly read

ποιῆσαι, and that the Complutensian editors and the Elzivers wrongly admitted πόλεμον. The true sense appears to be to practise, work, act, or do, rather than merely “continue.” The ancient versions are singularly vague, but to my mind they indicate action more or less energetic or specific, and not bare continuance; and so, it seems to me, the great majority of the best modern translators. Dr. M’Causland (pp. 300, 361) prefers “to make forty-two months,” i.e., to drive out the Jew into the wilderness for that period. This may be a “literal” version; but I cannot commend its “propriety.” Is it not plain that the acting of the beast is in contradistinction to his speaking? He blasphemes God in every possible way, His name, His tabernacle, and those that dwell in heaven; and more than this, license is given him to carry all out practically for forty-two months.

80 Even Mr. E. gives up the popular notion, sanctioned by Sir Isaac Newton, Bishop Newton, etc., that this was fulfilled in the subjection of Rome, part of Lombardy, and Ravenna, to the Pope. But is his own theory much better? How can the destruction of the Vandals in Corsica and Sardinia, or of the Ostrogoths in Italy by Justinian’s general Belisarius, and of the Lombards long after by Pepin and Charlemagne, answer to the little horn’s subduing three kings? Even of this petty territory, which is so strangely exaggerated into three kingdoms, the Pope has long possessed but a portion: if all the parts remained, they would scarce make one real kingdom. The little horn, on the contrary, conquers for himself, and becomes pre-eminently great.

81 It is not correct to say, with the author of the Horae Apocalypticae, that the conjunction is wanting in all the critical editions, for Griesbach, Knapp, Scholz,

Tischendorf, etc., retain it with the Vatican, Porphyrian, and uncials, a good many MSS., and almost all the ancient versions, save the Syriac. Still there is grave authority (A C, twenty-eight cursives, etc.) against kaiv, which is therefore dropped by some excellent editors, as Matthaei, Lachmann, etc. I have, accordingly, thought it right to bracket the word, though my opinion is in favour of receiving it.

82 Mr. Elliott considers the two-horned lamb-like beast to represent the papal clergy, secular and regular, united under the Pope, as the western patriarch, and supporting him in his loftier character of Christ's vicar or antichrist. Matt. 7:15, he thinks, almost precludes the possibility of error in thus interpreting the symbol of the anti-christian clerical body. But does not a "beast," in prophetic imagery, always imply a political corporation or civil power, never (certainly elsewhere) a priestly class however organised? Ought such an element to be left out in interpreting the chapter?

83 I take the opportunity of stating my conviction, which I have reason to know Mr. Birks shares, that the auth. ver. is quite justified in giving "by the coming (or presence) of our Lord Jesus Christ," rather than "with regard to." So it is in the AEthiopic probably, the Arabic, Gothic, Syriac, and Vulgate. Mr. Elliott, and the commentators he follows, have overlooked the most important elements for deciding the true meaning. It is not a question of ὑπέρ only, but of ὑπέρ with a verb of entreating, which yields regularly the sense "for the sake of" or "by." (Matthiae's Gr. Gram. vol. ii. § 582; Jelf, vol. ii. § 630.)

84 So Hippolytus Romanus, a martyr under Maximin or Decius, and said by Photius to have been a disciple of Irenaeus. It would seem from Jerome that he wrote formally on the Apocalypse, beside the short treatise still extant περὶ τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν

Ἰ. Χ. καὶ περί τοῦ ἀντιχρίστου. In this last (§ 49) he thus speaks of the second beast: τὸ μὲν οὖν θηρίον ἀναβαῖνον ἐκ τῆς γῆς τὴν βασιλείαν τὴν τοῦ ἀντιχρίστου ἐσομένην λέγει.

85 I am not prepared to affirm that "the abomination of desolation," of which our Lord speaks in Matt. 24, referring to Daniel 12:11, is the same as "the image" before us. It is absurd to suppose that our Lord alluded to the defilement of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes. (Dan. 11:31.) This was long past; whereas He is warning of another abomination yet future and final. Hence too it may be observed that the phrase given by the evangelist answers exactly (not to Dan. 11:31, but) to Dan. 12:11 in the LXX. In Dan. 8:13 it is another thing, "the transgression of desolation;" and in Dan. 9:27, though there may be a link of connection it is, I think, "because of the wing, i.e. (the protection) of abominations [them shall be] a desolator;" a very distinct statement, even if it be allowed to refer to the same time. The sense is that antichrist sets up idolatry in the temple, because of which a desolator appears in the person of the great northern enemy of Israel. The effort to apply it to the Romans under Titus, or to the Pope, is utterly vain. The former is probably due to the error of confounding Matt. 24:15, etc., with Luke 21:21. It is the latter only who brings in the Roman siege and captivity, as he alone treats of the times of the Gentiles. Matthew on the other hand, equally inspired of God, leaves out this part of our

Lord’s great prophecy, and dwells at length on the closing crisis, in answer to the question of the end of the age, which Luke accordingly omits.

86 †It is possible that the meaning may be, “that the image of the beast should both speak and act [or practise]; in order that as many,” etc. If so, the statement attributes to the beast’s image the same things which characterise the beast it) verse 5.

87 Literally, “that they should give them,” i.e., that a mark should be given them. Compare Rev. 10:11, “they say to me,” i.e., it is said. (See Luke 6:38; Luke 12:20; Luke 16:9, for a similar usage, the first and especially the last of which am often misunderstood.)

88 It is not surprising that those who are greatly occupied with present things feel the deepest amazement and abhorrence, not at the antichrist as futurists depict it, but at Popery as it has been and is, with its recognition of so much revealed truth, and withal its destruction of the efficacy of redemption and of all immediate relationship with God, not to speak of its hideous idolatries and its systematic persecution of those who do not bow to it, let them be saints or not. But the more such minds bring out its subtle hypocrisy, the more they seem to prove that Romanism corresponds with the mystery of iniquity. Of course, its working in apostolic days was but a germ of what afterwards went on, till it issued in that frightful corruption which Protestants have done faithful service in exposing with unquestionable vigour and earnestness. Hence, in Rev. 17 it is the corrupt woman (not the ravening beast) whose name is “Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of the harlots and of the abominations of the earth.” And

observe, it was the sight of the woman which caused John to wonder so exceedingly. Still, “the apostacy,” as I read scripture, implies the public renunciation of Christian truth, not an orthodox maintenance of the cardinal facts, at any rate, of the gospel, such as Romanism holds up; and the session and worship of the man of sin in the temple of God implies a defiance of Jehovah, under the false expectation of Israel, which looks onward to another and more daring form of Satan’s power.

Revelation 14

This chapter is the concluding one of the episode that separates the trumpets from the vials. We heard the events under the last trumpet announced; but the details and the means of their actual accomplishment were not revealed to us. There were songs in heaven celebrating its results; but the immediate effect of the last trumpet on earth was only spoken of in a general way; and this going down to the end of all, including even the final judgment of the dead.89 Then the Holy Ghost, as we have seen, in Revelation 12, 13, turns aside to show us the source, character, and leading instruments of the last outbreak of evil, on which the vials were to be poured out, after which the Lord is to act in personal vengeance. We are come, let us suppose, in some comprehensive history, to an account of a battle which decides the fate of the world at any time. The author stops to describe the previous state of the parties and the causes that led to the crisis. Exactly so with what we have here the earnest of retribution, as it were, is given us under the vials. Thus, Revelation 12 and 13, not to speak of Revelation 14, show us what it was that led to such a dreadful out-pouring of God’s wrath. So that, though they may appear to be an interruption, it was necessary for impressing on us adequately the horribleness of the evil the Lord was dealing with. We saw in Revelation 12 that Satan was the mighty and subtle spring behind the scene, hating and opposing Christ and His people from the very beginning. Then there was the war in heaven between Michael and the dragon, with their respective angels; and finally the conduct of Satan, when cast down unto the earth, was

traced and explained. Again, Revelation 13 shows us that, just as God revealed Himself to man, not only in tables of stone, but in the person of His Son, in order that men might see divine grace so as no tables of stone could display it (but rather the reverse), and that they might hear it in their own familiar tones; so Satan finds a policy suited to his ends, in taking up men on earth and making them the instruments and expression of his will. Accordingly he acts by the two beasts which represent two great systems or their leaders that will be at work during the short season of our adversary's great wrath on earth. The violence of the world and its pride and blasphemy are set forth by the beast that rises out of the sea. The beast from the earth is as much suited to ensnare men who desire a religion which excludes God and panders to man and the world, as the other intimidated them by its power, or enticed them by its appeals to their ambition and love of outward show.

But then the question arises, If Satan is so busy himself and his instruments, what is God doing? Is He inactive — indifferent He could not be — all this time? Revelation 14 seems to be the answer to that question. The perversion of everything God has given to man, and of all Satan can devise, will come to a fearful issue then in a few short months and years. Dreadful as it all is, and though God will have seemingly given up the world, just to see what Satan and men together will make of it, yet none the less God even then and there will be at work. And first, it is not now the heavens, nor the earth, nor the sea: none of these is the ground or scene of what is brought before us in the early verses of this chapter. There is a new spot introduced-one not mentioned before, yet a most important one and full of significance.

“And I looked, and, lo! the Lamb stood on the mount Sion.” Now let us just pause for a moment and enquire what are the ideas that the Holy Ghost conveys by or connects with the hill of Zion. The Apocalypse everywhere supposes an acquaintance with the other parts of the word of God, from Genesis even to the close of the New Testament. It would be difficult to find any part of scripture that is not required in order to come to a full understanding of this wonderful prophecy.

Let us take the present allusion to Zion as an instance. If I do not know what God teaches elsewhere by mount Zion, how shall I understand what is meant by this opening vision of Rev. 14? The first occasion where Zion comes into view is in the history of David, when he became king over all Israel. (2 Sam. 5) And what was the state of the people then? Israel had previously chosen a king after their own heart; one that reflected them, that could go at their head and fight their battles. “We will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations.” Saul was their choice, David the elect of God. Not that David did not need the mercy and forgiveness of God; for indeed after God’s favour to him he fell grievously. Beyond question, however, David entered into and responded to the thoughts of God in a most remarkable way. He sinned, it is true, but who felt and owned his sin more thoroughly? Who more than he vindicated God against himself? Neither, on the other hand, did God make light of his sin because he delighted in David. The deed was secret, but it was published upon the housetop. He had dealt treacherously with his faithful servant, and had defiled his servant’s house. And what a tale of sorrow did his own house show for many a long year afterwards! (2 Sam. 12.) It was then under

David, when Israel had been in confusion, when the priests had corrupted them and the king had wrought no deliverance, when all were in rebellion against God and constantly exposed to the razzias and tyranny of their Philistine neighbours. All was in ruin; the sanctuary, in what a state was it! The very tabernacle and the ark of God were severed. Thus, in all respects, sacred and political, great and small, public and private, the picture was most dismal. And it was then that God began to work energetically by His Spirit in the people. Justly were they suffering under the law which they had undertaken at Sinai. True, there was mercy and faithfulness too, in the midst of all, on God's part; but still evil was fast increasing, and in Israel there was no hope and no resource. And what then? God calls David out step by step, and Zion acquires a most marked place in his history. It was there David's city was built, the seat of his royalty. It may not be thought much of now in the world, but in one sense all the blessing of this world as such is suspended over that little spot; and never will there be rest or glory for the earth until the city, which was a stay in the downward progress of Israel, and was meant to be a resting-place for faith, shall by and by be taken up by God. In the Psalms and the Prophets it constantly reappears, the Spirit of Christ ever leading on the hearts, of the saints to anticipate the full result which the early type promised as it were in the germ.

In Hebrews 12 the Holy Ghost refers to it, though perhaps in a different way. Still the great thought is the intervention of God's race. The passage contrasts the position of Israel with that of the Christian; and, after having described the vision of Sinai, with its blackness, and darkness, and tempest — all most terrible even to

the mediator, it proceeds: — “But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,” etc. Now there we see just the same great and precious principle. Israel had come to Sinai, and that was the mountain that characterised their whole course from beginning to end. And what was the result of it? As it began with darkness and distance, so it ended with misery and death. As they were and Sinai was, they could not but shrink back from God; for there God was in His majesty of judgment — not in the love that comes down and puts itself under the burden, in order to take it away. That could not be at Sinai; for there it was a just God in the presence of sinners only; and therefore He could but overawe and fill all with terror and the forebodings of judgment. Bounds must be set round the mountain. If even an unconscious beast touched it, death was the penalty; and this was Sinai. “But ye are come,” says the Spirit, “unto mount Sion,” the mount” of God’s intervention in grace, as Sinai was of man’s responsibility; and with Sinai, what could be the effect for the sinner? Only to press his conscience with the terror of death. The Israelite was as good as a dead man, when he stood there, being already a sinner; and death would be as surely executed, after he left the burning mount. The Apostle shows the Christian ground of grace, the exact opposite of man trembling before a God who righteously demanded what the flesh could not do. Now, it is God who has come down — it is God who has accomplished His work of love. When Zion first appeared by name, it was when Israel-people, priests, king — had utterly failed. Then God entered unsought, established the king of his own choice in Zion, and raised him and his son to such a pitch of glory as never was or will be in Israel again, till the true David comes

and plants His royal glory on Zion, never more to be moved.

The principle involved in Zion, then, is God's activity for His people in the way of grace, when all was lost under the law. This gives the mountain of Zion its true force in Rev. 14. It is the gracious interference of God on behalf of those who sit with the holy sufferer — the Lamb. God acts for His Son, securing His glory on earth and gathering round Him in heart a remnant, not merely sealed as the servants of God (like a similar band out of the twelve tribes of Israel in Revelation 7), but brought into association with the Lamb in Zion, that is, with God's royal purposes in grace. These seem to me sufferers of Judah, who pass through the unequalled tribulation, which it is not said that the other remnant do. This is what is meant by their standing with the Lamb on the mount Zion. There St. John saw them. Of course, I do not mean that in fact they will be on Zion, or that they will necessarily understand what this symbol sets forth. The question is, what God was conveying to John's mind or to any who desire to understand the sayings of this book. It was, I believe, God's special interference on behalf of His people in the last days. He will associate with the Lord Jesus Christ, as the suffering Messiah, a full, numbered, godly remnant, who will be brought into fellowship with Him. There stand in the vision the hundred and forty-four thousand, having the Lamb's name and His Father's name written on their foreheads. It is not said that they know God as their Father. The Revelation never contemplates us in the position of children, much less does it so present the Jewish remnant. Thus, even when speaking of the church, we are said to be made kings and priests unto

God and His Father, rather than ours. And this is the more remarkable in John, because no other evangelist takes so much pains to show the relationship of children in which God has put us before Himself now. Thus, in John 20, directly the Lord is risen from the dead, the message to His disciples is, “Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.” Nothing of this appears here, because the Revelation is not so much intended to open our nearness of relationship to God as our Father, but rather His judgment and glory, though with mercy for a remnant. I speak of the prophetic and earthly portion — not, of course, of that which gives us a glimpse of things above. Thus, the name of the Lamb and the name of His Father (for so it ought to be read) written on their foreheads is in contrast with the name of the beast in Revelation 13. The beast’s name or mark was put on the right hand or forehead of his followers. The Lamb’s name and His Fathers these hundred and forty-four thousand have on their foreheads — not in their hearts only, if we may so speak; they were evidently and openly the Lamb’s.

“And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of loud thunder:90 and the voice which I heard [was] as it were of harpers, harping with their harps. And they sing [as it were] a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders; and none could learn that song but the hundred forty [and] four thousand that were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are they that follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, first-fruits to God and to the

Lamb" (ver. 2-4). Thus they are characterized, besides learning the new song of heaven, negatively by their holy separateness from all the various kinds of idolatry which will then prevail on earth, and positively by their faithful allegiance to the Lamb, whatever the fiery trial. Instead of becoming the slaves of the beast, they were redeemed for the earth's first-fruits to God and the Lamb. They are a very peculiar class, a sort of link between heaven and the earth from which they were redeemed. They were untainted by the corrupt influences of that evil day, and especially are they free from the idolatries that will be one of its most grievous marks. I do not mean idolatry in a. vague or virtual sense (as we are warned against covetousness, which is such morally), but positive, literal idolatry. Many may think it absurd to talk about the worship of idols reappearing in lands neither popish nor pagan; but this would only show how little man's heart is known and the power of Satan. The word of God is perfectly explicit that the last days will be characterized by the grossest spirit of idolatry, and this in the most enlightened parts of Christendom, yea, in Jerusalem itself, which will then put forth once more the highest pretensions. It is an apostacy that the heart of man is quite capable of, and to which Christendom will be given up by God, as a just retribution for refusing the love of the truth that they might be saved. "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." if He will give them up to their own natural lusts; and the heart prefers any and every thing to God.

The saints, associated to the prophet's eye with the Iamb on Zion, are said not to be defiled with women; i.e., they were preserved from the corruptions that

surrounded them. They walked in virgin purity. Neither do they wonder after the beast. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersover he goeth. “They were redeemed from among men, first-fruits to God and to the Lamb.” They were first-fruits: the harvest would follow in due course. (See verses 14, 16.) “And in their mouth was found no guile [or rather no lie, ψεῦδος], for they are without fault.” It is added in our common Bible, “before the throne of God” (verse 5);91 but these last words ought not to be there. The best authorities leave them out: and a slight consideration will show how wrongly inserted they seem to be. “They are without fault,” or blameless, it is true; but “blameless” here refers, I think, to their practical conduct. If compared with men from whom they were redeemed, such they were. In their presence they were without fault. But suppose God puts them before His throne to search into what they have been here, measured by His holiness — this is another thing. There I need forgiveness; there I need to stand, not in my own blamelessness, but made the righteousness of God in Christ. If I stand as an individual, viewed not in Christ but according to my actual ways, shall I say that I am blameless here? It may make this a little clearer, if we remember 1 John 1, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us;” we do not know the truth about ourselves, and we have no fellowship with Christ in discerning the evil that is there. But “if we say that we have not sinned,” we make God a liar, which is far worse than deceiving ourselves. We make Him a liar, and His word is not in us; for He has declared the contrary over and over. But in 1 John 3 what a change! “He that committeth sin is of the devil;” and “whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, and he cannot sin, because

he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil." How can we reconcile these two things? How account for the immense difference of the language in Revelation 1 and Revelation 3? Most simply. In chapter 1 the Holy Ghost is leading the Christian to view himself in the light of God's presence: he is before the Father and the Son. He stands before God, if I may so say — not exactly before the throne — but before the Father and the Son. And what will a man say when he stands there? Will he say, I have no sin; I have not sinned? None there will say it. Whoever says so here proves that the truth is not in him — that the word has never searched him. But when God compares His child with those who do not know Himself after a divine sort, He says, "he doth not commit sin," and "he cannot sin."

See Numbers. There we perceive Israel in a state of great disorder and failure, every form of unbelief and unfaithfulness in their journeying. But the moment an enemy comes forward, and comes to curse the people of God — that same Israel which had tempted and provoked Him ten times and more, what does He say then? Why, that He has not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither has He seen perverseness in Israel! "Jehovah his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them." In the very persons with whom He had found fault so often, when speaking to themselves, He can see none now. Let Satan and the world take in hand to damage His people, and all His heart is in movement on their behalf.

As this verse stands now in the common text, with the words "before the throne of God" added to it, we could only understand it as being true in Christ; but here the

sense requires, if I mistake not, that it be practical conduct. God looks at them as undefiled and truthful, because they have been kept by grace from all the idols of Babylon and the delusive power of the beast; and thus they are blameless. I only notice this to show that many of these little changes add to the great sum of Christian truth. Every blot or error which creeps into the word of God will be found to impair its accuracy and to detract from its perfect beauty.

The second thing that we note in the chapter is an angel flying in the midst of heaven, having everlasting glad tidings to preach unto them that dwell [or, literally, that sit] on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. I am aware that some have applied this to the great spread of evangelical missions to the heathen in these last days. But is it the way to understand prophecy — ever striving to find some present accomplishment of it? We must look at the context as a whole. If no such thing be admitted as a new group of suffering Jews, connected with Christ in the hope of the kingdom in Israel, it is in vain to look for the angel with the everlasting gospel in the missionary efforts of the last half century. Nor would the message itself in any way suit the present purposes of God. The ground on which the angel appeals to them is that the hour of God’s judgment is come. Is this the case now? Evidently not. Is not the day of grace in full contrast with the hour of judgment? It is still true that “now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” As yet the door is open. It is forcing scripture to say “the hour of his judgment is come.” But when the time for the accomplishment of this arrives, it will be the sure warning of the Lord for men. For then the closing

judgments are about to be executed, and the outpouring of God's wrath is just at hand. Now you cannot reconcile all this with the day of blessing and grace, as if they could both run on together. And yet there are those who say we are in the midst of the vials! But this (where it is understood not partially, but in full and finally) indicates the almost total eclipse which befalls the truth in the minds of men, when they can suppose that the day of God's grace and the hour of His judgment are the same thing, or can be at the same time.

And when we proceed a little closely to examine the message itself, we find that it has altogether another sound from the glad tidings which God is proclaiming now. Does it call souls everywhere to repent., because God has raised up a man from the dead by whom He will judge the world in righteousness? (Acts 17:31.) Thus Paul preached in his day; and thus it is right to preach now a Christ dead, risen, and coming again to judge the world. It speaks of the hour of divine judgment, but there is not a word about a risen man — nothing about a Saviour or His redemption. "Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters" (verse 7). Now, I ask, is this the kind of message that would suit to go about the country with? Telling persons to worship God that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and fountains of waters? Everlastingly true as it is, is it the special message now? God forbid that the creation-glory of God should be denied! It is exceedingly important; but its proper application is when God has finished the work, now in hand, of saving and calling out the church (Christ's body) for heavenly glory. When Satan has accomplished

his great purpose of making men not only reject the true God when He came as man, but worship a man as God on earth, what will not be the urgent need and value of that message then? It will be the contradiction given to everything the beast and the dragon conspire to bring in. When all this iniquitous false worship is going on, it will require positive faith in the one living and true God not to give way and fall under the power of the delusion. For Satan will have made it to be at the peril of a man's life and subsistence not to yield.

And so here is this message sent: "Fear God, and give glory to him." All the world had sunk in idolatry, worshipping the beast and falling down before him. Satan could not prevail on the Son of God to fall down and worship him; but he will have the beast as his tool and all the world is drawn after him. "Worship him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." These are the claims of God to supreme worship at the time when "the earth" will be completely carried away by the anti-christian delusion.

But persons may ask, "Why is it called everlasting glad tidings or gospel?" Perhaps because it is always true. It has been so from the beginning, and up to the close it must be unchanged. "Fear God, and give glory to him." The peculiar ground on which it is put here ("for the hour of his judgment is come") could not always apply. But still the word, "Fear God.... worship him that made heaven and earth" (that is, the glory of God proved or witnessed in creation), is of course always a standing, fundamental truth. But it will be emphatically regarded and brought out when Satan has gained over the world to deny the true God, and to worship a creature instead of the Creator.

The seventh verse is pretty plain; but I add a few words more with regard to the term “gospel.” It is used in scripture with much more latitude than men are now accustomed to. The glad tidings to Israel in the wilderness held out that they should inherit the land of promise. It was glad tidings to Abraham that in him should all nations be blessed. (Gal. 3:8.) The glad tidings in the time of John the Baptist, and preached by him, meant in substance that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. So also the Lord Himself preached and His disciples during His ministry on earth. But the people would not have Him; and the consequence was that, though the kingdom was set up, it was so in a way that differed emphatically from what the people expected who looked for it. It was set up in the person of the rejected King in heaven, till He comes again in power, when it will be established manifestly over the earth. Thus we have different messages, different glad tidings, according to the various subjects or hopes that God was presenting at different times. But the everlasting gospel necessarily was before Abraham, or any other of these special glad tidings. It has always been, and must be, that God is the only worthy object of worship. “There is none good but one — God.” And when the blessed day does dawn — when the King comes in His glory — when the kingdom prepared before the foundation of the world will be enjoyed — when God will have His blessed ones around Him from the north and south, from the east and from the west (not only the risen ones, but also those in their natural bodies who will be spared and be blessed on the earth, at the same time that the risen saints will enjoy heavenly glory under the headship of the only One who can concentrate all in blessing), what will be the due and needed message previously? Why

this: “Fear God, and give glory to him.” Evidently then it is called with perfect reason, “the everlasting gospel.” You will observe that it is sent “to them that dwell on the earth,” as well as “to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people;” thus keeping up the distinction that we have noticed before. They will both hear the testimony; but if those “who dwell on the earth” will not receive it, through the mercy of God the nations, kindreds, tongues, and people will in part receive it. (Compare Psalm 96 and Matt. 24:14 with the results in Matt. 25:31-46.)

After this comes another message — the fall of Babylon. I do not mean to dwell on it just now, as we shall find a great deal about that city in other chapters of this book: for Babylon was so important as to require a special notice to itself. But as it was evidently the active source of corruption, intoxicating men and drawing them away from the living God, so now He sends this, the death-knell of Babylon. The object here, probably, was to give its place in the order of God’s dealings at the close of the dispensation, its relation to what went before and to what follows after (verse 8).

In the next place, we have the solemn warning to those who worshipped the beast and received his mark, the sure and everlasting torment of all who were thus carried away by him. There are many who apply these prophecies about Babylon and the beast in an exclusive way to Rome; but while the seven-hilled city has many of the principles of Babylon and the beast, yet it is impossible to find their complete and united fulfilment in Popery as it now is or has been. Besides, the beast and Babylon are not the same thing; for the beast destroys Babylon. And will Rome destroy itself? Certainly, the

elements of Babylon are to be found there; but if the matter be looked at more closely, all cannot be found in Rome. For my own part, I believe that Rome, more than any other system, already is in a very true moral sense Babylon, and that it will yet contain and manifest all the elements of that vile corruptress. But for this very reason it cannot be the beast; for the beast it is which destroys Babylon, and after that the beast, falling into its own worst and open rebellion against God, perishes. The worst state of the beast is after Babylon has been destroyed; for then it exalts itself to heaven, only to be cast down to hell; but we shall have the fall of both fully by and by. “Here is the patience of the saints” (verses 9-12).

The fifth division is the word touching the saints that die in the Lord. “And I heard a voice from heaven saying, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow with them” (verse 13). It does not mean those who die throughout the present dispensation. When Christian people die now, it is blessed; but here the Spirit speaks of a future class, all of whom will die. You must take these things connected together as a whole — not a little bit that suits present circumstances, leaving out the rest which does not. What is the real meaning of the verse? What is God’s mind? It is the saints who die in that day. Many will be killed: the blood of the saints will flow. The everlasting glad tidings had been announced; the hour of judgment was come, as the angel proclaimed; so that it might seem a dreadful thing for persons to be killed just when God is going to introduce His kingdom. But, on the contrary, the voice says, “Blessed are the dead

which die in the Lord from henceforth." Do not be alarmed by it. They will only get a better kind of glory. What will be the portion of those that die in the Lord then? They will reign with Christ and His heavenly saints. Revelation 20 proves that those who die under the persecutions of the beast will be raised again to join the heavenly saints that will have been taken away before. "Blessed are the dead," etc., cannot in strictness apply to the church, because all belonging to the church will not die. Some will be alive and remaining at the coming of the Lord, who are to be changed without passing through death; whereas these are persons who all die, as a class. It refers exclusively to those who die in the Lord at that time; and shows that, instead of losing their place in the kingdom of Christ, they will gain an advanced position of blessing. Their company also is complete, and their full blessedness just coming without further waiting — blessed from henceforth (verse 13).

The spirit of it may be applied now; but the intention of the Holy Ghost seems to have been the comfort of persons who will die before the beast is judged and the heavenly glory appears. It might be thought that they had lost something; but it is not so. The voice from heaven says, "Write, Blessed henceforth the dead that die in the Lord: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." The Holy Ghost adds His "Yea" of sweet sympathy, true to the saints in joy and in sorrow, groaning with their infirmities, and rejoicing with their speedy triumph and reward.

Then follow the two closing scenes of this chapter. The first is the vision of one like the Son of man92 sitting on a white cloud, "having on his head a golden crown, and

in his hand a sharp sickle." It is a vision grounded upon the idea of a harvest: that is, it is a separating judgment (verses 14-16). There is that which must be cast away, and that which will be gathered in. Perhaps with this we may compare what is said in the Gospels — "one shall be taken and the other left; so shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." (Luke 17.) In the next judgment, we have a different character of dealing. It is the vintage of the earth, not its harvest. There is no good, and therefore no separation here. In the harvest there was; but when you come to the vintage, a more serious state is found. It is not the genuine vine, but the "vine of the earth." The Lord Jesus is the only true vine: and if we are fruit-bearing branches, it must be by abiding in Him. But here it is "the vine of the earth." And what does the Lord do with this vine of the earth and its clusters? There is nothing but unmixed judgment — no mercy whatever to mitigate it. The fruit is gathered and cast into the great winepress of the wrath of God. Then follows the image of unsparing judgment. "The winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs."93 It is an awful figure of carnage — blood flowing in a deep stream for about 200 miles. This is not to be taken in a mere literal way; but the great idea which God presents is that of a judgment where there is nothing but wrath to the very uttermost upon the apostates. Who ever heard of such a thing in any history of human events? It is entirely beyond all that man could execute. When the reality comes, it will be still more terrible than the figure, which has passed as a prophetic picture before the eye of the prophet (verses 17-20). The bloodshed might be of religious apostates from all parts

of Christendom; but it appears to be especially Jewish, as the scene is the land. The winepress was trodden without the city — i.e., I suppose, Jerusalem. (Compare Joel 3.)

In Isa. 63 we have the Lord treading the winepress, but it appears to be a more distant scene. There He is coming from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah. Here it is “without the city,” and vengeance on those who had been religiously guilty in connection with it. They had heard of mercy, but it had been despised; and now the judgment is come, and for them there is nothing else. The mercy had been only abused; and what is there that God so feels and judges?

In this chapter, then, we have the full outline of the dealings of God in the latter-day crisis. There are seven divisions of it. First, there is the full remnant of godly Jews associated with the Lamb on mount Sion, in sympathy with His sufferings and waiting for the kingdom. Secondly, a testimony to the Gentile nations scattered all over the world as well as to those seated on the prophetic earth. Thirdly, the fall of Babylon. Fourthly, the fearful doom, both in this world and in the next, of such as should worship the beast and his image, or receive the mark of his name. Fifthly, the blessedness from that time of those that die in the Lord. Sixthly, the discriminating process of the harvest. And seventhly, the awful infliction of vengeance on religious apostacy; the first, at least, of these two last acts of judgment being executed by the Son of man, which necessarily supposes the very close of the age: the wrath, not of God only, but of the Lamb.

Thus the sevenfold series appears in this sketch of the final ways of God, whether of mercy or of judgment. It is thoroughly in accordance with the Revelation. We have had seven seals, seven trumpets, as there are also seven vials. Here too, though not formally numbered, we have the seven dealings of God that make up a complete account; but the details, as they are given afterwards, may come before us another time. Although it is not about us, yet what a mercy it is to feel that we do not always require to think about ourselves when reading the Bible! Many suppose it a very spiritual thing to be always asking, What is there for me? But we ought to desire all the blessing that God can give us. and not merely a little Zoar. “Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it,” saith Jehovah. If I desire to have my cup running over, and thus to be strengthened in serving Him, I shall want to know all that God can tell me about Christ. And is it not something, and good for me, to know that Christ is to have His complete remnant, not merely when glory comes, but before it comes, associated in their measure with Him in suffering — like David when he came to mount Zion? Then who were they that shared his honours? Those who had been the companions of his rejection. So here with these 144,000. They will not have the same heavenly glory that is reserved for the church of the first-born; for either we have the very best blessings now, or none. All Christians stand now in the most glorious privileges which it is possible for children of God to enjoy. Whatever its pretensions, it is a time when Christ is thoroughly rejected by the world. God desires that we should find treasure enough in Christ to despise the world — to put its bribes under our feet. The hard thing is to take the place of the rejection of Christ, and to be happy in keeping it.

And now that we have viewed this chapter as the closing scene of the earth, the end of the age, more particularly God's working therein with reference to the evil of that day, it may be well to glance briefly at the historical application. None could learn the new song, it is allowed, but the 144,000 — none but those converted and illuminated by the Spirit of God, a company elected out of the Protestant nations (as before out of the Christianized nations under Constantine); and yet with singular inconsistency the voice of the waters and great thunders implied "the uniting of both nations and princes in the song." (Horae Apocalypticae, vol. iii. pp. 288, 289.) Were the Protestant nations ever the election of grace? Mr. Jenour, not unreasonably dissatisfied with the mere repetition of a similar class in Rev. 7 and 14, tries to vary the tune, and suggests that those in the former chapter are a Jewish elect remnant, these in our chapter a Gentile one.94 Now, I would press one question upon those inclined to either of the views mentioned: How could a Christian election (either under Constantine or at the Reformation, whether an election out of Jews or Gentiles) be styled firstfruits to God and to the Lamb? If the church, strictly so called, will he then completed, nothing is more intelligible; but on the scheme which regards the testimony and the body formed thereby as the same continuously, a reasonable explanation does not appear. If it be a special gathering out of Judah, associated with a suffering Messiah, and anticipating the kingdom, what clearer? Hence, there is no room for interpolating the declension of the eighteenth century into the prophecy — no place for such additions to the words of this book as that "the voice of the 144,000 waxed fainter and feebler, and the tokens of their presence more obscure in all the

continental Protestant countries and churches," while the light of England burned brighter!

Of the second division — the angel with everlasting glad tidings — enough has been said already to show why one cannot allow anything save a general reference either to the era of the Reformers, or to that of recent missionary societies. And I take this opportunity of stating my conviction that the Reformation (blessed as it was in breaking the dominion of Popery, in spreading the Bible and Bible-reading far and wide, and in asserting strongly, if not clearly, justification by faith) did not bring out the light of God even as to regeneration, and maintained substantially the same clerical system as before. That is, reformed doctrine and polity fail utterly, as a confession of the truth of the Holy Ghost's operations, whether in quickening souls or yet more in His sovereign action in the Christian assembly. Justification, as then understood, did not necessarily suppose perception of God's mind as to the operations of the Spirit. It is to me clear and certain that the reformed national bodies have never been free from confusion and even error on these subjects, which are of capital moment both to individuals and to the church.

One might have expected that, if the proclamation of Babylon's fall (verse 8) had been fulfilled, those who so think would have tried to make out some show of facts to account for its appearance here, after the epoch of evangelic missions. It may he alleged that it is something yet future. But such does not appear to be Mr. E.'s opinion, because he joins on the message of this angel, with hardly a shred of comment, to that of the angel evangelist; and he distinctly dwells on the third flying angel as yet unfulfilled. May we not then press the

query: What has taken place at all adequately answering to the second angel's mission?

As to the third flying angel, Mr. E. thinks its prefiguration requires, among other things, a sufficiently general agreement among Christ's faithful Protestant servants, as to what is meant both by the beast and the beast's image, to give weight to the judgment denounced against their worshippers. That is, if I understand him, there ought to be a general acquiescence in the system of the Horae Apocalypticae, an abandonment of all reference to the secular Roman empire, and an adoption of the discovery that the beast's image means the general councils of Papal Christendom, especially of Trent. I am assured that the impression on the mind of most intelligent Christians is growingly opposed to such theories, and the absoluteness of the warning as to any individual who worships the beast, etc., cannot (save by a violence which convinces no dispassionate person) be said to be fulfilled in Popery, abominable as the system is. In the crisis of antichrist it will be literally true. (Compare 2 Thess. 2:10-12.)

The harvest and the vintage call for no especial remark, as there is no question of their futurity, and Christ is admitted to be viewed therein as the initiator and completer of these final judgments. Why they should not indicate the time of His great predicted second advent does not clearly appear (H. A., vol. iv. p. 11): in reality there is no ground to doubt it, as far as I see. The fact of a distinct subsequent vision of the conflict with the beast does not hinder this. They may all well be various presentations of judgment when He comes in the clouds of heaven. The error is the reducing as much as possible to events in providence.

89 Hence it is going too far, and indeed not only without proof but inaccurate, to say that the vials are the evolution of the seventh trumpet. It is of no weight to allege that the trumpets are the development of the last seal. This I doubt not, because there is absolutely nothing under that seal, save a half-hour's silence in heaven, and then the trumpets are given to the seven angels, etc. But there is nothing analogous at the close of Rev. 11. For on the face of the matter, Revelation 12, 13, 14 intervene, the last of which contains the vision of a scene of judgment by the Son of man, which is unquestionably subsequent to the vials. Again, what more fanciful than the opistho-graphic theory (Horae Apocalypticae, vol. i. p. 99; iii. p. 4), that is, the notion that the writing without and within answers to the twofold series of visions, one of which, relating to matter chiefly secular, ends in Revelation 11, and the other of which, chiefly ecclesiastical, begins after that? Certainly, neither Ezekiel 3:9, 10, nor Zechariah 5:1-3 lends the slightest countenance to it, but rather the contrary.

90 "A voice," says Mr. Elliott (H. A., vol. iii. p. 312), "as of many waters, and of a great thunder, — that is of people and princes, — uniting to swell it. There can be no question, I conceive, as to some happy crisis in the earthly fortunes of Christ's saints and people being so prefigured; — some crisis during the Papal beast's reign, or at least before his destruction." And this he goes on to expound of the Reformation. Let the reader turn to Rev. 1, and ask himself the consistency of such an interpretation of the "voice as the sound of many waters." What room is there for dragging in "people" here? and what more for "princes" in Revelation 6:1, where the living creature, as with voice of thunder,

summons the rider on the white horse? No reason, indeed, is more decisive against so earthly a view, than that which is furnished by the very text which Mr. E. would have us compare (i.e. Rev. 19:6); for surely if ever there can he conceived a moment when princes and people are not in unison with heaven's new anthem of praise, it is in the crisis which follows the destruction of Babylon and precedes their own still more awful fate in the war with the Lamb.

91 It is curious that Mr. Elliott (H. A., iii. part iv. chapter x.), though he rightly rejects or doubts the clause ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου τοῦ Θεοῦ, nevertheless repeatedly, both in Greek and English, inserts another clause which has absolutely no warrant, as far as I know. He says in the text of p. 311 (and also in p. 323), "they were without fault before God," and then in the foot-note gives αμωμοι ενωπιον του Θεου. He adds, "Compare my observation on the words ενωπιον του θηριου, said in Apoc. xiii. of the lambskin-covered beast's responsibility to the beast antichrist as his supervisor, p. 206-208 supra. The words within brackets are implied if not expressed." Now, while I do not question that politically the second beast subserves the first, I demur to the proof drawn from this phrase. Thus, Rev. 1:4 — the first occurrence of ἐνώπιον in the book — is adverse. Subordination is not the idea. As little does the next occurrence, Rev. 4:14, bear him out: indeed it refutes the inference. Balaam taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel — certainly not under their cognizance and judgment. Compare also Rev. 3:8, 9; Rev. 4:6; Rev. 12:4, 10. Nay, in Revelation 13, the verse which follows the one on which Mr. E. dwells is in my judgment a sufficient answer. For while verse 12, if

justly so interpreted, would suit the papal supremacy, how square it with verse 13? For there we have the signs or miracles wrought ἐνώπιον τῶν ἀνθρώπων, before men. If Mr. E.'s theory of what is "presignified by this little word" in verse 12 be applied to verse 13, it would teach the Protestant principle of private judgment, quite as much as the other justifies "Coram Petro." The truth is that the view has no foundation.

92 Mr. Jenour revives a doubt as to "the Son of man," and suggests an application, symbolically, to the Jews then to be converted, and the great evangelists of that day! just as Vitringa long ago applied it to those princes, etc., whom God employed at the Reformation in executing his dealings in providence' But there is no force in the objection that St. John would hardly have said of Christ "one like to the Son of man." For it is exactly what he does say in Revelation 1, where beyond controversy our Lord alone can be meant. Likeness to a character, rather than to a person, is meant; and hence the phrase is anarthrous, as in Dan. 7:13.

93 Jerome remarked the coincidence of this with the length of Palestine, and Fuller, Faber, etc., apply it literally to that land, as the great future Aceldama. Mede, on the other hand (as we are told in the Horae Apoc.), suggests the fact of a similar length in the States of the Church from Rome to Verona.

94 Dr. M'Causland (Latter Days of Jerusalem and Rome, pp. 154-160, 398-400), falls into a singular cycle of errors: first, that the same company are intended in Rev. 7, 14; secondly, that they are the faithful Jews before Christ's first advent; thirdly, that the second company in chapter 7 (verses 9-14) are in no way Gentile, but a yet

future class of the redeemed of Israel to be taken out of the nations, etc., whither they are now dispersed; fourthly, that these in Revelation 14 have the name of the Father on their foreheads — not the name of Christ, whereas the true text (represented by the uncials, A B C, upwards of forty cursives, nearly all the ancient versions with the Greek and Latin fathers) expressly says “his [the Lamb’s] name and his Father’s name.” Besides, the insertion of ὡς, “as it were,” before “the new song,” is by no means certain. It is omitted by the Vatican and Porphyrian uncials, with nearly forty cursives, most versions, Origen, Methodius, Arethas, etc.

Revelation 15

We are now come to a new division of the book. The last three chapters (12, 13, 14.) formed a most important portion to themselves; they gave the whole history of the closing dealings of God, and of the last plans of Satan, as far as the present dispensation is concerned. And not only that, but before either Satan's ways or God's dealings were brought out, the hidden source of both was entered into. We saw in Revelation 12 the victorious man child born, and the dragon and his angels cast down from heaven. Thus we have two great parties in the scene with their chiefs opposed face to face. Whatever might have been the instruments of Satan's power here below, seen in Revelation 13, and whatever the ways of God in His grace or in His judgments in Revelation 14, all flowed down from that man child, the object of Satan's fear and hatred. Then we come to a new subject. There was a great wonder or sign spoken of in Revelation 12:1. Here it is said, "And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God." We are resuming once more the course of historical events. Under the last trumpet you may remember the word was, "The nations were wroth, and thy wrath is come." Now I think it must naturally strike any one that here God's wrath is come, and the nations not merely angry but blaspheming to the last degree. So far each fresh stroke of God, instead of humbling man, only drew out this intensity of enmity against the Lord. The seventh trumpet brought us up to the close in a general way; and here we have some of the details, but not all. There were two parties described under the vials

that we have more particularly afterwards. Revelation 17 refers to Babylon and the beast in their mutual relations. In Revelation 18 we have the destruction of Babylon, and in Revelation 19 the judgment of the beast.

There is another remark also that I must make. Revelation 14 gives us these events all together. We had there what may be called the religious actings of God — His dealing with man on the earth, as accountable for the use or abuse of revealed light, and responsible to own and worship God alone. These vials take up rather the outward civil history or secular condition of man, though the same thing may, in certain cases, have both a religious bearing and a secular one. For instance, look at Babylon: she is evidently the great corrupt and corrupting power in religion; but this does not hinder Babylon from meddling largely in the things of the world. And, in fact, this is one of the evils which form Babylon — the bringing in the spirit of the world even into spiritual questions, and thus producing confusion, hateful to God and most seductive to men. Hence we get Babylon in Revelation 14 as well as in Revelation 16. Chapter 14 gives us a summary of God's dealings at the end of the age in respect of religious matters, whether bright or dark, grace, testimony, and judgment. It thus helps us a good deal as to putting the closing events in the order in which they come to pass. For instance, the fall of Babylon is the third link brought before us in the chain of chapter 14. First, we see the complete remnant of godly suffering Jews — a holy remnant, associated by grace with the Lamb on mount Zion. Then follows the testimony of everlasting glad tidings to the earth and all nations. And thirdly, there is the fall of Babylon. On the other hand, in the vials the fall of Babylon is the last of

the seven. From this we gather that the judgments set forth by the preceding six vials must be before the fall of Babylon. That is, the first six vials may be successively accomplished while the Jewish remnant is being formed, and the everlasting gospel is going out to the Gentiles. The last vial involves the fall of Babylon, which answers to and is the third link in the chain of events given us in chapter 14. This is of importance in order to hinder confusion. The warning as to the worship of the beast, the pronounced blessedness of those who died in the Lord, the harvest, and the vintage of the earth, are events clearly all subsequent to Babylon's fall.

Having had then the general and orderly view of God's ways both in mercy and judgment, now we learn in Revelation 16 a part of these ways, the details of some of which are connected with Revelation 14:8, and perhaps simultaneous with what precedes that verse. It must not be supposed, therefore, that the vials take place after chapter 14; the earlier ones might be poured out while the remnant there spoken of is being formed, and the testimony going on. Or they might occur rapidly after these, and before the fall of Babylon; but certainly the last vial includes the fall of Babylon; and its fall is as clearly before the very solemn events which follow that announcement in the latter part of chapter 14.

But now let us look a little at the scene introductory to the vials. "I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire." This is a type borrowed, though with changes, from the temple.95 The tabernacle had the laver, the temple its molten sea — a larger vessel, but of a similar nature in which the priests used to wash their feet and hands when they went in to do the service of the Lord. In this case it is a sea of glass, and therefore not used

for purification. It was not a sea of water, but was solid. Its being of glass indicates a state of firm and settled purity. It was not that which was used to cleanse, but the image of purity that nothing can defile. These saints are no longer in the circumstances where they have need of cleansing through the washing of water by the word. That was over. Now it was “a sea of glass mingled with fire;” showing plainly through what circumstances those connected with that sea had passed. They had experienced fiery tribulation, they had glorified God in the fires. This plainly does not refer to the church. “In the world ye shall have tribulation” does apply to us. But this refers to special tribulation — “the tribulation” of which scripture frequently speaks. “I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire. and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image” (clearly, then, they are contemporaries of the beast), “and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.” Thus what is referred to here is not washing in the sea, but standing on it. Their earthly circumstances characterize them; but the scene of conflict is now past. The Spirit of God anticipates all which marks those who had been troubled by the beast, but who are viewed as victorious over him. They were persons who had been cleansed already; they had done with the present scene, and were now out of it all. They were standing on the sea of glass. Not only this, but they had “harps of God.” That is, they are occupied with divine joy and praise, the contrast of all they had passed through.

And what is offered in lieu of the temple-sea? The burning lava of a volcano, or overflow of French revolutionary fury inundating the anti-Christian territory

of continental Europe; and, naturally, the harpers represent the triumphs of living revived Protestantism in insular England under Wilberforce now, as formerly there had been for others under Augustine and Luther! As a sea of lava or even of water would be an incongruous place whereon to stand, one cannot be surprised that “on the sea” has been changed into “by,” which I admit the preposition will bear. On my view, however, its more ordinary meaning holds good. Mr. E. lays stress on ἐκ τοῦ θ. κ. τ. λ. as implying not only conquest over, but separation from, the party conquered. Can it be because his supposed harpers were not in any way within the fiery, scene of tribulation? I should rather infer that they had been in the furnace, but were come victors out of all. Again, the reasoning on the present participle is unsound (H. A., iii. pp. 465-467), for nothing is more common when accompanied by the article than its abstract use. Thus, to take the first which presents itself, in Matt. 2:20, οἱ ζητοῦντες certainly does not imply that they were still in the field. Compare also Rev. 7:14, said of a multitude which is anticipatively viewed as already in the rest of God. It is, I believe, just the same in ch. 15 I would just observe, though it be a slight circumstance, that there is a short clause here which should be left out. It is said in verse 2, “Them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name.” But the clause “and over his mark” has no business here whatever. The same thing occurs in Revelation 13:17: “That no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.” Now the truth is that the little word “or” inserted there before the clause “the name of the beast” ought to disappear. The difference in

the sense is that “the mark” might be either the name of the beast or the number of his name; not some third thing distinct from these two, as the ordinary text might suggest. There were two ways in which the beast marked his followers; one was by his name, and the other by the number of his name: but there would be no sense in saying, “the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.” The number was his mark, though not the only one; there was the name besides — the one, I suppose, being closer and more appropriate than the other. Here, then, were those (Rev. 15) who had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over the number of his name. Even in the English Bible the word “and over the number” is printed in italics, and only adds to the confusion with the words “over his mark.” I refer to it to show that wherever there is even such a little word as “or” introduced by man into the scripture, the sense is impaired. In the language which the Spirit uses, it is but a letter that makes the difference; but you cannot even put a letter into the word of God without so far injuring its beauty and perfectness. Through the mercy of God, His children may get little harm through such blemishes; but it is in part because they do not think enough about it. If they were to work a system out of them, they might fall into some serious mistake in not a few cases. But happily (this is the way God mercifully shields them) they do not really receive the false doctrine; they do not know what it means, and therefore leave it. But evidently God is little honoured where persons merely escape error because they do not understand it. It is the mercy of God thus to preserve His people from evil; but it is His overruling hand rather than the intelligent guidance of the Spirit. The book of Revelation has suffered more

than any other from the carelessness of man; and as we are looking into its contents, and it seems desirable for God's children to have clear thoughts about His word, I thought it better to notice it, however small a matter it may appear. I remember having myself been perplexed to make out the difference between the mark of the beast and its name and its number. But having examined the question more closely, I found that there was really nothing to decide about. A little fox had slipped in and spoiled the vine. In short, the mark was not something different from the name or its number, but was the general term for both — the name expressing probably a more intimate and entire subjection to the beast than the number of his name.

Those who had won the victory over the beast were not his creatures or slaves; far from it — they were the servants of God. Here they were seen standing in conscious victory, outside all the scene of their conflicts, having the harps of God. And they sing: it is intelligent praise. "They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb." There is a double character in their praise, quite different from the song of the elders. It is very blessed, but not the same thing. The strain of the elders was far deeper. These saints are not here spoken of as priests of God, much less the heads of heavenly priesthood; nor have they the emblems of royal dignity. They sing the song of Moses. They were true saints, but with an undoubtedly Jewish character. They sing the song of the Lamb too. If they did not know the Saviour, they would not be saints at all. But withal they sing the song of Moses. They will not stand exactly in the Christian position that we now enjoy. They will be in circumstances of trial, when the

church has passed out of the scene into heaven. But still the Lord will have a company of saints then who will suffer for Him even unto death; for the beast has power to slay — and it may be thus that, by their own blood as well as by the blood of the Lamb,96 they gain the victory over him.

Here they are seen at rest, like Israel of old, on the triumphant side of the Red Sea, to which there seems an allusion; as the plagues of the next chapter clearly refer to those that fell upon the land of Egypt. “They sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God the Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of the nations” (verse 3). Now if we look at Psalm 103:7, we find that the Holy Ghost brings into prominence these two things — the ways of Jehovah and His acts. “He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel.” The distinction is between the deep hidden ways of the Lord which Moses knew, and the public acts which were conspicuous before all Israel. Here these saints take up, not His ways first, but His displayed works. “Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God the Almighty.” And then they rise to celebrate His ways. “Just and true are thy ways, thou King of the nations” — I must say so, for King of saints is a thing unknown in any part of the Bible. But King of nations, given in the margin, is most true. It is a reference to Jeremiah 10: “Thou art great (verse 6), and thy name is great in might. Who would not fear thee, O King of nations?”

Just to show the general truth, I would observe that, while Christ is King, yea King of kings and Lord of lords, and while it is our joy to acknowledge it (for Christians

indeed are the only persons now who rightly know the Lord Jesus to be King), yet it is remarkable how the Holy Ghost avoids calling Him King in relation to the church. I am aware that well-known hymns may speak of Him as "Our Prophet, Priest, and King." Scripture often calls Him King, but never in that relation to us.97 Of course, the object of God's word is not to weaken our subjection to Christ. Whatever weakens that comes not from the Spirit, but from Satan. But is it not plain, that the relation of a king and people is not so close and binding, neither is it so full and all-embracing in its authority, nor does it involve such elements of affection, as the relationship of Bridegroom or of the Head? And this is the way in which scripture views the church. There is the deepest and most constant subjection, but it is that of members to their Head, of the bride to the Bridegroom. Thus is the church subject to Christ. It is true that we are translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, but in what capacity? He has made us kings in it. So we are represented as singing in the first chapter of this very prophecy, "Unto him that loveth us, and hath washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father."

While it is perfectly certain, then, that we are in the kingdom, yet are we there not as subjects, though assuredly subject. We joyfully own Christ as our Lord, whose grace has made us kings with him, and not as a mere people at a distance under Him. This in no way lessens our responsibility to obey Him, any more than it takes from His glory. It puts us in the place of showing obedience on a firmer ground and from higher motives; it is not the weakness of flesh under law, but the heart purified by faith and strengthened by grace. He fills us

with a sense of the glory, of which we are joint-heirs with Himself. He raises us in hope to the throne; but the effect is that, even in heaven, we shall fall down and cast our crowns before Him. He loves that our obedience should take as it were the form of worship. So we see how the Lord preserves these two things intact. On the one hand, He delights that we should look up and know that the Lord Jesus is ever immeasurably above us: but then, on the other hand, Christ has set us now in earnest of the Spirit, as by and by in possession, on thrones, that He may show that it is not merely as servants, nor as a people that we are subject, but as those whom His perfect and divine love has associated with Himself; for we are one with Him. He will put us on thrones around Him — on His own throne; but even then subjection to Christ can never disappear. Never will it be anything else, whether in the kingdom or in the eternal state. Wherever you look, never can the church so far forget what she owes her Lord and Bridegroom as to wish it otherwise. It were to abuse His grace to take from His glory; and the church must and ought to resent that. If the elders at the sight only of His taking the book fall down before the Lamb and worship, much more should the thought of any indignity offered to Him call forth the strongest feelings of indignation and horror. The church may be and is loved of Christ; but in anywise to take equal around with Him were to display that spirit of antichrist, “whereof we have heard that it shall come, and even now already is it in the world.”

“Just and true are thy ways, thou King of nations.” If I apprehend aright, the reason why “nations” are introduced here is that these vials were about to be poured out very particularly upon the Gentiles. Under

the trumpets, and in Revelation 12-14, we had the Jews, or at least the Jewish remnant, in an especial way the object of covenant mercy. The very phrase (Rev. 11), “the ark of the covenant,” connects itself with that nation; for the covenant was made with them. Therefore we saw too that the woman in the next chapter (Rev. 12) represented Israel. Then we had the Remnant of godly Jews. (Rev. 14) But now these saints are celebrating the righteous ways of God with the Gentiles, or nations. He is King of nations — not merely of the Jews. Jewish relationships appear in both, but they are distinct visions, opened each by a very different sign.

“Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments were made manifest.” The word used for “holy” here is an unusual one. It is the same that is used where scripture speaks of the mercies of David, and its Hebrew counterpart is frequently found in the Psalms. For there are two words in both languages to express holiness. There is the common word for “holy,” which, for instance, occurs in Rev. 4 “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.” It always implies separation from evil — absolute separation. The holiness spoken of here implies mercy, which is quite another thought. We are about to hear of the vials, and the first thought would be, “how dreadful!” God’s wrath is going to be fulfilled. But who and what is the God whose wrath is about to be consummated? He whose holiness is full of mercy. “Thou only art holy.” It is the holiness of mercy. “For all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments were made manifest.” They look through the judgments, and they see the end always is that “the Lord is very pitiful and of

tender mercy." So that, though this storm of judgment may be about to fall, they look to the end from the beginning, and they celebrate accordingly the holiness of the One who in judgment remembers mercy. No doubt there must be wrath, and God must complete it; because the first outpouring of it will only make men more hardened. But let it be observed, it is not a question of Christ; there is no such thing as the wrath of the Lamb here, not even in men's minds; it is the wrath of God. In Revelation 14 He who reaps the harvest is the Son of man. But here God acts according to His own part, before Christ comes from heaven to execute wrath. This indicates that the vials end before the final judgments of chapter 14 commence, because the close of the chapter shows us the Son of man coming Himself to execute judgment.

And therefore they can say as they look up, "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord?... for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments were made manifest" (verse 4). Another important truth; for, as we are told in Isaiah 26, as long as God deals in mercy, what does man? He takes advantage of it, and refuses to "learn righteousness." But the time comes when the Lord will lift up His arm in judgment; and what then? "When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." So here, "All nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments were made manifest." Such would be the ultimate result.

The prophet again looks, "And the temple98 of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened" (verse 5). Mark the difference. In Revelation 11:19 (which introduces the scene of Revelation 12-14

before the vials) the temple was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant seen; but no ark appears now. There it was the fit pledge of the security of God's faithfulness — of His unchanging purposes towards His people Israel. But here His enemies are in question rather than His people; and there is nothing but the tabernacle of the testimony, which is inaugurated as it were in judgments on the men of the earth. It is opened for wrath as yet, not for gospel triumphs. It is God's testimony judicially to the condition of man. Man is guilty: what then could result? "The seven angels came out of the temple." And terrible to say, they come out of that in which no ark was now seen. And what would be, what is, the effect? Nothing but wrath — the more awful because it flows from the sanctuary. They "came out of the temple, having the seven plagues." This was all that God could do for man now. "Clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles. And one of the four living creatures" — the great presiding executors of the providential judgments of God — "gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials." The word means bowls or cups, and is taken from the vessels used for pouring out drink-offerings, etc., before the Lord. It is not drink-offerings now, but wrath coming down from God — "seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no one was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled." Thus, neither present worship of God nor intercession was any longer possible. It was vain for any one to attempt entering there: the smoke of the fire of God's righteous anger filled the temple, the smoke proving the fire that was there. Thus there was no

possibility for any one, not even for a priest, to enter. None could draw near now: wrath, the smoke of judgment, filled it. Just as at Sinai, where smoke is represented as going up from the mountain as the smoke of a furnace; and as in Psalm 18, “There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured.” So now there is the image of God’s offended majesty against sin. There was nothing He looked upon here below that called for mercy on their behalf. The time was past for intercession. Accordingly the judgments rolled forth, and the wrath of God is finished (verse 6-8).

95 Simple as this may appear, the force of the sea of glass has been, in my judgment, entirely misunderstood both here and in Rev. 4 by Mr. Elliott an others. Thus, in the Horae Apoc., i. pp. 84, 85, the singular error of Vitringa is adopted, which confounds it with the firmament like the terrible crystal of Ezekiel; and in a note it is objected to the true reference, (1) That John is describing what was in the inner sanctuary, not in the court without; (2) That it is represented as of glass, not brazen; and (3) That there is no allusion to the layer in any of the Apocalyptic visions. The reply is obvious. 1. The Spirit of God distinctly applies the position of souls under the altar in Rev. 6 to the souls of martyrs in heaven. Now, the altar and the laver were equally in the court. Compare also Rev. 8 where both altars are found in the same heavenly scene, in contradistinction to the earth. 2. The vessel is not denied to he made of glass, but the meaning is that the sea, or what answered to it, was of glass, not water. 3. The last is not a reason, but an assumption of the very question. I should be disposed to put the converse, and to ask, whether it would not be

strange in the midst of temple — scenery so marked to have nothing answering to the molten sea. If the “sea” here be the counterpart of the “sea” in Kings and Chronicles, then the layer is alluded to in these visions. Next, it is agreed (H. A., iii. pp. 468, 469) that, were the “sea” in Rev. 15 a “re-mention” of that in Rev. 4, the definite article ought to have been prefixed; nay, that even on its first mention it was entitled to the article because of its notoriety. Here again the answer is manifest. The seven golden lamp-stands of Rev. 1 nobody doubts to be an allusion to the well-known candlestick of the Jewish sanctuary, and yet there is no article on their first occurrence. If the reason of its omission here, as distinguished from the altars and the ark, is due to the striking difference between them (the Jewish one being single and seven-branched, the Apocalyptic consisting of seven separate lamps), the game remark applies to our matter; for water was the point in the Jewish temple — sea, glass is as express in the Apocalyptic, because the purifying of those in relation with it was complete. So again, it is no wonder that in Rev. 15 the article is not prefixed, seeing that another change appears there. It is for the first time a sea “mingled with fire”, — emblematic of the excessively severe trial through which the victors had passed. The analogy of Apocalyptic usage also confirms this; for the “beast” is anarthrous in Rev. 13:1, 17:3, though, as I agree with Mr. E., it is the same power already mentioned in Rev. 11:7.

96 Of course, the Lamb’s blood alone avails for sin with God.

97 Mr. Elliott hesitatingly inclines to “King of ages” in his text) H. A., iii. p. 473) up to the last edition; but in

his note, supported by C and a Paris cursive, Coislin 202, with the Vulgate and other versions, he ventured the opinion that the (undoubtedly false) vulgar reading ἁγίων seems “best of all to suit the context.” To me this reluctance to bow to the best reading ἐθνῶν (supported by the Alex., Porph. and Vat. uncials, forty-five cursives, the AEthiopic, Arabic of the Polyglotts, Coptic, not to speak of the correction in the Sinai MS., Slav. MSS., Greek and some Latin fathers) is not happy. I am glad however to see that he omits this, and seems content with the better authorities in his fifth edition. Page 461 by a misprint gives C as well as A for εθνων: it should be B.

98 It is extraordinary that the author of the Horae Apoc. should say that ναός or temple is sometimes used more largely of the whole, including the altar-court; stranger still that he should cite Rev. 11:1, 2, in proof, seeing that the altar and the outer court are so expressly distinguished there (as I believe always). There is another word to comprehend ill, namely, ἱερόν, which is never used in the Apocalypse, though it occurs repeatedly in other parts of the New Testament. So also the door of the tabernacle and the hanging at the court-gate are not confounded in scripture.

Revelation 16

Now I must say a little on the details of God's judgments in Revelation 16. It is a painful subject and humbling, when we think that this is the declared end of man's vaunted progress. I will endeavour, then, briefly to glance at these seven plagues. "And I heard a loud voice out of the temple, saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God unto the earth" (verse 1). Wrath is no longer restricted to the third or fourth part, but the whole scene is given up to judgment There is not only an increase of severity, but the whole of that which had once the light of God, and had far and wide enjoyed outward privileges, is in complete apostacy, and given up to His wrath.

"And the first went away and poured out his vial unto the earth; and there came a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and them which worshipped his image. And the second poured out his vial unto the sea," etc.

The first four vials resembled the trumpets in this, that they both fall on the earth and sea, on the rivers and fountains of water, and finally on the sun. There may be certain differences; for in the trumpet it was the third part only of the sun that was smitten. Here it is simply said, "the sun." Still it was the same sort of sphere. Further, I think the objects of these plagues, the earth, sea, etc., are not to be taken in a merely literal way. The language is symbolical. Not that there would be to my own mind the slightest difficulty in believing that God could do these things in a literal way, if this were His will. He has turned the waters of Egypt into blood, filled

a kingdom with darkness, and inflicted plagues similar to what we have here: so that there is no difficulty in conceiving such a thing again. But the only question is, whether this is what we are to gather from the chapter before us. I think it is not; and that God here alludes to plagues that were once literal in the land of Egypt, but that are now referred to symbolically, representing certain judgments of God. First, the ordered and settled parts of the world are smitten as with an ulcerous distemper, where men were branded with subjection to the apostate civil power and his idolatry. Next, there is a judgment on the sea; that is, on the outside regions, where profession of life quite died out. The third, I conceive, represents by rivers people formed into a separate condition of nationality, like waters flowing in a distinct channel, under special local influence; and by the fountains rather the springs of a nation's prosperity. All the active principles assume the form of death. The third judgment comes down to smaller details than the former ones. The fourth is on the public supreme authority.

In verses 5-7 we have a word or two which, when corrected or rightly read, adds to the full force and clearness of the passage. "Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast," etc. I noted (on Rev. 11) that the words, "and shalt be," were of no force at all here, and that another word is the best attested — the Holy One." It is the very same word that occurs in Revelation 16:4 — the less usual one for "holy." Before these vials are poured out, God is celebrated in His merciful holiness. "Thou art righteous." This was plain, for God was pouring out His wrath upon men in their iniquity, just because He was righteous. But more than this — "which

art and wast, the Holy One." Before the vials are poured out, and now again while they are in course of pouring out, that remains true. The angel of the waters attests His graciousness, even while He was judging thus, which might have seemed to contradict it. He too, from below, answers to the song above. If the saints, at rest on the sea of glass, celebrate Him as merciful in holiness, the angel confirms it.

"For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou gavest them blood to drink; they are worthy" (verse 6). There was righteous retribution — they were worthy in an awful sense. "And I heard" not another out of the altar, but "I heard the altar say" (verse 7). It may seem extraordinary to speak of "the altar saying," and no doubt the other words were put in because people thought it so strange. But there is nothing really contrary to prophetic usage if it he taken in a symbolical way. No person would intentionally foist a difficulty into scripture: but it is too common to try and remove that which is not understood out of the word, thus to make it plain according to ordinary modes of thought. Besides, you have what might prepare the way for it elsewhere. In Revelation 9:13, it is said, "I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God." Here (Rev. 16) the figure goes farther: the voice is said to be that of the altar itself. To me it confirms what we have had various occasions to remark — the fact and impropriety of men's meddling with scripture. "I heard the altar say" has great force for this reason. In an earlier part of the book, the souls of those that were "slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held," were seen under the altar. Now here that altar which had witnessed their blood is

said to cry out to God, and to own that His judgments are true and righteous. In the first book of the Bible, the earth is spoken of as crying out to God about the blood of Abel: much more should not the altar cry about the blood of God's martyred saints? To my own mind it is uncommonly pertinent. If it had been merely an angel, this would have been a comparatively distant link; for an angel, though ministering for them who shall be heirs of salvation, does not enter so directly into their sufferings, and can scarcely be said to have immediate sympathy with them. But God not only had seen the bones of His slaughtered saints scattered upon the cold mountains, as poets sing, but regards His saints as so many burnt-offerings rising up before Him whose blood, or rather the altar which witnessed it, calls for indignation and wrath. The Lord may seem to slumber for a season, but when He awakes, as one out of sleep, He will surely avenge their blood on them that dwell on the earth. And now it is at hand. Great Babylon had not yet come into remembrance, though from the beginning the special corruptress of the truth, and drunken with the blood of the saints. But meanwhile the altar could not hold its peace, and the Lord listens and hears. For the God who heeds the groans of the creature will surely answer the altar's cry about His slain ones.

"And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire" (verse 8). It is a judgment on the sun, the figure of supreme government; so that what ought to have been the means of light and comfort — that greater light which rules the day — now becomes the means of scorching men with fire. The effect of its tyranny is intolerable. "And men were scorched with great heat,

and blasphemed the name of God, which had authority over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory" (verse 9).

"And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the throne of the beast," etc. (verse 10.) We are now entering upon a somewhat different class of judgments; for the last three vials differ from the first four, just as the last three trumpets had a different character from the rest. And so with the seals also. It is evident that the fifth, sixth, and seventh vials are apart from the preceding four. The judgment falls upon the throne of the beast and upon his kingdom — not upon the beast himself, who is apparently untouched by these vials. He is reserved for the judgment of the Lord Jesus Himself at His coming, and will be destroyed by His appearing. Here the stroke is merely upon the seat of his authority; and just as of old king Pharaoh was hardened, so here men blasphemed the God of heaven, and repented not of their deeds (verse 11). When God manifests Himself as the God of the earth, this will not be possible.

"And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates, and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings" — not exactly of the east, but — "that are from the east might be prepared" (verse 12). The Euphrates was the great eastern boundary of the Roman empire: it was the regular line to which they carried their conquests. So that the drying up of the Euphrates would seem to mean that this side of the empire would be left open as a way for the eastern powers to come and mingle with those of the west, or to assault them. One effect of this vial, then, would be the removal of the eastern barrier, and thus the way of the

kings from the east is prepared probably for the great closing conflicts.

But there is more than this. “I saw out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs”99 (ver. 13). It is just before the end. These murmuring spirits issued out of the mouth of the three powers which we have seen in Revelation 13: out of the dragon, the open enemy of Christ; out of the beast, the revived Roman Empire; and out of the false prophet, the ecclesiastical beast that had lamb-like horns, imitating Christ’s power, but now spoken of only in his deceptive religious character. “For they are the spirits of demons, working signs, who go forth unto the kings of the whole habitable world, to gather them unto the battle of [that] great day of God the Almighty.” This confirms what I have just stated about the Euphrates. It is a general collision of the kings of all the habitable world. Not only the western powers are arrayed for the war, but the eastern also. It is the great day.

But now comes an important parenthesis. As was shown under the sixth seal and the sixth trumpet, so here we find an interruption also. “Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame” (verse 15). It is the Lord coming, but then He is coming in judgment to surprise the earth; and this is the reason why the figure is used. The thief comes unexpected and unwelcome: still more unpalatable will be the Lord’s coming to the earth. But there will be saints to whom it will be welcome, to whom His appearing will bring deliverance by the judgment of their enemies. And they are enjoined to watch closely the daily life. “Behold, I

come as a thief." Not so the Lord presents Himself to us, save as telling us how He will appear to the world or the professing mass cast into it. When speaking to us He says, "Behold, I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." Need one say how much more blessed is this word? The idea of coming as a thief involves surprise. To us He will come as a gracious One, who loves that we should have the rest of our affections and our glory in and with Himself: this is our own proper portion and hope, Here it is not rapture to heaven, but Jewish deliverance by judgment.

Then, after closing the parenthesis, it is said, "And he gathered them together into a place, called in the Hebrew tongue, Armageddon." It might seem strange that it should be said, "He gathered;" for in the fourteenth verse the evil spirits, or spirits of demons, were those that went forth to gather the kings together. The reason is this. In the language that the Holy Ghost employed, the word is capable of meaning either he or they gathered. There are certain cases where, in that language, it is doubtful whether "they" or "he" be meant; and this is one. The word "demons" is of such a nature, that the verb which has it for its subject might be either singular or plural. Here the subject is not expressed, so that it is quite optional as far as this is concerned: all depends upon the sense of the context. If it be "He gathered," the reference of course is to God Almighty, who might be said to do it through the 'intervention of these unclean spirits. If it be "they gathered, it would simply mean that the spirits of demons had accomplished the purpose for which they were sent forth. In verse 14, they proceeded to gather

the kings; and in verse 16, the kings are gathered together.

The place of gathering that is mentioned here, called in Hebrew Armageddon, is, I think, an allusion to Judges 5:17. “The kings came and fought: then fought the kings of Canaan in Taanach by the waters of Megiddo.” It was not that Megiddo was a place of any great size or note. God looks to the principle at issue. Israel was in a low state. There was a prophetess that the Lord used to inspire them with courage; and when encouraged by her, they won a great victory over their enemies. The same place is referred to in 2 Chron. 35:22, when Josiah received his death-wound in battle with the king of Egypt. But I doubt that this is the incident referred to by the Spirit of God here. For Megiddo in the day of the Judges was a memento of joy and triumph to Israel. In the time of Josiah it was a place of gloom; all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. It was “the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley100 of Megiddon” (Zech. 12:11), which led historically to the writing of the book of Lamentations. For this reason I think that Armageddon (i.e. the mountain of Megiddo) here refers not to the sorrow for Josiah in 2 Chronicles, but to the gathering and defeat of the Gentile kings in Judges. For here it is the Lord beating down the nations. He had been acknowledged as king of the nations in Rev. 15; and therefore, to make this an allusion to a time when the godly Jewish monarch was slain by a Gentile would be little appropriate. But to derive it from the day when Israel had been led on to victory even by a woman well fits into the scene that is here described, when the kings of the whole world will be gathered only for a more terrible destruction.

A few words must suffice for the last vial. “The seventh angel poured out his vial upon the air; and there come forth a loud voice from the temple [of heaven], from the throne, saying, It is done” (verse 17). This is a more penetrating judgment, and one more affecting men and their very life-breath than any we have yet seen. It is on the air, necessary to the existence of men. Symbolically it represents a judgment on something that is as essential to the life and comfort of men as that which we breathe. All is over as regards God’s wrath here poured out.

“And there were lightnings and voices and thunders: and there was a great earthquake, such as was not seen since a man was on the earth, so mighty an earthquake and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell,” etc. There was a vast and unexampled convulsion of civil associations — breaking up, not only what is called here “the great city” (which means all that was established within the Roman empire), but more than that, the cities of the nations fell; that is, it was the ruin of all that the nations outside Rome had built up politically. And furthermore, Babylon the great — that counterfeit of the bride, and hitherto successful system of religious evil, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth; Babylon the great — came up in remembrance before God to receive from Him the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. The latter term, Babylon the great, refers rather to moral character or idolatry.

“And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And there fell upon men great hail, about the weight of a talent, out of heaven, and men blasphemed God,” etc. (verses 20, 21.) It is not necessary that I

should speak particularly of the explanation offered by the leading historicalists. The hailstorm Mr. E. used to apply to some fearful infliction of France, the most northerly of the Papal kingdoms, much as he had surmised in the minor judgments, as be would say, of the seventh trumpet. And so it yet stands in the text of Horae Apoc., vol. iv. p. 23. But in a note he observes that many expositors prefer to explain it of the Russian power. “And in revising my work, and comparing this prophecy with one in Ezekiel 38, 39, which seems to point to Russia’s taking part in the great pre-millennial conflict, as will be noticed in the end of my next chapter, I cannot but incline to the same view. I observe that the great hail is here predicted as falling after, not before, the great city’s tri-partition.” Having already expressed ray opinion on the similar case of Rev. 11:19, and shown the error of connecting this verse with the seventh trumpet, which is the assumption of these writers, I need only remark that the reference to Ezekiel is peculiarly unhappy, because the scene there is Palestine, not the Papal empire or the west; and that the issue is not the infliction of a plague on others, and God blasphemed in consequence, but the utter discomfiture of the Prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal, with his vast company, and God sanctified thereby. “And I will plead against him with pestilence, and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire and brimstone.” Thus it is God who plagues the invading Russian with great hailstones, not they who so fall on others. “Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself (not then men blaspheming God because of the plague of the hail); and I will be known in the eyes of many nations; and they shall know that I am

the Lord.” Indeed, the reader has simply to examine the context of the Jewish prophet in order to be satisfied of the absurdity of connecting that scene with the hailstorm of the seventh vial. For the Jews, nay, Israel as a whole, are supposed to be at that time restored and united in their own land, when Gog invades it through lust of conquest. There is no ground to think that such is the case under the vials. Neither does Mr. E. so judge, if I understand his remarks on the first occurrence of “Hallelujah” in Rev. 19, which he views as an indication of the conversion of the Jews, after the final catastrophe of Babylon, when the outpouring of the vials is completed and has marked the time for it.

Before God establishes His purposes in power, you see a moral accomplishment working either in His people or in the world. Thus, if God is to bring about a separation of His people by judgment, which we had in Revelation 15, I doubt not that His people are even now being separated graciously by the Spirit of God. If, on the other hand, there is to be a delusion over men’s hearts, so that even the judgments of God will only aggravate the evil to all appearance, something analogous is at work in our day. Is it not a fearful sign that Christians, in the face of such words as these, can look for any real amelioration of things as they are? Here we have the true closing scene disclosed by God after all the efforts and boasts of men. The most favoured part of the earth, its civilized and moral centre, is to be full of apostacy, and the wrath of God must be finished there. This must be ere the Lord Jesus Christ will come in glory to set up His kingdom; for He it is in person who shall deal with the beast. Under the vials it is God chastising in wrath.

But what is the effect? Men blaspheme God. Instead of repenting, they become worse and worse at every step.

It is a terrible thing to see this evil morally spreading over the world; but the Lord is also separating, by faith and affection, to Himself. May we hold fast grace! We shall need it. It is the only place, not merely of privileges, but of security. What should we think of the man who would merely go as far as he thinks he must not to be lost — who wants to be saved, but withal to be allowed to sin as much as in his opinion he may, so as to escape at last? But as the Lord is separating by personal affection to Himself, where there is faith, so, on the other hand, the opposite of it we find where faith is lacking. God gives up men to delusion, and all that He does in the way of judgment only hardens them. Preparatorily this is going on now: men are yielding to and choosing their own delusions. The full pure truth is distasteful and dreaded. So that, in spite of God's Spirit working to present truth with all simplicity to His people, men are obstinately comforting themselves with the dream that things after all are not so bad; that if there are things to be regretted, the remedy is at hand. For now there are so many ways of helping on the poor — such delightful minglings of the rich with them — such promising unions which invite all men to come together and join, spite of their little differences, for the great object of social advancement, the improvement of Christendom, and the regeneration of the world. But all this is founded on the miserable delusion which ignores and denies that God's wrath is to be filled up and poured out upon Christendom. It is impossible that Christians, who realise that such judgments are near, could lend themselves to schemes which assume the very reverse.

Suppose a person going to execution — what would be thought of a Christian man who, knowing this, would occupy the criminal's time with chemical experiments, or a lecture on mechanics? Much less would one who feels the solemn truth that the world lies under such a sentence as God's word declares. Christ alone is the power of God to set things right. When He comes, and not before, the tide of evil will be stemmed, and Satan bound: but not even divine judgments apart from Christ can avail.

May we be in earnest, always seeking to connect Christ with our testimony! That is the great practical purport of all for the present moment. Sometimes we may hinder blessing by presenting the truth, but not in Christ, if I may so say. The heart must be sadly perverted, if it refuses Him. The Lord grant that we may keep these two things before our souls — thorough separation from all that is of the world, and this place of victory held with joy, our hearts taking up the song of which the Lamb is the subject, as He alone gives us the power to sing it. May we ever think of the world as a judged scene, conscious of the terrible wrath it cannot escape! This will not make us distrustful of the power of Christ to deliver individuals, but it will preserve us from any insensibility as to either the world's evil, or the divine judgment which awaits it.

99 Most readers of the Horae Apoc. will remember that, after giving evidence of the working of the frog-like unclean spirits in England (the draconic spirit of heathen-like anti-social infidelity, the Popish spirit, the Tractarian spirit), Mr. E recurs to the hopeful strain of a bright future for his country, and conjectures that France may be the country called to the bad pre-

eminence of being the chief secular power employed by these demons to gather the world's powers to the last great war of Armageddon. "There is a curious heraldic fact," he adds, (vol. iii. pp. 533, 534) "accordant with this view, which (considering how frequently such national emblems have been had in view in the Apocalyptic figurations) I cannot permit myself to pass over in silence, though by no means wishing to insist much on it; viz., that, as the three spirits do each and all most assuredly energize in the French nation and priesthood, so their Apocalyptic symbol, the three frogs, are the old arms of France." And then we have a plate in illustration of the alleged fact, with some subjoined annotations. Now, it happens that natural history comes in as an awkward witness here, for the "fact" turns out that Mr. E. confounds crapaud with grenouille; or, as the Encyclopaedia Metropolitana say (and so Court de Gebelin), cited by himself, the arms of France, as some affirm, bear three toads sable, etc. In a word, in order to convey correctly such a reference, the Greek should have been ὡς φρῦνοι, rather than βάτραχοι. Four other authors he produces say frogs; but this seems loose, and not to set aside the more precise word. Of course I think the point trilling in the extreme.

100 A mountain of course implies a valley. The singular variation of A (ποταμόν, river) may have been either taken from the waters of Megiddon in Judges 5:9, or more probably was a blunder for τόπον, just as in Revelation 15 A C, three cursives, not to speak of some MSS. mentioned by Andreas, Bede, support λίθον, stone! for λίνον. The Harleian cursive of the eleventh century (5537) exhibits the still stranger ληνόν.

Revelation 17

The Spirit of God has shown us the destruction of Babylon under the last vial. We are now to learn in the chapter before us what was her special evil, what there was so hateful to God in Babylon; not only what her own conduct was, but what there was in her connection with others, that God could endure no longer — why it was that He singled her out above all others for His vengeance. And this is not a thing that we can put aside from us, as perhaps some others may be in the Apocalypse, as comparatively foreign or distant. For though there may be, and I doubt not will be, a further development of Babylon, yet God looks at it as a moral whole; as a system of corruption that has been at work, and that is still at work. When judgment can delay no longer, it may have taken a peculiarly aggravated form; but the evil exists and is active. Babylon is not so much the snare of a profane man, as it is that of one who, having a certain idea of religion, seeks to reconcile it with the world. It is then that the corrupting influence becomes a source of chief danger to the soul.

Now we shall find that, first of all, the chapter gives us the vision which the Apostle John is taken to see; and next we have a certain explanation of that vision. The angel’s word commences more particularly in this way at the seventh verse, while the first six verses are occupied with recounting the vision. One other remark I would make before proceeding farther. This chapter does not carry us forward as a matter of history. It is rather the Holy Ghost looking back upon the character, conduct, and relationships of that Babylon which had

been already shown as the object of the judgment of God. This is worthy of note, because, if not seen, there is inevitable confusion in our thoughts of the book. In Revelation 14 we had the fall of Babylon in connection with the evil workings of Satan, and with the dealings of God in goodness or power, including the Son of man's judgment at the close. Now, it is of no little moment to have the precise niche where this intervention of God is to be looked for, and that we had in the next place. For we have seen in the providential judgments of God — by which I mean those which are executed by angels, and not by Christ directly — Babylon reserved for the last stroke of His wrath tinder the seventh vial. It is God acting — God still employing angels. The Lord Jesus is thus far quiescent, if I may so say; not acting yet in vengeance personally upon the earth.

In Rev. 17 the Holy Ghost stops to enter into the details of the moral cause of Babylon's terrible fall. "There came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying, Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore; that sitteth on [the]101 many waters" (ver. 1). it is described as a harlot here; not only as a woman, but as a corrupt and licentious one. And I suppose that no dispassionate person would doubt that this term is used in special reference to religious corruption. A little lower down in the third verse, Babylon is said to be sitting on the beast; here she sits by the many waters. There is a slight difference in the Greek. Sitting by the many waters does not mean that she was literally or locally thereupon, but beside them. Thus, you may say, for instance, that London is seated on the Thames. Now no one of common understanding would suppose the meaning to be that

London was actually situated and built over the bed of the river, but that the Thames is the stream which characterizes London. So here in the same way we have the whore described as seated on (i.e. beside) the many waters. These are explained in verse 19. “The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues.” The figure implies the wide-spread influence which this abandoned woman exercises. But there is more than that. In the second verse it is said, “with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication. and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.” This is something more than her seat by the mass of waters. It is immediate intercourse of an evil kind carried on with the kings of the earth — her power in drawing away and seducing the affections from Christ, who is the only worthy object of all love and worship. In the sphere where God’s light had been displayed, the chiefs or leaders are led away by the corruptress, and the people are entirely ruined as to all discernment of the mind of God.

Nothing, then, can be plainer than the general bearing of these few verses. We have the vast influence of Babylon set forth by the figure of a woman seated beside many waters; next we have the great leaders of Christendom, the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication with her; and then the inhabitants of the earth stupefied with the wine of her fornication. There are different degrees of guilt, but all were the result of connection more or less intimate with Babylon. “So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness” (verse 3). In spite of all her pride and worldly glory, to the saint of God the wilderness is the

only place where the Spirit leads him to behold her. Had John gone in his own spirit (so to speak), it might have carried him to look at Babylon, not in the wilderness, but rather in the mirage of some garden of the Lord. But he was carried away by the Spirit of the Lord into the wilderness, and there he sees the harlot sitting upon a scarlet-coloured beast; a closer thing and of more ominous import, as we noticed, than her description at the end of verse 1. This shows us the actual position of the woman. She has supremacy over the Roman empire. For there can be no legitimate question that the beast here brought before us is that same Roman empire, of which we have heard such terrible doings, and so portentous a doom, in previous chapters. It is the beast that is full of the names of blasphemy, as his heads were so viewed in Rev. 13:1. Babylon is a whore or corrupting system; but blasphemy is what belongs to the beast. It is a more open and audacious evil. The woman's way is more seductive, and one that lays hold of the affections. But blasphemy is the expression of a power that fears neither God nor man. As for the woman, though seated on the beast, glad to be exalted through him, and willing to use him for her own purposes, yet is she distinctively the religious system of the world. She is "arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls:" the obvious figures of all that the world counts great and glorious and beautiful here below. But she has also "a golden cup in her hand, full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication" (verse 4). In spite of all her glittering, gaudy splendour, how the Holy Ghost brings out together with it what is most nauseous! He has no words too strong to express His sense of what He sees in the cup. It is "full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication." By

“abominations” in scripture regularly is meant idolatry. This is the gravest distinguishing feature in Babylon. As the beast was full of names of blasphemy, so was the harlot’s cup full of abominations. But besides the idols, there was this corrupting influence, here called the uncleanness of her fornication. They are two distinct things. There might be the depraving influence without the idols; but in Babylon both are actively at work.

In the Apocalyptic churches it was observed that in Pergamos appears the doctrine of Balaam, who taught among other things to commit fornication. When we came to Thyatira, there we saw Jezebel, who imposed idolatry by force. Here in Babylon both are united. The evils that crept into Christendom in those earlier days, discerned in Pergamos and Thyatira, both appear concentrated and undisguised in the cup of this wicked woman. They were budding then; now they are full-blown in all their hatefulness before the prophet. They may be tricked out in all the meretricious tinsel of this world; but nothing could change or hide their real character before God.

“And upon her forehead a name written, Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of the harlots and of the abominations of the earth” (verse 5). There was great pretension to truth — a masterpiece of the enemy in counterfeiting the revealed ways of God. The mystery of Christ and the church had been revealed; now there is the mystery of this anti-church; not the mystery of faith and godliness, but of lawlessness — Babylon the great seated on the beast, the awful contrast of the church which is subject unto Christ. Here she rules the beast. The holy city, Jerusalem, comes down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, — not “that great city”102

but, — the holy city, which is the true way in which God characterizes the bride, the Lamb's wife, the glorified church. This religious system, on the contrary, sprang from the earth (not to say more than that), enticed into its defiling embrace the kings of the earth, and extended its malignant influence far and wide. Such was Babylon, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth. Whatever evil thing was used by Satan for the purpose of ensnaring the affections from Christ, whatever idolatrous object took His place, she is the mother of them all. Babylon is the great parent of all the worldly systems, and of the idolatries used by the enemy to draw away souls entirely from the Lord.

But there is another thing mentioned in the vision still more extraordinary to the prophet's mind. He could not doubt the religious character of this woman, Babylon the great; he sees her at the same time drunken with the blood of the saints. He could well understand a religious system becoming corrupt. Jerusalem itself had, alas! become as Sodom and Gomorrah, first for guilt and afterwards well-nigh for judgment. But that the woman should be drunken with the blood of the saints was what filled even John's mind with great astonishment. Bad as passion is, it is not the worst thing that the heart of man is capable of. The deceivableness of false religion is that in which Satan displays his direct power. For the very thing which God has given for light and blessing, to win the heart and to bring into fellowship with Himself, is abused by the enemy to make a man a worse man than ever — twofold more the child of hell than before.

But astonished as John must have been of old to hear such a sentence upon beloved but guilty Jerusalem, here he has to wonder still more when he learns that the

woman who had assumed the place of the church should not only end in the same blood-guiltiness, but should be drunken with the blood of the very martyrs of Christ Himself This was what filled his mind with amazement indeed (verse 6).

And we now come to the explanation which the angel furnishes of the vision. It is of deep importance; for you will find that when God interprets, He not merely opens to us that which needed solution, but He gives us truth more abundantly. “And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and the ten horns” (verse 7). This is in fact the main subject of the chapter; it is a description of the woman more particularly, and of her connections with the beast, the Roman empire. For manifestly and beyond denial, the woman and the beast are two distinct things. For if the beast be the Roman empire, as those will have seen who have followed me through this book, the woman cannot be. She may be seated upon the beast, but for that very mason she is not the same thing. And not only is the woman distinct from the beast, but, as we find afterwards, the beast turns against the woman and takes his part in destroying her.

Therefore it is quite evident, that it is impossible to suppose the woman and the beast to be the same thing. In the end they are so violently opposed, that the one becomes the destruction of the other. So that the woman must necessarily be some power distinct from the empire. We shall find more reasons that confirm their distinction.

“The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and is to ascend out of the abyss, and go into destruction; and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and shall be present” (verse 8). I have no hesitation in saying that so runs the last clause of the verse. This would not be questioned by those who are sufficiently acquainted with the subject to form an opinion. Persons may differ in the explanation of the verse; but there can be no doubt that such is the true reading. The common text here is almost contradictory of itself, and affords no just sense.

Now let us consider a little what is taught by this verse. The beast is the Roman empire, as we have before seen. But we learn here that that empire was to cease to be. The countries and peoples that composed it would remain; but its imperial unity would cease to exist. The fractional parts would be there, each nation having its own independent government, but there would be no corporate bond. Such is their condition in our day, as it has been for more than a thousand years. “The beast which thou sawest was, and is not, and shall ascend out of the abyss.” The angel characterizes this empire as no other empire ever has been or could be. It was first found in its strength, then to cease, and afterwards to rise again. But there is an exceedingly grave feature that attaches to the reappearance of the empire; it is to have a diabolical character. And as it comes from Satan, so must it end with Satan: it shall “go into destruction.”

These things could not be said in the same sense or strictness of any other empire. None that has appeared yet upon earth but what has had its rise, its splendour

for a little while in full power, and then its extinction, sudden or gradual, never to rise again. I am not aware of any example to the contrary. Most peculiar is the lot of that empire which was so prominent in the apostle John's mind. It existed in the time of John: under it indeed he was personally suffering. But it was to terminate its career; and then, after a condition of non-existence, to rise out of the abyss or bottomless pit. "They that dwell on the earth shall wonder.… when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and shall be present." When this beast reappears in its last Satanic phase, men would be carried away by their excessive admiration of it.

"Here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth" (verse 9). This is a material point, though simple. It is a local mark, intended to indicate to the wise mind, where this woman has her seat. There ought not to be the least doubt that it is a reference to Rome. The word "Babylon" had been used, it is true, in speaking of it, as Sodom and Egypt were figuratively applied to Jerusalem in Revelation 11; but the Chaldean capital had nothing to do with the city of Rev. 17. That had long passed away as an imperial city; whereas in verse 18 it is said of this Babylon that "it reigneth over the kings of the earth." More than this, the literal Babylon in Chaldea was built on the plain of Shinar. Here the woman was seated on seven mountains; and all the world is aware that such is the well-known characteristic of Rome. In prose or in poetry, if any city were described as being seated upon seven hills, every one would say, That must be Rome.

But we have an additional explanation in the following verse. “There [or they] are seven kings: the five are fallen, the one is, and the other is not yet come: and when he cometh, he must continue a short space” (verse 10). Here the Holy Ghost, without entering into detail, refers to the various forms of government which were to succeed each other in the famous city Rome: seven heads or kings; but not contemporary: for five, as it is said, were fallen; one is, and the other is not yet come. This implies succession. Five different modes of government had already passed away. “One is,” namely, the imperial form then subsisting, when the apostle lived — the line of Caesars. Another of the seven was not yet come, which, when it did, must continue a short space.

“And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into destruction” (verse 11). There is this peculiar character attributed to the beast here, that in one sense he would be (if the seven, and in another he would form an eighth or extraordinary beast. It would in certain respects be a new form of power altogether, while in others it would be but a revival of what had gone before. The reason is, that the beast at first might be like any other empire. It might owe its rise providentially to human revolutions; for men when they have tried democracy are apt to grow weary and disappointed, and then some vigorous arm takes advantage of the reaction, and a despotic power is the not unnatural result. I have no doubt this will be the history of the west. The eighth head, though an individual ruler, is spoken of as the beast or empire, because he is morally the empire, directing as supreme all its authority. He is of the seven, for there will be a continuance or taking up of some such form of power as

before. But he will be the eighth, because there will be something so peculiar as to deserve a name to itself That new feature may refer perhaps to the diabolical power that stamps the beast in his last or quasi-resurrection state.

“And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet, but receive authority as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and authority to the beast.” It is not that we are to suppose “one hour” to mean mystically, or literally, such a brief division of time as it has been the vain attempt of so many persons to try and make out. But the meaning is that these are kings who receive royal authority for one and the same time103 with the beast.

Abstractedly, ever so many years might be meant, or only a short period. It is not a question of what an “hour” means. These ten horns should not merely have their period of authority, but they receive it for one and the same time with the beast. This is most important to the due understanding of this verse. It overthrows all the prophetical systems which have attempted to make out that this chapter has been exhausted in the past or present. The common view of the chapter may have a certain measure of truth; because, as I fully believe, the book of Revelation was intended to be partially accomplished all through the dispensation; but the complete fulfilment is only at the close. The barbarian hordes came down from the north and east of Europe and Asia, about the fifth century, and overspread the Roman empire, bursting over Europe from all points, and attacking it within and on every side, so that the empire, already too extended, and crumbling under its

own weight, found it impossible to hold up against these vigorous and repeated assaults from so many quarters. By degrees the Goths and Vandals, etc., settled themselves in the various parts of that which was once united. They were the enemies that destroyed the empire.

But this is not what is shown us in the chapter. It tells us that these kings receive authority for one hour with the beast. Supposing that these barbarian kingdoms had been exactly ten in number, even this does not answer to what we have here; because we are told that these ten kings receive authority for one and the same time with the beast. They only received their power when the beast was dead, when the Roman empire had fallen. They destroyed the beast first, and then erected themselves into independent kingdoms.

Nothing can get rid of the sure and simple fact that these powers were not kingdoms in the empire while the empire lasted. They had not power with the beast, much less did they give their power and strength to the beast. For nothing is more certain than that when they became kingdoms, it was at the expense of the empire. When it was gone, they took up the broken fragments, and converted them into separate kingdoms, France, Spain, etc.; but the empire as such was fallen. The beast that is described here acquires power as an empire at the same time that these kings receive their power as kings. In other words, they are contemporary powers, the beast and the horns, and not that which we find in history at all. This prophecy shows us that the empire is only formed as such again at the same time that these ten kingdoms have their final power. They are co-existing, and have their dominion together — each of these

several kingdoms working to a common end under the beast.

Thus in the facts of the past we know there was a united unbroken power, when the Roman empire governed the western world,104 and did not admit of different independent kingdoms within its own limits. There was no such thing then as the kings of Spain, France, Italy, etc. It was an all-absorbing power, and would never have allowed such separate kingdoms to cluster round the imperial city. But the peculiarity of the future revived empire is that it will admit of distinct kings. Two things will be united which never were before. First, there has been the empire without kings — at least, so it was in the west, which is the question here. Then there were kings without the empire. The new feature will be this: neither the beast without the kings, nor the kings without the beast; but both the beast and the kingdoms going on together. This is what never has existed before.

Hence the chapter gives us a view of the Roman empire as it will be resuscitated by the power of Satan, and shows that then it is destined to have the peculiar stamp of the enemy upon it. God Himself allows him to have his way for a short space, and to perpetrate all his wickedness before the end. Just as Judas was filled with Satan when he was about to betray the Lord for the price of a slave. He was under the influence of Satan before; but it is said then that Satan entered into him. He or his high-priest was the son of perdition: and this is the very name that is given to the future power that will rise up against the Lord from heaven. This empire is to rise up out of the bottomless pit, and to be clothed with a diabolical character and energy; and when it comes

up, there are to be ten kingdoms, or kings, exercising regal power for the same period with the beast.

The next verse (13) shows us the policy common to them. “These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.” They are not jealous of the beast; their great object is to exalt him and to aggrandize his power. And what is the issue? what the use they make of their combined power? “These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him, called and chosen and faithful” (ver. 14). So it is evident from this, that the heavenly saints are already gone to the Lord. It is not that the Lord receives them now; they are with Him in the conflict, and before the conflict begins. And this is confirmed by Revelation 19:14: “And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, clean and white.” Whence did they follow Him? Is it not from heaven? Christ is coming to attack the great adversary upon the earth whom Satan employs. But it is heaven that opens, and thence not only Christ comes, but “they that are with him, called and chosen and faithful.”

This is not a description of angels: for though angels may be said to be “chosen” or “elect,” they are never said to be “called.” “Called” is a title only used of men, and supposes the working of grace. Angels are not, and I think could not be, “called;” for if an angel were in a position of evil, he could not be delivered out of it; and if he were in a holy position, he would not need “calling.” Calling always presumes a condition out of which the called are brought. The believer is brought from a place of sin and misery into one of salvation and blessing. This

is true of man alone. He, is the only creature of God that is called, through God's grace, out of a state of ruin into the blessedness and glory of redemption. And as in Revelation 17:14 there is this expression which shows us positively that saints and not angels are spoken of, so in Revelation 19:14 we are told that the armies which follow the Lamb out of heaven are "clothed in fine linen, white and clean." Now it is said in the same chapter (verse 8) that fine linen is the righteousness of saints. People may ask, Are not angels said to be clothed in linen? Yes, they are; but it is not the same term that is used for instance in Rev. 15:6. The Spirit of God employs a different expression to describe it, never confounding the two things. The plain inference then is that the glorified saints are in heaven with the Lord, before this conflict begins — not that they then meet the Lord in the air. When the Lord comes, we do meet Him in the air. Then it is that He will take us to heaven. But when He comes in order to judge and make war, we come with Him from heaven. How long a time may have expired while we are in heaven, and before we appear with the Lord, we do not know; but the coming of the Lord for the saints is an event that takes place some time before He comes with them. When He comes with the saints, it is for the purpose of judging the beast and his adherents. The church will come with Him then, and the Old Testament saints too; for they will have been caught up to the Lord at the same time that we are, I doubt not. "These shall make war with the Lamb" — but the victory is sure — "and the Lamb shall overcome them,.... and they that are with him, called, and chosen, and faithful."

"And he said unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes,

and nations, and tongues. And the ten horns which thou sawest and the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire" (verses 15, 16). This is another verse of great value for understanding the chapter. The common text thus says, "the ten horns which thou sawest upon105 the beast;" but it ought to be read, "the ten horns which thou sawest and the beast." The importance of the change in this (and there is the best authority for it), that when people read, "the ten horns upon the beast," they might have imagined that, the Roman empire being gone, then these ten horns took its place. This would very well have suited the past history. But, as we have seen before, that the ten horns receive their kingdom for the same time with the beast, so here the Spirit of God says, "the ten horns which thou sawest and the beast." Thus any person who weighs this with verse 12 would perceive how mistaken the usual thought is. "The ten horns which thou sawest and the beast, these shall hate the whom, and shall make her desolate," etc.†

That Daubuz (1720) should have laboured under a mistake as to the comparative claims of the two readings one can conceive; that Vitringa, spite of his historical lore and general ability in expounding, should have ignored the best witnesses then known, is not perhaps very wonderful. But it is passing strange that in the face of the unanimity of critical editors, presenting every shade of religious prejudice and prepossession, such as Bengel, Griesbach, Lachmann, Matthaei, Scholz, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Vater, etc., who had no preconceived notions to blind their judgment, Mr. Elliott should persist in an opinion so unfounded. It is not a

small matter to slight the evidence of the three uncials, forty cursives (some of the highest character), of the AEthiopic, Arabic of the Polyglotts, Syriac, etc. If Wilkins is to be depended on, the Coptic, it seems, should be added. As to the Vulgate, Mr. E. is misinformed. The common printed text, no doubt, has “in bestia;” but the very ancient and best copies (including the Amiatine in the Laurentian Library of Florence, and others already named) read “et bestiam.” Whatever may be the inconsistency of Popish apologists, I cannot admire Protestant special pleading which contends for a reading that is utterly indefensible. In this instance, at least, it is plain which of the two is most open to the charge of blunting the edge of the prophetic sword. Rome is Babylon; but the ten horns AND the beast (hardly the Pope!) are yet to unite in destroying her. It is not the first intimacy or alliance which has closed in hatred and violence. The false prophet continues with the beast to the end; but this neither proves nor disproves that Babylon is the Romish church. Why may there not be a new form of religious wickedness in the Holy Land, even when Rome city and church shall have disappeared?

†The attempt of Protestants is vain to reconcile this statement with their theory that the woman and the beast refer to the church or city of Rome and the Papacy. Thus it has been recently argued that the woman is the Roma Dea, both Pagan and Papal, the scene representing Rome itself, in the latter point of view, the angel’s explanation including also the previous pagan history. Accordingly the idea is that the ten horns undiademed are the Gothic powers desolating Rome, diademed are the same kingdoms giving their power to

the Pope. For certainly the barbarians ravaged the empire as a whole, not the city exclusively, and out of the dismembered empire formed their own independent kingdoms. That is, the beast was that which they spoiled and destroyed much more than the woman. Nor were they united in a common feeling of hatred towards Rome. Envy, covetousness, lust of conquest would more aptly characterize the motives of the particular barbarians who attacked the city. Still less can it be said that, diademed or not, they gave their power to the Pope. It would be more true to say that they derived it from him as their ecclesiastical and spiritual head. For my part I altogether admit the principle that the explanation gives us, not merely the key to what was originally seen, but additional truth. Only, as I have shown the absurdity is in supposing that the fresh information is something about the past pagan form of Rome. On the contrary it really furnishes the future closing aspect, when the beast and the ten horns have a common policy, first in wreaking their hatred and indulging their avarice on the whore, and then in mustering their forces with one consent for the final conflict with the Lamb. The beast is to ascend from the abyss, and the Lord of lords descend from the throne of God. The chapter gives us character and description, not dates. The history is resumed in Revelation 19, first as to heaven, and next as to earth; Revelation 17, 18 forming a descriptive episode.

A little sample of this, not of course executed by the beast or by the kings, but by the will of the people, appears in the French revolution of the last century. There you had an infuriate people rising up against the woman (the ecclesiastical power that had ruled the

earth being completely given up to the rage of the multitude, and men enriching themselves at her expense). But we must never meet one wrong by being guilty of another. The Christian way to deal with evil is ever by grace lifting us above it. Events that have been seen on a small scale will be then realised on a larger one. Good men — men worthy of honour and in other respects wise — have not only desired to get rid of Babylon, but have been too apt to sanction any means with that aim. I say not that saints are not to rejoice in her fall; but that they ought not to mix themselves up with the instruments of it, nor to cherish unfounded hopes of blessing then and thence.

Rome will always be the central city of this corrupt system. “The woman which thou sawest is the great city that hath sway over the kings of the earth” (verse 18). There will, no doubt, be a further development of it before the close; for she who sits as queen has given proof even in our own days that she can invent new doctrines, and boast new miracles, developing wickedness without conscience and with feeble protest, nay, in the midst of all but universal acclamations. And it will be true, I conceive, of Rome, as in all other cases, that before the judgment comes, her cup will be full. It was so with the iniquity of the Amorites, when God judged them. But God will employ the powers of the earth to deal with Babylon. No doubt the kings will think well of themselves for getting rid of such a scandal; but then the means used may be as bad as that evil itself. And what will be the issue? The millennium? Quite the contrary — they will make war with the Lamb. They will not only have got rid of Babylon, but will combine against Christ in the most direct and deadly way. When

this day comes man, instead of being any the better for having turned against Babylon, will give all his power to the beast: and, bad as Babylon is, the beast is more openly wicked. Nothing is more hateful to God under the sun than religion, where it is used as a cover for corruption; and this is Babylon. But as for the beast and the false prophet, they will deny God altogether. As we read in the Psalms, “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.” Babylon is not that wilful rebellious spirit. Therefore, after having destroyed Babylon and eaten her flesh and burnt her with fire, after having enriched themselves at her expense, and having destroyed her, we find that those avenging powers will go to fight with the Lamb; they will set themselves in open opposition to the One of God’s choice, the holy and heavenly Sufferer.

“For God hath put in their hearts to do his mind, and to do one mind, and give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God shall be finished” (verse 17). How remarkable it is to observe that thus it is man accomplishing the words of God, when his only thought is that he, in hatred to God, is blotting out the most corrupt sham from the face of the earth! No doubt Babylon will have deserved it; but the kings, without knowing how, are but doing servile work for Him whose authority they disown. In vain they will have had all God’s dealings under the law before their eyes; they will have had the whole Christian revelation of grace and holiness, founded on and shown in the cross of Jesus, only to despise it; they will have heard and rejected the latter-day testimony, the gospel of the kingdom, which will be given by other, and I believe by Jewish, witnesses, after the church has been taken to heaven.

Anything pretending to be a new testimony, while the church is on earth, must be false. But when the church is gone, God will take up His people Israel again, and will give a testimony, not so much meeting souls so as to put them in connection with Christ in heaven, which He is doing now, but sending out far and wide through the habitable world, as a witness to all nations, the glad tidings that God's King is coming to set up His kingdom; "and then shall the end come."

It is fellowship with Christ as the suffering One which gives us deliverance from the spirit of the beast, the spirit of proud independence. How shall we overcome with the Lamb? We must be with Him, and this is what. gives the victory now. Our strength, in whatever comes before us, is to ask, How does the Lord feel touching it? Supposing I am invited to go to some great sight, to join in some movement that may be very attractive naturally, the question is, Does the Lord sympathize with it? Is He there? And if this applies to all other questions, still more does it decide in what concerns the holiest things, as for instance worship. What does the Lord sanction and value in His praise? What is most according to His heart and mind? What really and intelligently and obediently gives Him honour? Such is the sole key for faith in this world; it unlocks many a difficulty, and through the opened door there is a plain path for our feet.

The Lord grant that none of us may put aside those solemn truths! To neglect His warning is the very thing that tends so far to bring about the state of things of which we have been speaking. That which carries away in this direction now is slighting the words of God; though we shall in the end be fulfilling them to our own

shame. We shall be proving how little we have known of real heart-subjection to God — how little we had appreciated the grace in which we stand, and how little rejoiced in the hope of His glory. We shall manifest that we have not counted it an honour to bow, and to give up what we may like, or what others might like for us, where it was really a question of God's will. For to us this should decide all; because "we are sanctified unto the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," that is, to the same character of obedience which marked the Lord Jesus here below. It is not Christian to obey Christ merely because we must. Christ never obeyed thus. If a man only does a thing because if he does it not he knows he must be punished, it shows plainly that his heart is not in it — he does not want to obey. Christian obedience is the desire of doing a thing because it is the will of God, and the Holy Ghost gives us power through presenting Christ to our affections. Remember that to this we are sanctified. Cleansed by the blood of sprinkling, instead of its being a menace of death, as in Ex. 24, we are sanctified unto the obedience of Jesus Christ. We are not under the law but under grace, and led of the Spirit of God. May we enjoy the power of His spirit and the fulness of His salvation! Bear in mind. however, that we are thus saved, not for ourselves, but to obey after the same pattern and measure of obedience as that of Jesus.

101 The article (twice) is omitted by A P, seven cursives, Hippolytus and Andreas. I have therefore bracketed it as a mark of doubt, though disposed to lean towards its reception, spite of its absence in the Sept. Ver. of Jer. 51:13, etc. It is strange that any should imagine a reference in Dan. 7:2, or Rev. 13:1, any more than here,

to the literal Mediterranean. In Hebrew (or Chaldee) “the great sea” when used of the Mediterranean is a totally distinct phrase.

102 The common text of Rev. 21:10 is faulty.

103 Quite agreeing with Mr. E. that the notion of horal brevity is untenable, must utterly reject his statement (H. A., iii. pp. 81, 82, and often elsewhere) that “at one and the same time” is either the most natural or the true rendering. It is almost past comprehension how a scholar could have committed himself to what he says in his notes: “There is no doubt that accusative of time may (!) signify duration; but seldom, I believe, except after verbs signifying action such as may imply time; not often after verbs, like λαμβανω, of action instantly, completed.” The truth is, as every person of learning must know, that as a rule the temporal accusative distinctively denotes duration, while the dative is just as notoriously used for a point of time, and the genitive when time is conceived as the necessary condition of the action, and therefore antecedent to it. Nor is this confined to certain words only. “All verbs imply a notion of time (says Jelf, vol. ii. p. 377) over which the action extends, coincident and co-extensive with it; whence all verbs may have an accusative case of this coincident notion of time, if it be required definitely to express it.” That I may not appear to have drawn the distinction of the Greek cases for controversial purposes, I must cite further from Jelf, § 606, obs. 2. “The genitive, accusative, and dative, therefore, are all used to express relations of time, and they differ as follows: the time is represented by the genitive as the antecedent condition of the action; by the dative as the space wherein the action took place; while the accusative expresses the

duration of the action. So compare ταύτης τῆς ἡμέρας οἱ Ἕλληνες ἐμαχέσαντο, this day giving them the occasion, with ταυτῃ τῃ ἡμέρᾳ, on this day, and ταύτην τὴν ἡμέραν, throughout this day." These general principles find the fullest illustration in the Hellenistic of the LXX. and the New Testament, as well as in classical Greek. See, for the time at which (the dative), Gen. 2:2, 3, 17; Gen. 3:5; Gen. 5:1, 2; Gen. 6:4; Gen. 7:11, 13; Gen. 8:4, 5, 13, 14; Gen. 14:4, 5; Gen. 15:16, 18; Gen. 17:26; Gen. 19:33, 34, 35; Gen. 21:4, 8; Gen. 22:3, etc. But why thus run through the occurrences? It were to cite from every book of the Bible, wherein epochs are spoken of. I will only therefore refer to the Apocalypse, as it may be alleged that the Greek is peculiar there: Rev. 1:10; Rev. 2:13; Rev. 9:6; Rev. 10:7; 11, 13; Rev. 18:8, 10, 16, 19. On the contrary, when duration is intended, the accusative is employed with equal regularity: Gen. 3:14, 17; Gen. 5:3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, etc., passim; Gen. 7:4, 12, 17, 24. Gen. 8:10, 12, 22; Gen. 9:28; Gen. 11:11-26 — in every verse, etc. So in Rev. 2:10 (in the text of B, thirty-two cursives, and apparently the ancient versions, Arethas, and the Catena, while A C many cursives, Andreas, etc., have ἡμερῶν); Rev. 6:11; Rev. 8:1; Rev. 9:5, 10; Rev. 11:2, 3, 6 (so in A B C P, most cursives, Hippolytus, Andreas — save in one manuscript — Arethas and the Catena), 9; Rev. 12:6, 14; Rev. 13:5; Rev. 17:10 (not to speak of 12); Rev. 20:2, 4, 6. It is certain, therefore, that the most natural rendering of μίαν

ὥραν is (not at, but) for one hour. (Compare Daniel 4:9; Matt. 20:12; 26:40.) As to the action expressed by the verb, the objection is futile. If the angel bound Satan for a thousand years, the ten horns may assuredly receive

kingly authority for one and the same time with the beast. It is not the mere act of binding or receiving, but the effect which spreads over the given time. Is it denied then that the point of time is ever found in the accusative? Not at all; "but this only (says Jelf, § 571, obs. i.) in general notions of time, such as seasonably, lastly, where the accusative stands for the cognate substantive." Nobody can pretend that such is the case in the disputed clause. And in my opinion it is more than questionable in the three exceptions which are produced (as if they were the ordinary construction!) from the New Testament: John 4:52, Acts 10:3, and Rev. 3:3. As to Acts 10:3, we know that the best manuscripts, the Alexandrian, the Vatican, the Sinaitic, the Palimpsest of Paris, the Laudian of Oxford, not to speak of some twenty-five juniors and other good authorities, insert περί, as all do in verse 9. As to John 4:52, may it not be accounted for by a reference to the question of the nobleman? He enquired the hour, τὴν ὥραν, ἐν ᾗ. The servants answer, Yesterday ἐβδόμην ὥραν. Then he knew that it was ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ὥρᾳ in which Jesus had spoken the word of healing power. So again, I think, Rev. 3:3 in probably due to a sort of mixed construction dependent on γνῷς. It may not be known generally that this is one of the instances alleged by unfriendly criticism in evidence that the Apocalypse employs the accusative of time contrary to good usage. But this, says Professor Stuart, is the only instance of the kind in the whole book. He explains it thus: "The time which is at the ultimate extent of his coming is here the prominent idea, and therefore the accusative is allowable." (Comment. Apoc. p. 204.) Matt. 24:41, 42, 43, 44, 50; Luke 12:39, 46, show plainly enough the usage undisturbed by special causes. The difficulty is merely technical in the

exceptional cases, which entirely differ from the text in question. As to it I see no ground for a doubt, nor have I any theory to uphold by it; for the true rendering implies the same starting-point, but it also determines the equal duration of the beast and the ten horns. The AEthiopic and Arabic understood the phrase as expressive of duration, the Syriac and Latin as a point of time. But why attach such moment to the Vulgate on a nicety like this, when the words which conclude the verse contain the gross blunder of rendering μετὰ τοῦ θ. as if it were μ. τὸ θ.? Some copies add "et" also — "[et] post bestiam." Cyril and Theodoret do not touch the question. Can Mr. E, produce a single instance from any correct writer where μίαν ὥραν or ἡμέραν, as here without a mixed construction, is used save for during one hour or day?

104 That is, the properly Roman part only of the empire, as we gather from Dan. 2:34, 35, and Dan. 7 — not to speak of Dan. 11; from all which it is plain that the iron-clay kingdom does not refer to what was once under the Roman sway outside Europe, but to the western part which never belonged to Greece. Persia, or Babylon.

105 Here is another flagrant proof of Mr. E.'s proneness to prefer a manifestly spurious reading which his hypothesis requires to the reading which has the support of the best authorities, and the suffrages of perhaps every critic of weight. But he now omits his words in the fifth edition, "I think with Daubuz, that this reading (και) is most unlikely. He writes thus: 'This (

και) is the reading of the Complutensian edition; but the rest have epi to qhrion instead of και το θηριον. This last is not consistent with the description, or distinction, of

the ten horns and the beast; and therefore I have received the other in my translation. For the beast, as such, can never (!) be said to hate the whore; but the horns upon the beast may' (p. 795). Vitringa too adopts the reading επι, 'decem cornu quae vidisti in Bestia.' Bellarmine urges the reading και, in defence of the Papacy against Protestants. 'For how can Bishops of Rome be antichrist,' he argues, 'when antichrist is to join with the ten kings and destroy Rome?' But the infallible Vulgate, we saw, as well as his brother Romanists, Ribera á Lapide, Malvenda, etc., are here against him. The prophetic sword's edge cannot be so averted from Rome. Bellarmine admits the beast to be antichrist, and the woman of the seven hills to be Rome. And what their pictured relation to each other in the vision but that of the closest intimacy and alliance? If και be read, what is said of the beast's hating the woman, etc., can be understood only of the city of Rome, not the church of Rome. For the apostate church's false prophet continues with the beast to the end. So Apoc. 19:19. Compare what is said of treading the winepress without the city, p. 15 supra." (H.A., vol. iv. p. 30, note l.) He now adds, "But see my note 3 on p. 74 of vol. iii. in support of the reading επι. I there cite Tertullian and Hippolytus, two Fathers of earlier date than any extant Greek MSS. of the Apocalypse in support of επι. It is the reading too of most copies of the Vulgate: Decem cornu[a] quae vidisti in Bestia, and adopted by the Romanists, Ribera, á Lapide, Malvenda, etc., as well as by our Protestant interpreters, Vitringa, Daubuz," etc. I have examined these citations, and am satisfied that neither Tertullian nor Hippolytus touch the question of ἐπί. Neither quotes the verse, nor says a word but what one who received χαί might say. Their codices too are

far inferior in antiquity to the great uncials of the Apocalypse. The best copies of the Vulgate (Amiat. Fuld. Tolet. Demidov. etc.) read “et;” so that no critic could hesitate that Jerome, “that most critical of all the Fathers,” rejected the reading which has crept into the inferior Greek and Latin manuscripts clean contrary to Mr. E.’s statement in vol. iii. p. 74, note 3. The healing of the wounded head is quite consistent with the destruction of the whore. As to the Romanist and Protestant commentators, not one of those cited was conversant with questions of text. So Desmarets, in his treatise on Antichrist, is imprudent enough to say, “Emendatissimi codices plerique. omnes, Stephanorum, nominatim, habeat ἐπί.” Can one wonder that Professor Delitzsch says, One untruth is the mother of the rest? Even Erasmus went against his authority; for Cod. Reuchl. is now known to read καί, not ἐπί. It is not even correct to speak of Tichonius; for he and Bede omit the phrase. On the whole, Bengel (a wild commentator on the book, but a true critic everywhere) was justified in saying of the common reading, “Fecit Erasmus, quem hic quoque sequntur, qui solent, editores quanquam lectionem hanc Latinis deterioribus fictam vel solus Andreas Caesariensis redarguit.” “Inanis esset tot codicum collatio, si talium quoque locorum germana lectio aut postponeretur sine fine, aut saltem in ancipiti relinqueretur.” Even the prejudiced Wolff, who differed from Bengel wherever it was possible, here truly remarks, “Vel omnium vel plerumque codicum Graecorum consensus nun parvi fieri debet.”

Revelation 18

I think that the case of Babylon illustrates strikingly how a judgment which is said to be God's may, at the same time, be executed by men. In Rev. 17 we saw that God will make use of the ten horns or kings, into whose dominions the Roman earth, at the close of this dispensation, will be divided, and will give especial prominence to what is called "the beast," that is, the power that gives a bond to those otherwise broken parts. The great imperial chief, and the various separate but no longer independent powers, his vassals, will be the instruments that God will employ for inflicting His judgment upon Babylon.

Now in Revelation 18 not a word of this occurs; and the difference is so obvious and great at first sight, that some have laid it down with decision that the judgment in Revelation 17 is previous to that in chapter 18; that the destruction of Babylon in the former is merely a human one; that her doom in the latter is subsequent and directly from God. But I would not dogmatize as to this explanation, conceiving, on the contrary, that in the same judgment you may have God's and man's side of the matter, God dealing providentially, and men as His hand in striking the blow. If there be a real distinction, the "fall" precedes the final destruction; a total degradation of her state ensues upon the assault of the civil powers, followed by an urgent call to God's people to come out; and then her utter everlasting destruction on the part of God.

If we look at Babylon in the Old Testament, justly did the prophets speak of its destruction as the day of the Lord

upon it. “This is the work of Jehovah of Hosts in the land of the Chaldeans.” (Jer. 1.) At the same time it is quite certain that the medium through which God brought about the ruin of Babylon was the celebrated Cyrus, the leader of the Medo-Persian army. In the same way, in Rev. 17, we see the actual human instruments. The influence of Babylon extended much beyond, but the ten horns of the Roman earth were those powers that radiated as it were from her very centre. And therefore it may be that God mentions in that chapter that these powers which seemed to be so linked with Babylon as her abject slaves (the imperial power itself having been but a beast of burden to her) are to turn round at a certain time appointed by God, and to wreak their vengeance, scorn, and hatred upon her. They have human objects, no doubt, but they are accomplishing this work of God’s righteous retribution. God will have put it into their hearts to agree, and give their kingdom to the beast, until His words be consummated.

But in Rev. 18 human instruments disappear, and when this other angel comes down from heaven, he says not a word of those that God had employed as the means of the fall of Babylon; they are left out, and the Lord God it is that judges her. God could just as easily have destroyed Babylon without the ten kings as with them. They were in no way necessary. But it is a part of His government of the earth, if she had reigned over kings and committed fornication with them before, to employ the ten horns to humble her at the end. They might be bad men with bad objects. It is therefore necessary to show the saints distinctly that God is against Babylon. Let us now consider a little this new point of view, in which we have only two parties presented in the scene.

There is Babylon upon earth and there is God in heaven; and the Lord God is against the proud queenly city that had been the constant enemy of God and of His people — that had been the instrument of Satan to entice and draw away her victims into an evil alliance and into idolatry. Such is the way Babylon is looked at here. And yet this Babylon is the one that arrogated to herself the place and function of making God known. For the great city is no longer a heathen power: not like Babylon of old, a stranger outside, and used of God as a means of inflicting chastisement on His people Israel. I conceive that the Babylon of Revelation is most clearly a reference to Old Testament Babylon, but applied to New Testament subjects. In the Old Testament, the great thought of God was His people and land: and there was also a city on which His eye rested with special affection. For He not only loved the people, but was interested in what He gave the people. But that has entirely passed away since the rejected Christ was crucified. From that moment till now there has been no one place more holy than another. That which had been the holy city was now as it were Aceldama, the field stained with the blood of the Lord Jesus. But God's eye saw that in process of time the great city of the earth would profess Christ's name, and would take advantage of His own revelation, and out of the corrupted and fallen state of Christianity would make a system of its own — borrowing all that it could take from Judaism, and mingling it with its own Gentile evil, so as thus to work out a system most hateful to God, and seducing to man.

I have no doubt, therefore, that in this chapter it is Rome that is the peculiar object of God's judgment. Not

that Rome is all that is meant by Babylon, but that Rome is the centre of it; because it is of all others the most guilty in God's sight. Not Rome in the pagan form; not merely Rome in our own days, bad as it is, and becoming increasingly wicked. But I think that the Babylon of the Apocalypse is not merely that system which is now opposed to Christianity, but Babylon when it will have opposed the last testimony that God will send — this testimony of the Son of man's kingdom that is about to be set up over His beloved people. For God never gives up His purpose. It is part of the character of God never to repent of His gifts and calling. Where it is not a purpose of mercy but a threat, God may and loves to bend. That He does so we know from the case of Nineveh; though the blow was then struck and will be again at some future time. He will allow men to say that He has changed his mind when it is a question of delaying a punishment for sin; but whenever, on the other side, it is God's purpose to bless a people, He never gives up that. This is worthy of God. He is full of mercy. He will allow His prophecy against Nineveh sent through His servant Jonah to appear to be set aside; He does not mind what men say about that. He is quite willing for them to think that He has in mercy changed His mind, and that the sentence of destruction has been set aside, where there has been humbling and repentance before God. But the blessed thing we find is this, that though man's failure, the church's failure, and the like may seem to have jeoparded the blessed purpose that God has in store for His people, and for His own glory, all that is of God comes out only the brighter another day.

Let us look at Babylon in its past history, and consider how that name was suited to express the special evil that was to grow up out of the corruption of Christianity. In Genesis 10 we have the first mention of Babel. And there we have it connected with a wilful man, who had first shown his cunning with regard to brute beasts, and who soon began to turn against his fellows all the craft and experience he had acquired in a lower sphere. Nimrod is the first person with whom you have Babel associated. It is man concentrating power in. himself But in the next chapter (Gen. 11) we have another idea. It is not only one man exalting himself and others subjected to him by fraud or force, but a grand effort of men gathering themselves together to build something permanent and strong and high — a tower that would reach toward heaven, and gain them a name upon earth. Here, then, we have the two thoughts that are always more or less connected with Babylon. It may take the form of an individual who exalts himself, or of men combining for some notable enterprise or it may be a mixture of both principles.

Now this you have further and still more plainly developed, when you come down to the history of the Jewish nation. God called them out as a people, and gave them special privileges and blessings. They fell into idolatry, the sin which sprang from Babylon as its great and primitive source; and Babylon becomes the chief means of judgment for the people of God, and the scene of Judah’s captivity. There again we behold Nebuchadnezzar, the golden head of the image, answering to Nimrod, and the great city that he built, which answers to the tower of Babel — the two ideas being united, as indeed they soon became at first; for

Babel was the beginning of Nimrod's kingdom. The natural heart covets present exaltation for man on the earth, and this too clothed with a religious sanction, but with an idolatrous intent.

Now the Holy Ghost in the New Testament takes up the term "Babylon" and applies it to the corruption that was to issue in professing Christendom. When God saves souls, He does not allow them to choose their own path in the world; still less can He own their choosing their own path in the church. He who understands his place as belonging to God has his will broken. He is privileged to treat his nature as a dead and evil thing; not on the ground of a slave working for something and because he must, but in the liberty of a son of God — of one who has been blessed by God, and who has the interests of his Father at heart. But it is not his Father's will that at the present time he should meddle with the world, or have a place in it. According to God's mind the world is not good enough for the Christian, because it is practically under the power of the enemy. There is a time coming when the world will be put under the children of God, when they will judge the world. But this can never be until Satan is set aside, and Christ publicly exalted over the earth as well as in heaven. Meanwhile the saints have to wait in faith and patience. And this is the argument which the apostle urges in 1 Cor. 6 why brethren in Christ should have nothing to do with the world's judgments now. It was beneath their dignity as children of God to carry their differences there; it was vain to try to reform the world. Such a thought never entered the apostle's mind. For faith, while it delights in the deliverance of poor sinners, looks at the world with

God as already judged, and only waiting for the execution of the sentence at Christ's coming.

But while the apostle exhorts to subjection to the powers that be, he never says, You brethren, that have posts of honour in the earth, you are to continue there. This would have been to defeat the object of God, whose children are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world. For God is not now undertaking to govern the world, save in His secret providence of course. When the kingdom of this world as a fact becomes His, He begins by judging the corrupters of the earth, and more particularly every iniquity done under the name of Christ. This is not what God does now: He is rather testing the souls of His people in a place of temptation, where everything is contrary to His name. If they are faithful, they will suffer persecution; if unfaithful, they may be made much of by the world. They may have its ease and honour, but they assuredly will be used by Satan to keep all quiet; for nothing furnishes such a sanction to evil as a good man who joins the world and gives it countenance. Remember Lot He was in the gate of Sodom, the place where justice was administered. His position there was as dishonouring to God as it was miserable to himself. He had to be forced out of it at last; but even before he was taken out of Sodom, the well-watered plains had lost their value in, his eyes. Remember also Lot's wife.

His righteous soul was vexed with their unlawful deeds, he himself was the object of their taunts. "This one fellow," said they, "came into sojourn, and he will needs be a judge." They saw the incongruity of his position, as worldly men generally are quick to perceive the failures of the believer. Alas! it is easy to understand how a man

may be godly in the main, and yet found in circumstances where a Christian ought not to be, and that so far he is not a true witness for God. Whether I look at the individual Christian or at the church, I see that God's object is to have a testimony to His own glory in the world; to have those who are for Him, not in the way of putting down the world, much less of seeking to get the honour and riches of the world; but willing for Christ's sake to abandon what they liked best, because they look not at the things which are seen, but at the unseen and eternal. This is grace's triumph, and so far as it is true of us, we are real witnesses for God. On the other hand, if we are seeking to gain or retain the world along with Christ, the principle of Babylon is begun.

No doubt, Rev. 17, 18 go much farther than this, and show that a vast religiously corrupting system is meant. This is made very plain by comparing Rev. 17:1, 2, 3, with Rev. 21:9, 10, 11. In Rev. 17:1, it is said, "There came one of the seven angels,.... and talked with me, saying, Come hither; I will show thee the judgment [or sentence] of the great whore, that sitteth by the many waters." But again, in Rev. 21:9, we have another scene. "There came unto me one of the seven angels, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." Now it is evident that the Holy Ghost uses the same kind of introduction for these two women, for the purpose, I think, of our connecting them together. The same guide, one of the seven-vial angels, takes John, and shows him in the wilderness this earthly and corrupt woman; afterwards, in the closing scene, he takes him to an exceedingly high mountain, and shows him a heavenly one. As the heavenly woman is the symbol of the heavenly church, so is Babylon of a

corrupt religious body. It is that which takes the place of the church, and of being the witness for God upon earth, while it carries on every wicked commerce with those who are exalted here below. There is first, as usual, the carnal and earthly, then the spiritual and heavenly. After the false system of men and Satan disappears, the true is displayed in the glory of God.

Now, though we may look for a future development of Babylon, as opposing God's final testimony of the kingdom to all nations before the end come, yet I think that, even at the present moment, there need be no difficulty in judging where the features of Babylon are found most fully. It is a religious system that governs a number of kings, not an establishment that is at the mercy of the secular government. This is sin, but it is not the wickedness spoken of here. Babylon is an incomparably darker, deeper, and more wide-spread system of religious corruption — arrogating to itself the name of the church of God exclusively, setting itself above kings, intriguing with them, but at the same time maintaining its supremacy above them all; stupefying the masses with the poison of her exciting falsehoods: arrayed in all the meretricious splendour of the world; the fountain-head of the worst idolatry under the sun; and finally manifesting a spirit of blood-thirsty persecution against the true saints and witnesses of Jesus, under the usurped pretence of His will and authority. There is one that does claim this place — one that takes it as given by God — one whose seat and centre are found in the very heart of what was once the Roman empire — a religious system that affects universal dominion, and that, in order to accomplish it, either wins by every enticing art, or extinguishes all

opposition in the blood of heretics so-called, her victims. “By thy sorceries were all nations deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth” (verses 23, 24). For any unprejudiced person who reads this description of Babylon calmly, and asks himself, What is that professing Christian body so abounding in idols, so authoritative over the kings of the earth, so indulgent to the wicked, and so cruel to the righteous? it is impossible not to see the answer.106 As to the Greek and Oriental churches, as to the English, Scotch, and other reformed national establishments, they are more or less notoriously subservient to the government which has to do with each of them. This may be, and I believe is evil. But there are two ways in which a religious system may act contrary to Christ: either by a guilty subjection to the world, or by a still more guilty supremacy over it — in short, by being the world’s slave or the world’s mistress. At the present time there is only one religious system which pretends to have kings at its feet; and this is the system of Rome, which therefore answers to Babylon. It is a great mistake to suppose that we have done with it, or that its day is over. Rome may yet have a short-lived triumph. Its emissaries are actively abroad all over the world, and the foundations of Protestantism are being undermined everywhere. Those who are looking for Christianity, as things are, to overthrow all its adversaries on earth, are in my opinion in great danger of being deceived, through the unscriptural hope of getting a church as great or greater in good than that of Rome is in evil. For there will come a fearful struggle yet, and Rome, as I conceive, will seem to acquire vast influence, and to put down every contrary voice, except the feeble whisper of the few

witnesses spoken of here, who either die by her or come out of her. God will hear them, but as far as all open or public testimony for Him is concerned, it will be swamped by Babylon. And as to putting Babylon down, it is not by the gospel, or by the force of truth that it will be done, but by the will and wrath of men. Wherever Romanism gains the day, infidelity is the necessary consequence; and, therefore, Babylon always prepares the way for the last effort of the beast against the Lamb. But before the close, the beast gets thoroughly the upper hand, and Babylon becomes food for him and the ten horns.

Is this what is introduced to us here? Man is left out; the ten horns are not once alluded to in Revelation 18, though the kings of the earth are. The difference is this. “In the kings of the earth,” I apprehend, are embraced all those rulers of Christendom with whom she had been on terms of bad intimacy, or who had had evil connection with her. The ten horns are the chiefs of the final divided state of the empire and the active instruments of her devastation, as we are told in Revelation 17. The kings of the earth are her mourners, not her burners Here in chapter 18 her hour is come, and it is the Lord God that hath judged her.

You will observe the voice from heaven here: “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues” (verse 4). The receiving of her plagues is not the divine motive for separation. Men would be anxious enough about that. But the great thing that God looks for from His people is this — that they should not be partakers of her sins. I would put it to every Christian, how far is he in

sympathy with God's mind touching Babylon and its sins? How far does he feel the evil of it, and judge it?

Babylon does not seek heaven, but the earth — not the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow, but to sit as a queen and to see no sorrow. Babylon is content with worldly exaltation. If you steer clear of this, Babylon has no attractions for you; and the present danger of every soul from Babylon is the gradual caring for and allowance in Christians of what man values on the earth. Of late years there has been no little change in the thoughts of Christians as to the present enjoyment of prosperity and pleasure in this world. But there is amazing danger in it. For what is the great thought of it all? Man rising, progressing, exalting himself — man showing what he can do, and how improve; and this is sought to be connected with the name and sanction of Christ! Alas! it is Babylon the great (verses 9-19). In her we see the end of the heart's desire, along with Christ, to enjoy all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. I do not wonder at an unconverted man seeking to make the world pleasant: Cain did it, and there is such a thing now as going in the way of Cain. These are the people that handle all sorts of musical instruments, and the artificers in brass and iron. It is true that these things sprang up in a very early hour of the world, but still the Spirit of God does not tell us for nothing that they were in the family of Cain, not in the family of Seth.

Every child of man stands responsible to God, whether converted or not, to own his outcast state as a sinner: he has no right to drown his conscience in the pleasures and glory of the world. But bad as this may be, the thing

that God most hates, and that He will judge in an awful and public manner, even in this world, is the tacking on the name of Christ to the indulgence of worldly lusts. Is it not the desire, even of many Christians, to have the grandeur and riches of the world at their back? I do not doubt that they heartily wish to have people converted, but they would like them to bring their earthly influence along with them. This is the spirit of Babylon. What the Lord looks for from us is doing the will of God, suffering for it, and taking it patiently. Any of these things which the heart covets will be found to involve the will of man. There is not a single position of distinction or of glory in the world but what requires a man to give up a good conscience towards God. In other words, you cannot be a member of the world and act faithfully as a member of Christ. If you value and wish to follow the world, you will make all sorts of excuses, and argue for a compromise; but this only shows how far the leaven of Babylon has affected your soul.

God gathers souls round Jesus — that is, Jesus rejected, and gone up to heaven. Therefore the Church is based on these two fundamental truths. She has got the cross, and she is united to Christ in heavenly glory by the Holy Ghost sent down. And the cross and heavenly glory will not mingle with the world. This is the very thing that puts my heart to the test. If Christ is my object, I shall not want the world; I shall be looking up it may be feebly, but still looking up to heaven; and there will be the one object that God uses to strengthen me by, giving me willingness to suffer in the consciousness of having Christ in the glory. Whenever the church craves after something else, as the esteem and honour of the world, or even social improvement, she denies her proper glory.

Popery mistook the true character of the church, followed the Jewish system, and thought that people ought to bring their gold and silver and precious stones and goodly things to honour the Lord with. (See verses 12-14.) But God was wiser than men, and shows that all this pretence of honouring God is a mere sham, and that what people really want is to honour themselves. They are seeking what attracts and makes them an object of attraction, whilst they cover up their real object under the plea of the name of Christ. This is what God will judge, and what infects the whole of Christendom increasingly before judgment comes. You may ask me how that can be possible, when there are so many societies growing up, and such an active energy, religious and moral, dealing with the various forms of public evil throughout the world. I am not telling you what I see, but what God's word shows — the all but universal prevalence before the close of a corrupt system, which plainly has its centre in Rome, though taking a larger compass, so as to embrace every religious institution107 which, however opposed it may seem to Popery now, does not link a soul with heaven. There is no safety for any person who is building on the earth. The heavenly saints will be taken away before the judgment falls upon Babylon. They are not referred to in that word, "Come out of her, my people." This is spoken of God's earthly people108 by and by. But at the same time, its principle fully applies. For the essence of Babylon is the union of the world with the name of Christ. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you."

The Lord will not hold any man guiltless who has a conscience of what is due to Christ and does not follow it. To such I would say, this is what you will prove: you will go on for a time and be troubled with the truth, for it will condemn you; but ere long you will find that all taste for it is lost; you will tire of it and even turn against it, and then will become morally ripe for Babylon when it bids seriously for you. If I am guilty of the spirit of Babylon, this is what God looks at, as far as I am concerned. The person who travels in her path cannot but be a partaker of her sin. And who so oppose the truth, as those that corrupt it? Who so hate, as those that are condemned of themselves?

There is a great work, not only of dissolving and breaking up what is old, but uniting and amalgamating for various purposes, going on now; and as this was found in Babylon at the very beginning (Gen. 11), so, in the long run, it will be found to serve the purpose of that great city before the Lord God has for ever judged her.

There will be, I believe from various scriptures, an astonishing mixture of professing Christianity with Judaism: and the latter, as judged by the new and full revelation of Christ in the New Testament, is no better than heathenism. (Gal. 4.) We know how tender the Spirit was in bearing with the weakness, the scruples, the attachment to old religious habits in such of the Christians as had been Jews (Rom. 14); but it was a very different thing when teachers sought to impose Jewish ordinances on the Gentile converts. The same Spirit treated a ritual borrowed by Gentiles from Jews as the same thing in principle as old and open pagan idolatry. “But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and

beggarly elements of the world, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years." Popery is the most salient and hateful exhibition of this amalgam now; but greater abominations shall appear. Sacramentalism and rationalism, in these and other Protestant lands, are each provoking the other to excesses previously unexampled. When too was ever known such public indifference, which desires leisure for commerce abroad and social development at home? The result will appear in the last stages of Babylon and the beast.

In the scene before us we have had the lament of kings, merchants, and all who had to do with the unholy traffic of Babylon. Heaven, and especially the "saints" (for so it should be read) and the apostles and the prophets, are called to rejoice at God's judgment: "God hath avenged you [or literally, judged your judgment] on her." In the mighty angel's solemn act and word, which closes the chapter (verses 21-24), not only are set forth the violence of her ruin and its totality, but the reason of it as regards the nations — deceiving them all by her sorceries. The last verse adds another and awful cause — Babylon's inheritance of Jerusalem in blood-guiltiness. "And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth."

The Lord grant that, instead of merely looking without and occupying ourselves with condemning others, we may take good care that our own souls are preserved from the contaminations of Babylon. May our affections be kept true to Himself — the only real guard against the seductions of the enemy! We are espoused as a chaste virgin to Christ. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

106 The effort of the celebrated and subtle Bossuet to torn aside the application of Babylon in Rev. 17 and 18 from Christianised or Papal Rome is not only weak, but when duly sifted brings out the truth more evidently. His argument is that the church being married to Christ, the guilty church would be an adulteress rather than a harlot. The answer is, not merely that fornication is the generic term, is every one may see in both Old and New Testaments, but that. even applied with the utmost rigour, a harlot most correctly describes the present sin, because the church is now espoused to Christ, not married. The marriage, according to the Apocalypse, is only consummated after Babylon's final judgment in Revelation 19.

107 Babylon is not only herself "the great harlot," but "the mother of the harlots and the abominations of the earth." There are more of kindred corruptions in religion, though Rome is pre-eminent, "the mother and mistress," as she claims, of others.

108 Hence there is no need to adopt Vitringa's odd notion, that verse 6 is addressed to the kings, nor to destroy the distinctive practical calling of the church by supposing that she is to be the avenger of Babylon's wrongs. God's retributive justice will send its more fitting appeal to His people the Jews, who are to be the witnesses of His righteous government here below.

Revelation 19

We are now approaching a brighter and happier portion of the book. The providential judgments of God, whether more secret like the seals, more loudly summoning men to repent like the trumpets, or more positive and distinct wrath like the vials, have had their full course. And now, when Babylon who had set herself up to represent God in His grace and truth arrogated to herself exclusively the name of the church, the spouse of Christ — when she was set aside for ever, there was a burden gone — a heavy burden that had long grieved the heavens and corrupted the earth.

There was freedom, so to speak, now for God to make good the precious things which He had in His heart for poor beguiled men; and that too, as it ought to be, through and to the praise of the Lamb. Hence you have two things connected together at the beginning of this chapter. The first is the call to rejoice. “The great whore” had presented an obstinate barrier to blessing; not simply because she was evil, but because her profession had been all that was holy and true, while in effect she it was who above all had been active in corrupting grace and truth as far as possible; she had utterly and systematically denied Christ in effect, though parading everywhere the outward symbol of His cross. In vain for her had God’s character shone out in Christ; in vain had God pronounced on man and the world; in vain begun a new creation whose Head took His place in heavenly glory. She associated His name with the flesh and the earth, and there sought and laid up her treasures. In vain had God brought light and

incorruptibility to light by the gospel. She plunged men into deeper uncertainty and more positive error than ever, teaching them that every gift of God, and even salvation, may be bought with money; cheating souls to sleep by the hope that all would go on well, and that the Lord was not yet coming in judgment. Thus had she shut up, as far as could be, the streams of blessing from the world. But now the true and righteous judgment of God had smitten her, and there is rejoicing in heaven.

In Revelation 18 there was universal earthly sorrow. The kings of the earth who had committed fornication with her lamented. The merchants that had been enriched by her were wailing, Indeed, there was no class free from her snares, and now all that had had to do with her were full of sorrow over Babylon. But heaven was called to rejoice, and here we have the answer: “I heard as it were a loud voice of much people in heaven,” not exactly, I heard a great voice of much people, but “as it were a loud voice,” etc. The words “as it were” have been dropped, but I believe they ought to be inserted; just as a little lower down, in verse 6, it is said, “I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters,” etc. “And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.” As far as Babylon was concerned, this was her sad amen, if I may so say, to the joy of heaven.

But we are not left with a vague rumour of praise and gladness, not knowing from whom exactly it comes. There appear the twenty-four elders, who had understanding of the mind of Christ, and the four living creatures, that had been from the beginning associated with the providential judgments of God, or at least a certain part of them. These “fell down and worshipped God that sat upon the throne, saying, Amen;

Alleluia" (ver. 4). It is not Christ, who has taken His place upon His own throne yet, but they worship "God that sat on the throne," etc. "And a voice came out of the throne," for all must speak now, "saying, Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as it were the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice and give honour to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready" (ver. 5-7).

This is the second part. Not only is the harlot's day over, but the consummation of the bride's blessing is come. it is important to observe that this is not the moment when the Lord comes to receive the heavenly church. It is a scene in heaven, not the Lord Jesus meeting His saints in the air. A few verses lower down we do get heaven opened, and Christ comes out of it, and the saints follow Him. Nothing, therefore, can be more simple or certain than the inference that the saints were already there. They must have been in heaven before, in order to follow Christ thence when He comes to judge. Now, I ask, how did they get there? They are not said to be now taken up to the Father's house. We have the old familiar parties in heaven. But we have a new fact: the bride is married in heaven — the one for whom Christ reserves the brightest grace and glory — she gets ready; and now is announced, not merely the song of triumph, because of the judgment of evil, but the marriage of the Lamb. "Let us be glad and rejoice." It is grace that flows out to others. "And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen clean and white." As for the other woman, she had somehow fine linen too, with her pearls

and her other adornments. (Rev. 18:12,) But it was never said of Babylon that it was granted her. We do not hear how she got it. But to the Lamb's wife, to her it was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen. The fine linen is the righteousnesses of saints (verse 8). God does not forget the work of faith or labour of love.

"And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." There is evidently a peculiar solemnity in winding up this account. We are called upon to pause and listen and weigh. "These are the true sayings of God." To the suffering one, the one that had shared the Lamb's path of sorrow upon earth, to her was now given the fullest joy above. But the marriage scene of the Lamb is only intimated, and not described here. The purpose of the Revelation is not to show us the Father's house, nor its inner scenes. God is never even called our Father in this book, because it opens out, not the intimacy of His love to us, but rather the righteous ways of God — the establishment of the kingdom and the end, when He is all in all. True, there must be the stern unsparing judgment of all this evil, and this we have had. But when God's part comes, and the full blessedness of the church, there is but an announcement of it — the bride has made herself ready. It is left there comparatively hidden. We are told of the invitations to it, as it is said in verse 9: "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb."

And now I would just ask you to pause before going farther. Is it too much to suppose that the bride, the Lamb's wife, is a different symbol, that is, represents a class of saints different from these blessed ones who are invited to her marriage? Who is it that God means by

these two distinct symbols? As to the bride, the Lamb's wife, few would have the least difficulty. Almost every one sees in her the church — the one that is constantly presented in the New Testament scripture as the heavenly bride of the Lord Jesus Christ. One turns to Eph. 5, where this relationship is brought out, and the development in her behalf of the fulness of Christ's affections. Observe, by the way, that there it is not merely a question of a future epoch, because the Holy Ghost shows that this is a relationship established now. "Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it" It is true, from the very first moment when God began to form the church on earth by the presence of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

The church is always regarded as a real and subsisting body, because wherever the Holy Ghost is, there is the church. The Holy Ghost was sent down, and it is His personal presence that forms the church. That is the reason why those saints who depart to be with Christ are not directly spoken of as the church. Of course, individually they are members of the church, but the scriptures which speak of the church contemplate its existence as the body of Christ on earth. Ordinarily men talk of the church visible and invisible, militant and triumphant, and think that if Christians depart to be with Christ, there more particularly, and in the truest season, is the church. Yet the word of God never so speaks, but predicates the church of such as are called even here below, and are baptized by one Spirit into one body. No doubt, when all are gathered together as a fact in heaven, it will be the church, and is so spoken of in Eph. 5:27, and perhaps a few more texts. But in general in scripture, where the church is spoken of, it means the

actual assembly of God on the earth at any given time. The Holy Ghost was there; and wherever the Holy Ghost dwells, He knits and joins the body into one. This is a weighty truth, and involves the most important consequences.

For I repeat, we are put into this relationship with Christ at the present moment. It is not that we have the hope merely of being made the bride of Christ by and by: we are espoused to Christ now. We shall have the marriage or the actual consummation by and by, when all the members are brought in. But the great and blessed and practical thing for our souls is, that we are brought into this position of union now. It is not only that the affection on which the marriage is grounded is true now; but more than this, the Holy Ghost is on earth uniting the saints to Christ in heaven, and making them as truly one with Him now as they ever will be. When Christ comes, there will be the removal of all hindrances — the putting aside of what Satan employs to make us forget our relationship to Christ, and the change of our vile body according to the body of His glory. But it is important to remember that our oneness with Christ as His body depends on the presence of the Holy Ghost, who has knit us up with Christ in heaven. We are one with Him now.

Here, then, the Holy Ghost seems to show that there are others to be there, not as the bride, but as guests, so to speak. These are the called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. You may remember John the Baptist speaking of himself as the friend of the Bridegroom. I presume that those who are here said to be invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb answer somewhat to the friends of the Bridegroom. They are not angels, for the

word “called unto the marriage” would not be said of angels. These last are never characterised as “called” because the elect angels have always abode in their first estate. The calling of God comes to those who are in a low place to deliver them out of it. We have all, I suppose, been in the habit of assuming that if a man is a saint of God he necessarily belongs to the church, and that there is only one common blessing for all saints of all times. Here you find the contrary laid down plainly, and upon the face of scripture. You have here a marriage supper, and one singled out for especial joy, called the bride, the Lamb’s wife (composed, it may be, of myriads of people, but here recognized in unity of blessing, being united under one term, that of “the bride,” to show that they have the same portion of love and blessedness). But this is not true of all saints, for there are others who are not in this position; they are present as guests at the marriage supper of the Lamb, not as His bride.

“And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.” What strikes me is the remarkable way in which that solemn appeal comes in, anticipating that man too would depart from His word. John was going to worship the angel! — the other extreme; but such extremes often meet.

We had a similar caution in the beginning of the book. The Holy Ghost there says, “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein.” He knew well that many would treat the book lightly, and, not understanding, would count it dry and unprofitable. Alas! for such as say, “There is nothing for my soul there!” There is no book in the Bible where the Holy

Ghost so encourages you at the very threshold to hear what God says therein, as the Book of the Revelation. And what makes it the more striking is, that the same kind of admonition occurs at the end, when we have been brought to the close of all the dealings of God, in the last chapter. “And he said unto me, These things are faithful and true.... Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book:” not merely that keepeth the sayings of some particular and choice parts of it, but of the book as a whole. There is the broadest statement: “Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.” Thus the Holy Ghost seems to have taken especial pains to warn us against the unbelief of our hearts, as well as against our idolatry (verses 9, 10).

But more particularly (verse 9) it would seem that we have a guard against the indiscriminate notions which have generally prevailed, even among Christians.

“Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.” Besides the Bride, there are other blessed persons who will be there. Now, looking at Heb. 12, I find that in the roll of blessing there are other classes besides the church of the first-born ones. “But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, the general assembly.” For it is well known that such is the true meaning and connection of the verse. “The general assembly” does not belong to “the church of the first-born,” but to myriads of angels in verse 22. It may help to make it plain to any reader if it be borne in mind that the word “and” is always the connecting link, which

introduces every fresh clause. And this is allowed by those who have no pretensions to what is called dispensational light — that is, by men who simply give their opinion on the genuine structure of the sentence. This being admitted, observe what is next given here: “Ye are come.... to the church of the first-born ones, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.” I am aware that there are some who say that all these mean the same thing; that the heavenly Jerusalem, and mount Zion, as well as the spirits of just men made perfect, are substantially no other than the church of the first-born. But just look at the passage again, and consider if such a thought is allowable for a moment. God Himself is spoken of here, and Jesus the Mediator, and myriads of angels. Does any man mean to say, that these are all the same thing? And yet this might as well be said, if the other objects in the scene are not expressly distinct.

What then is the real meaning of these clauses? “Ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.” When mount Zion was referred to, a Jew would naturally think of the earthly city around that celebrated mountain. But the Holy Ghost says, this is not your portion. You are come to the heavenly Jerusalem;109 not to the city of dying David, but to the city of the living God. Then we have “an innumerable company of angels;” and this is called “the general assembly.”

Here plainly we have different objects of millennial glory to which the saints were already said to be come in spirit. There is the mount Zion. Next is the heavenly city the image of the glory that is coming by and by — the city for which Abraham and the other patriarchs waited.

Then we have the angelic host. Next we see the church of the first-born, not merely the local scene of heavenly glory, but the complete assembly of the heirs who are written in heaven in contrast with the earthly firstborn Israel. Then we rise up to God the Judge of all. The Spirit has led us on from the mount Zion. And now we are brought down from God in His judicial character to the spirits of just men made perfect. It is a very remarkable position in which these are put. We probably, if we had had to do with it, might have set them first; but the object was to correct the Jewish tendencies of those here addressed, and to give prominence to what was heavenly. Then, having the heavenly seat of glory, and the church in their due place, we get God Himself as the Judge of all, and, following this, those saints who had known God as so acting on the earth. Hence they are called here the spirits of just men made perfect. They are, I think, clearly the Old Testament saints. (Compare Rev. 11:39, 40.) For they, and not the church, are a class that could be most aptly described as the spirits of just men made perfect. They were in the separate condition then, and are so still. This will never be true of the church as a whole. When the moment comes for the church to leave the world and meet the Lord, there will be a part of the church upon the earth, not in the condition of spirits at all: there will be those that are alive ad remain to the coming of the Lord. Of the church it is said, “We shall not all sleep.” So that this description never can apply to the church of God as such.

We have had the church already separate and distinct from the spirits of just men made perfect. It is not more certain that these are saints than that they are not the

church. Carry the light of this back to Rev. 19. We read there of the church having made herself ready, and are not surprised to read also, as a distinct symbol in the same circle, “Blessed are they that are called110 unto the marriage supper of the Lamb” (verse 9). Are they not plainly all the risen saints, save those baptized into the one body, the bride of Christ?

The note of Daubuz will interest many. “It is one thing to be marriage, and another to be invited to a marriage feast. This is evident; and the Holy Ghost distinguishes very well the different states of these two sorts of persons. The bride, to whom [fine, linen] is given, being the persons to whom a perfect justification and the effects of it are awarded, are persons in a state of resurrection, to whom Christ has performed His pre-contract. But they who sic only invited to the feast cannot be the same as those that are married. They who are glorified with Bysse, and thereby declared fully justified and holy must of course be happy; but this happiness is pronounced to another sort of persons. Who are they then? Even the, converted nations, (?) all such men as, having not yet tasted of death and appeared before God’s judgment seat, till Death and Hades are removed, are still in this life, and in a state of infirmity as to their flesh; not being indeed impeccable, but assisted very much by very great and extraordinary effusions of grace. However, the Holy Ghost doth not pronounce them holy, which in this place would be taken for perfect holiness, but barely happy; whereas those who have a share in the first resurrection are blessed and holy both. This blessing and happiness consists, as it is expressed in Revelation 21:24, in this, that they walk in the light of the New Jerusalem,” etc. (Perp. Comm. p.

869.) Readers may differ in the measure of their acquiescence with these thoughts; but who will not admit their interest and acuteness?

John then, instead of paying homage to the angel (so natural to the heart), was to feel that the angel is the fellow-servant of himself and of his brethren that have the testimony of Jesus. All such homage is due to God. For we must also remember that the testimony of Jesus is not limited to Christianity, nor to the Spirit's presence in the church. What He works as the Spirit of prophecy (and so He will work in the saints after our translation to heaven) is the testimony of Jesus as truly as what He gives us now as the power of our communion with the Father and the Son.

But now we have another scene. It is no longer what is going on above, but heaven is open: "And behold, a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness doth he judge and make war." It is not a door opened in heaven, nor the prophet caught up there, as we have seen in Revelation 4. Nor is it anything that had been done then or there. But now heaven is open, and the symbol of the power appears which comes to subdue the earth, not without the signs of victory. The horse is always the symbol of power connected with the earth; and it has the colour of prosperity. It is a white horse. None, I trust, would be so foolish as to imagine that, when this blessed scene really comes, it will be a question of horses literally. It is the symbol that passed before the eye of the prophet, employed to show certain realities that will take place by and by. Heaven is seen opened for the purpose of victory over the earth. And the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is plainly referred to as the rider: He is

the one who directs the power — “He that sitteth on him [called] Faithful and True, and in righteousness doth he judge and make war” (verse 11). This is the subject of the chapter. In the next chapter it is not a white horse that is seen, but a throne, which is the symbol of another character altogether. The throne is for rule, not conquest: the horse is for conquest, not a reign. The Lord Jesus is here seen putting forth His power to put down His enemies; as in Revelation 20 we have the picture of His reign.

Next, “His eyes were as a flame of fire.” That is, there is divine discernment in judging. “And on his head were many diadems” or royal crowns. And he had a name written, that no man knew but he himself” (verse 12). It is not merely in a certain conferred glory that He comes forth, but in the exercise of His own divine power. It is quite true that He has a name given to Him, as we see in Phil. 2. “Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.” But here it seems not to be that name of Lord which we all confess, but one “which no man knew but he himself.” He has a glory that is essentially His own, distinct from that which was His reward and incapable of being shared with others; a glory which He has in His own right as a divine person. The name of the Lord here appears to express this, what He really is in His own nature. So, speaking of His person, it is said in Matt. 11, “No man knoweth the Son but the Father.” And it is remarkable how this is stated, in order to guard against the workings of our minds. Wherever there is a question of His Son, God is ever jealous about it. When speaking about the Father it is added, “and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him;” but it is not said that the Father

reveals the Son to any one. “No man knoweth the Son, but the Father” — and there we stop. May we not say that thus God guards against the familiarity with which man would venture to analyze the person of Christ? There is nothing so offensive to God as this irreverence. The humanity and the humiliation of the Lord Jesus Christ are brought out plainly in scripture.

But there is no person in the Trinity whose divine glory is more strongly maintained than the Son’s — perhaps none so much. It is remarkable that while the same sort of expression is used about God as such in Rom. 1:25, and about the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in 2 Cor. 11:31, as about Christ in Rom. 9:6, yet there is a further expression about the Lord Jesus that is not used about the Father. God the Father is said to be blessed for evermore, and Christ “God over all blessed for evermore.” The Holy Spirit knew that man was prepared to outrage the person and envy the glory of the Son, and foresaw that, even where they professed to know Him, He would be crucified afresh and put to open shame. Therefore it is that there is no one thing the Holy Ghost more insists upon, than the glory of the Lord Jesus, as indeed He is the constant object of the enemy’s attacks. It is the true key to almost every question of doctrinal difficulty one meets among the children of God. Whenever our souls are firmly fixed on God’s thought of glorifying Him, all the power of Satan will be used to hinder in vain. When Christ’s person and will are fully seen, difficulty, whatever it may be, is at an end. And so with our practical dilemmas also: the moment we catch the connection with Christ, the difficulty is clean gone. Satan would hinder our having anything to do with Christ about it. He shuts out the glory and the word of

Christ from our eyes; and when that is the case, we are ready to fall into any snare: for the same blinding power that destroys a worldly man darkens and hinders the Christian.

But to return. We next hear that the Lord “was clothed in a vesture dipped in blood” (verse 13). It is not now suffering but avenging. He is coming to execute righteousness and takes His well-known title in revealing God to us. “The Word of God” had been peculiarly the name when the subject was the manifestation of grace and truth which He used for bringing us round Himself, and putting us in His own position. Here He is the Word of God as manifesting divine judgment. I do not think the Holy Ghost refers to that name in the verse before. It appears to me that the name written which no man knew but He Himself is purposely left in obscurity, that we may not forget the perfect, divine and essential glory of the Son of God.

Now we learn that the Lord for judgment did not come alone. When He came out of the opened heaven, there were armies that followed. “And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean” (verse 14). And observe, that the words, “which were,” though they are printed in italics, are rightly inserted. The sense would be substantially the same whether you read it with those words or not; and therefore the English translators, seeing that it ought to be understood, but not knowing that it was really a part of the text, inserted the phrase in italics; but it ought to be adopted. “The armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.” I have no doubt that angels will be in the train of Christ, for in some other

parts of scripture angels are mentioned as coming with Him, and not saints, as for instance in 2 Thess. 1:7. In this passage saints are mentioned and not angels. Such is the way of the Lord. He does not state things as man does. He has always a moral object in view, and therefore just brings out that part of the truth which bears on the particular subject in hand. Thus in Matt. 25, where the Son of man is seen seated upon the throne of His glory, all the holy angels are mentioned as being with Him. And why? Because the angels have a special connection with Him as the Head of human glory. (See Matt. 13:41; 16:27; Luke 9:22.) If the Queen of England were setting out upon some great political occasion, she would be accompanied by ministers of state. But if she were going to visit her army, those officials need not be there; but she would require the presence of the great military authorities. If this is so among the things of men, much more is there a suitable order in the things of God. The Lord is called the Son of man in reference to His glory as connected with the earth: and when He takes the world under His government, He has got His angels whom He employs as the messengers of His power. But He is not called here “Son of man,” but “the Word of God,” and angels are not mentioned in connection with that name. As the Word of God, Christ makes Him known. Here He expresses God in the way of judgment. He had shown Him in the way of grace; as we have in the Gospel of John. Thus the Lord Jesus is the expression of all God’s ways, whether in perfect grace or perfect judgment.

Here then, the armies that followed Him out of heaven are saints.111 This very chapter decides the question, it seems to me; because in the eighth verse, the fine linen

with which they are clothed (and it is the same word that is used) is said to be the righteousnesses of saints. Others might be there, but could not well be mentioned where the Lord is described as the Word of God. Whereas the mention of the hosts of heavenly saints is very important; and for this reason: the chapter gives us the deeper connection of the saints with Christ. You have the bride of Christ, the marriage of the Lamb, and the consummation of the church's joy in heaven. As far as the world is concerned, no stranger intermeddles with that joy.

But now God is going to put down all the wickedness of man and of Satan on earth. Hence the Word of God comes from heaven; and those that had been the companions of His rejection are now the companions of His judgment. As it is said in Revelation 17:14, "The Lamb shall overcome them.… and they that are with him, called, and chosen, and faithful." There was the announcement that, when the battle came, He would not be alone, but that the saints would be with Him — called by grace, elect, and faithful ones; and accordingly here they are. "The armies which were in heaven followed him, clothed in fine linen, white and clean." They may not be all who will follow, but it is of importance to see that these are saints.

The description proceeds: "Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he may smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God" (verse 15). This is a simple description of the various judgments that the Lord will execute when He comes. First, there is the word of power set forth by the sharp sword going out of His mouth. If any must be

destroyed, it is enough for the Lord Jesus Christ to speak. “He spake and it was done.” The judgment was executed. But besides, “He shall rule them with a rod of iron.” This is the judgment which is referred to in Revelation 2, where there is a promise to those of Thyatira who overcome, that they shall have fellowship with Christ in this judgment of the nations. “And he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God.” This is the unsparing judgment that we have seen before in Revelation 14. It is vengeance on religious wickedness, which is always reserved for the severest stroke that God can inflict. “And he hath upon his vesture and upon his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords” (verse 16) — the same title that we have seen in Revelation 17:14.

But while there was an invitation to the marriage supper of the Lamb, there is another and very different supper, the great supper of God. Here it is not the blessed whom God’s grace invites. An angel speaks obedient to His word, and the instrument of His power, standing in the sun — the symbol of supreme authority. For it is not now a thing done in a corner. There are no terms of forbearance: all must be thoroughly open. Nor is it now a partial, but a complete and final judgment. “And he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the great supper of God (for so it should be read); that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great” (verses 17, 18). It is the same sort of contrast, I think, that we may have seen in Rev. 14, where we had the first-fruits

at the beginning of the chapter, and afterwards the harvest before the chapter closes. Here you have the supper of the Lamb above; and the great supper of God that He will make for those that prey on the remains of the dead.

“And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet,112 that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image” (verses 19, 20). You will observe that one is here called the false prophet. He has apparently lost his world-power, and is therefore not presented now as the second beast rising from the earth with lamb-like horns (i.e., the imitator of Christ’s power); He is the false prophet simply. Whatever dominion he had is now merged, and he is seen in his ecclesiastical character, as a teacher of lies in the capacity of foe to God’s truth. Babylon was gone, but there was still this wicked ecclesiastical power who had wrought with the beast, and both now meet with the same tremendous judgment at the hand of God. “These both were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.”

There had been two men singled out from all others for special mercy and glory. One was in the early antediluvian world, when it was fast coming to its close. “He walked with God, and was not, for God took him.” And when the world had grown older in sin, and God’s separated people had far departed from Him, God did interpose again, and would show that there are no times, however evil, when His servants may not walk

with Him. Thus, when Israel was altogether debased in sin, and God had put His servant in the midst of that wicked and corrupt and apostate people Israel; then and there it was that Elijah gave his testimony, and he too, without dying, was chosen of God to be taken up to heaven.

And here, in most miserable contrast, we find two singled out from all others, — two men as remarkable for Satan, as Enoch and Elijah had been for God. And these men, the heads of their respective powers of wickedness (the open blaspheming power of the beast; and the more intriguing, corrupting energy of the false prophet, who had specially set himself against the Lord Jesus Christ), are found together. If God had interposed to show signal mercy in bringing alive to heaven, so now God interposes to send alive down to hell. They had been leaders in evil; they had worn down the saints and overcome them before men. Now their day comes — "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him." — "These both were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone!"

The Lord judges their followers too, but not with so terrible a doom. They remain to be judged another day — they must stand and appear before God. Meanwhile they "are slain with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh." But as for the twain, God required as it were nothing more: they were the worst leaders of the world's lawlessness, and therefore judgment takes its course summarily and for ever. I know of no judgment so tremendous in scripture as that these men, untried, should be cast into

hell before Satan himself! Yet the goats or Gentile rebels in Matt. 25 approach it.

And, solemn thought! the time is fast approaching. It is difficult to realize that such will soon be the doom of the rulers of these western lands. They will be found gathered for battle near Jerusalem. For, as Christendom began with Jerusalem, so the last and terrible end of Christendom will be there. As the Roman empire will reappear, so there will be found a chief of its political power sustaining and sustained by the religious chief of the east. Such is the crisis which, as God shows plainly in His word, awaits the world. And I have the firm conviction, without pretending to fix the time that the train is being laid even now. Thus we see the remarkable prominence which in our day is given to the east, and its growing connection with the west. These are facts before our eyes; but it is well known to many readers that these same things have been affirmed years before any of these facts had taken place.113 They were stated with the same confidence as now, and to some of those who may read these pages. Thus what is going on in the world comes in as a remarkable confirmation of prophecy. It is not the circumstances which enable us to judge aright; but taking the word of God alone, we may have a full persuasion in our souls. For whether we see the events or not, no man ever believed the word of God and was ashamed. “The days are at hand, and the effect of every vision.”

The Lord grant that we may remember that there will be a power of deceit in the world that will carry men away! Men may fancy that they will discern and reject the beast and the false prophet. This only shows that they have very little idea of the influence and working of

Satan. His most dangerous power lies now, not in that which looks outwardly bad, but in what seems quiet and fair. Thus is it still, as it was when Christ was here. The man possessed with a legion of demons received deliverance and blessing. But what did the Gadarenes do? They besought the Lord to depart out of their coasts.

Let me ask you, do you not prefer something to Christ? You may not show active enmity to His name. You may hear the gospel: but have you received it? If not, you are rejecting it. God does not allow one to say, there is something to be done first. He has done everything. Therefore, it comes to be a question of positive rejection — bidding Christ depart. The Lord grant that such may not be your present guilt and eternal misery!

109 It is not seen here as in Revelation, where it is the symbol of the glorified church itself, but rather as the blessed and ordered home of the heavenly saints, as I think it is in Heb. 11:10, 16. In the epistle the city is objective, in the Apocalypse subjective.

110 Mr. E. puts in his text, and half promises in his note 4 (vol. iv. p. 52), to consider the question whether those called to the Lamb's marriage supper were a class the same as, or distinct from, the bride herself; but no trace appears, that I can see, either in Revelation 3 following or anywhere else.

111 It is difficult to say how Mr. E. understands this. He asks, parenthetically (Horae Apoc. vol. iv. p, 53), "were they not his saints, 'the called and chosen and faithful?'" But in what condition? Were they already changed? Or are they still imagined to be in the separate state? It does not appear, that I can perceive, what his judgment,

as to this important question, may be. We know, from p. 50, he infers that no translation of the living saints, or the resurrection of the saints departed this life, will have taken place up to the time figured by the chorus of song at the beginning of our chapter, and this became the scenery of the in-most temple, with its throne and seated Divinity, and the elders and living creatures attendant near it, the mystical representatives of the expectant church in Paradise, remain still figured in the vision as before. That is, he deduces consequences from the most unreasonable assumption, which he had stated, though hesitatingly, in commenting on Revelation 4, 5, that the crowned and enthroned and complete heads of heavenly priesthood mean that portion of Christians who are gone, to be with Christ, separate spirits, not glorified men. This error arises from denying the transitional period, filled with the most momentous changes, which spans the interval between the coming of the Lord to gather His saints to Himself, and the appearing of His coming which destroys the lawless one and all his company. (Compare 2 Thess. 2:1 and 8.) Is it meant, I ask, that at the marriage of the Lamb, when the Lambs wife had made herself ready, there was no more than spirits separate from the body 9 To me all this is quite simple, because I firmly believe that what is properly called the church had been translated and in the glorified state ever since Revelation 4. But on Mr. E.'s hypothesis, all seems inextricable confusion. If I catch the meaning of his note 4, vol. iv. p. 203, he dissents from Daubuz, who contends, from the dress of the hosts that followed Christ, that they were the risen saints, now associated with Christ in judgment and afterwards in reigning. But text and notes of Part vi. chap. iv. present hardly any thing but a jumble of times, places, persons,

and dealings of God. I am sorry to speak in such strong terms; but the truth should be dearer to us than every other consideration.

112 Mr. Birks seems to be, I will not say accurate, but less under the influence of human system and bias than most of the Protestant school. Thus, in his Two Later Visions of Daniel, p. 337, he admits that it may be inferred, from a careful comparison of several scriptures, that at this time the temple described in Ezekiel will have been built, and that then this fierce and mighty king will seat himself as a sovereign, and claim to be the object of a divine adoration." I doubt as to the identity with Ezekiel's temple, but this is a question of detail. Again in the following page he says, "The Papacy, denoted by the wilful king, in its last hour will fill up the measure of its apostacy, and gather to itself those partial features of antichrist, which are now to be seen in the Mahometan delusion, and its open rejection of the Son of God. At the same time, a leader will arise, the last personal head of the compound system of evil, and the heathen Antiochus, the Pope, and the Turk contribute to supply the features of his iniquity. The wilful king in this last stage of his power, and represented now by this leader, will gather on himself the predicted character of a king of the north, and then come down like a whirlwind on the land of Israel." Here there is the most palpable confusion of the two opposed chiefs, the wilful king in the Holy Land, and the northern king who assails him there. But I cite the passage to show that fair-minded men, spite of preconception, are obliged to admit the all-importance of the future crisis in Judea.

113 This was written above fifteen years since. I need hardly add what fresh and strong evidence is furnished by the late war (and peace) in Italy.

Revelation 20

The first three verses of this chapter are closely connected with the one that goes before. For there we see the judgment of the beast and the false prophet, and of their adherents. Here we have what God saw fit to inflict for the present upon the real unseen leader of all the mischief — the devil. But there is this difference, that it is not Christ who deals with Satan. It was the shining forth of His coming that destroyed the beast and the false prophet. They were taken and were both cast alive into the lake of fire. And so we learn in Revelation 20:10, when Satan's turn came for being cast there also, it is into that lake where the beast and the false prophet already were, and where they shall be tormented for ever and ever. But it was not yet the time for the last and most terrible judgment of Satan. God's trial of the world was not quite over, and therefore, perhaps, God did not interfere by Christ in person, but through an angel. Before Christ inflicts the last crushing blow upon Satan, an angel is employed to limit his power and liberty for a certain period. This is what we have here. Satan is restrained for a thousand years; and the risen saints judge the world.

Many persons have raised difficulties as to this chapter, as indeed to all the rest of the book, on the ground of the figurative language. But no objection could be less reasonable; for figurative or symbolic language is used in scripture from the first book to the last. So that if you neglect one part of God's word on this ground, you are in danger of slighting all. It is the commonest thing possible. Take the language of God Himself in Eden, the

words which the Holy Ghost used for the comfort and salvation of souls from the day that man was fallen by sin. Even there we find that God used highly metaphorical language.

But if a soul was needy, and through grace desired to understand God, there was always a sure way. God waited patiently, and taught and led on His children. No doubt there was room for growth; but then there was room for unbelief too, and the evil heart could readily find difficulties to stumble over. But faith always finds out the way to understand God. Not but that there are things hard to such as we are; yet faith pursues its narrow path through obstacles and dangers, because God has said, “they shall be all taught of God.” Nevertheless, the language in which God was pleased to pronounce judgment on the enemy and to intimate a Redeemer was so figurative, that an unbelieving Jew like Josephus could pervert it and apply it merely to the natural dislike that men have to serpents, and their desire to get rid of them wherever found! Of course such a notion sprang from not understanding the mind of God, and the Jewish historian was ignorant of scripture and of the power of God.

And remember that I do not use the word “ignorant” here to describe the lack of human learning, any more than scripture does, when it says of certain persons that “they are unlearned and unstable.” They might be as wise as Plato and prudent as Aristotle, but they were not learned in God’s will and in the knowledge of His mind. This is the learning that we should value and cultivate — a thing that never can be gleaned in the schools of this world. On the contrary, if a man prosecute human learning as a means of understanding the things of God,

he is sure to go astray, because this per se is never from the Holy Ghost. Doubtless he who has got human learning may make use of it for God. But the great point is, that the man of God must make learning and everything that is of man to be his servant; whereas the mind of man, as such, makes learning his master and becomes its slave. Hence the danger of all such things proving positive hindrances, even to the Christian, save so far as he is led by the Spirit of God. The only possible way of understanding God's word is by subjection to the Holy Ghost; and the test is Christ, because the object of the Spirit is to exalt Him. Therefore it is that you never can separate growth in the things of God from the moral state of the soul. It is true that a man who has learned a great deal of truth may slip into a bad state of soul: but, in general, sound knowledge of the things of God and a wise gracious application of the truth flow from communion with God.

I have made these few remarks not doubting that many of my readers know them to be true from their own experience; but some perhaps may learn from them why they make small progress in the things of God. The true way is to seek the glory of Christ. Where a man is bent upon this, he must learn, no doubt; but all is open and clear before him, because he is in the current of the Holy Ghost, whose office is to take of the things of Jesus and to show them unto us. "When he is come.... he shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you:" for Christ, not man, is the aim and end of the Spirit.

Doubtless, as to the earliest book of the Bible, Genesis, all will acknowledge it to be a perfect model of perspicuity. It is the most simple book, containing

profound truth, that ever was written. In this book where God was putting us in His nursery school, yet what do we find? Not seldom bold and figurative language. Hence, if I am to give up the scriptures because of figures, I must give them up from Genesis to Revelation.

The revelation of the woman's Seed that was to bruise the serpent's head was the very word on which salvation hung; the blessed truth that faith laid hold of at all times. Take a case. Abel's faith, that expressed itself in the offering which he brought, was grounded upon this word. He believed that the Lord Jesus was coming (though he did not yet know that name), who would be bruised in order to destroy the serpent — One who would suffer, whose heel would be bruised, though eventually He would crush the bruiser.

This shows that faith is a very distinct thing from the ability to explain the figures of a passage, the general sense and certainty of which may yet be clearly seen. So much so that even now, if you were to take a Christian and ask him to explain all the particulars of that verse — what was meant by the Seed of the woman and that of the serpent, the enmity between them and the bruising of the head and of the heel, though he might be perfectly certain that it speaks of Christ, and might understand the general meaning of all, yet he would find a great deal of difficulty in explaining what each thing meant. But there lies the blessedness of God's word, that people are not saved by having clear thoughts on the obscure; but God knows how to direct every soul that is saved to the right object. Their hearts rest upon a Christ who has suffered for them and completely destroyed the destroyer. They may not be able to bring

out their thoughts clearly to others; but the faith of the taught knows the truth perhaps as well as the teacher, though the latter alone can develop it with convincing plainness. This shows that even where God employs these figures, the general thought is sufficiently plain. To expound them by words might be an insuperable difficulty to the soul that has no question of the general sense.

Here an angel comes down out of heaven. This angel, in the prophetic vision, has the key of the abyss and a great chain hanging on his hand (verse 1). He is seen laying hold of “the dragon, the ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan,” the well-known enemy of God and man; and then follows the use of the key and the chain, the key for shutting him up and the chain for binding him fast. Obviously these are figures, but they are familiar to the simplest mind. There is no one, however ignorant about some things, who need misunderstand what is meant. The Spirit of God takes advantage of the commonest things of every-day life to describe an act of judgment that is about to be accomplished in His providence by and by. God intends to restrain Satan, and will not suffer his going about to deceive the world as he does now; but it will be only for a season (verses 2, 3). He is not thrown into the lake of fire at once, but is a prisoner in the bottomless pit, which is the expression of the place, under the control of Satan ordinarily, that will then be made the place of his confinement. (Compare Revelation 9, 11 and 17.)

It is certain from God’s word that Satan is not yet shut up on the contrary, that he goes about now seeking to deceive and to destroy souls. The New Testament always supposes this. It is perfectly clear that Satan is an

enemy still at large; that he is active in his rebellion against God, in the falsehood that he spreads among men, and in the death and ruin that he causes everywhere. But this is to close when, for a certain limited time, the earth will be freed from his deceits. This is all that I need to draw from the passage. I am not going to discuss whether the thousand years are to be taken literally or mystically; for this is a question of detail and decree only. But beyond a doubt the period has a beginning and has an end; nor can it have begun yet, because Satan is not bound. The New Testament epistles suppose that Satan still carries on his devices hinders the work of God, has to be resisted, and is going about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. So that there must be a vast change when the time comes for his restraint. And God will have to cast His people upon other parts of His word, which would not apply to the past or the present. The saints then will be in many respects in a totally different state, In that day Christ will be reigning over the earth, having it under His direct control; and assuredly the change will be incalculably great. Satan too will be bound, and God's people then will not require the same discipline through the word of God as those do now who have to encounter the assaults of Satan and his accusations. God will deal with them according to the condition in which they will be placed, and for which His word provides.

Allow me to repeat that it is chiefly the influence of prejudice, with which persons approach the book of the Revelation, that makes it appear so difficult. People say that so many good men have made mistakes in interpreting it, that there is no sure way for the simple to take it up profitably. But this is to the dishonour of

God; for He has given the book to be understood by His people at large, peculiarly commending it to His servants. Special promises of blessing He attaches to such as read, hear, and keep it, foreseeing the delusion abroad with regard to its obscurity. But why is it the devil's object to hinder people from reading this book? Why is it that, in what are called Christian churches, every other part of the Bible is read, while the book of Revelation is scarcely looked at? Even the Apocrypha is read by some, while of the "true sayings of God" only a few fragments here and there are used for public services. The reason is because there is no book in the Bible that Satan fears more, and justly too. It announces first his sure humiliation by angelic power, and then his destruction afterwards. Other books show his partial temporary successes; this dwells on his overthrow, and therefore must he dread it. Again, if you have here the account of God's putting down Satan, you have also very fully brought out the awful height of power to which he rises before the end. For the divine principle is never to judge evil until it has rejected all the patience of God, abused His goodness, and become thoroughly unbearable. Had Christians felt that Satan's object was to conceal his own wiles, and power, and ruin, by leading them to neglect this book, they might have been more on their guard. But this is the last thing he wants people to suspect; for then they at once get upon the ground where the Spirit of God can lead them on; whereas, if they assume that the book is so dark as to be, practically unintelligible, they are so far exposed to his delusion, though God is faithful, who will not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able.

In the next verse we get another thing, the portion of the blessed. What will Christ be doing, and what they who are with Him, now that the victory is won? “And I saw thrones; and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them” (verse 4). The heads, civil and ecclesiastical, of the evil in the world had been summarily judged; the hidden source of all was next set aside “till the thousand years should be finished.” But now the Lord Jesus has taken the kingdom of the world. Still the object here is not so much to show us Christ’s reign, because this was a familiar truth, found throughout all scripture, and one that was well known to the Old Testament saints; and so habitually were they waiting for the Messiah, and so prevalent was the expectation of His kingdom, even in the mass of unconverted Israel, that Satan took advantage of it to make men refuse the grace of Christ coming in humiliation. Here His reigning is of course implied, as the central pivot of the blessing; but His people, or at least His sufferers, are specified with the utmost clearness.

This then may be one reason why prominence is here given to those who reign with Christ. God felt deeply for His saints. They were under keen trial and temptation. He takes pains to show that, if they had suffered, they were also to reign with Him. And therefore, as it seems to me, it is not there said, I saw a great throne, but “I saw thrones.”114 As the Lord Jesus Christ Himself had said to the disciples, “In my Father’s house are many mansions.” He does not speak of one peculiar mansion there for Himself, but He says, “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.” Was it not in the

same spirit that the prophet here had the vision of these thrones? And they were not vacant. “I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them.” They were now to exercise judgment.

Evidently this is an accomplishment of the word in 1 Cor. 6. The apostle there, addressing the saints at Corinth, says, “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?” And here they are judging the world. But more than that. The Lord had said to the twelve apostles, “Ye shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” Many persons think that this will only be fulfilled in heaven. But there can be no such state of things there. The twelve tribes are not above. They are only known as such upon earth. Here below they will be found as an object of government; and so the prophets speak. What will there be for saints to judge in heaven? When the glorified are there, where will be the men to judge above? All will be blessed there. These will have passed out of the scene of judgment.

It is plain therefore that this scene is one that cannot apply to heaven: and that it supposes the earth as a sphere of judgment. Those in question reign over the earth. I say, “over the, earth,” for there is no reason to believe that this world will be the home of the risen saints of God. They may visit it from time to time, as we know the Lord Himself will; but their proper dwelling-place will not be the earth. Even now our blessing is in heavenly places in Christ; much more evidently will it be when we are glorified. The blessing is heavenly in its source, character, and sphere. But while we shall thus have blessing in heavenly places, the earth will be the lower and subject province — full of interest and glory to God, but a comparatively outside domain. Just as a man

who owns an estate may have a grand family seat in it; but this does not hinder his having property outside, which he must leave his house in order to see. And so it will be hereafter. The glory above will be the rest and centre of the heavenly saints; but besides that they will judge the earth.115 Accordingly it is written here, “I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given unto them.” They were the destined assessors of the Lord in judging or government.

But that was not all. “And [I saw] the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God.” Mark the word “souls.” It is strictly correct. There are many who, in the main agreeing that this vision represents a judgment exercised by heavenly saints over men upon earth, understand the “souls” spoken of here to mean persons according to a common usage of scripture. But I do not believe that this is the true explanation. Why not take the word “souls” here as meaning those who were in the separate state? Thus, the apostle John saw in the vision, first, thrones with persons seated upon them; secondly, a certain number of disembodied people, the souls of them that had been beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God; and besides, thirdly, a class of those “the which had not worshipped the beast nor yet his image, and had not received his mark upon their forehead, or in their hand.” Had he meant persons in their ordinary state, he might have said, I saw the souls that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, etc.; but not “I saw the souls of them that were beheaded.” Just as it was said of Jacob, “All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt.... all the souls were threescore and six.” It is not said there “all the

souls of them," or "of the people that came," etc. (Compare Rev. 6:9.)

Here, then, John beheld in the vision some that were already risen from the dead and seated upon thrones. "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them." The reference seems purposely general, and implies "the armies" previously described (Revelation 19:14). Those who followed the Lord from heaven to war are now His companions in His government of the earth. Next, he saw a company "that had been beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God." These were not yet raised from the dead, but were still in the condition of separate spirits. And there was a third class — persons who had not worshipped the beast, nor submitted to his pretensions in any form or degree. The two last were distinct but connected classes of people, who when first seen were in the separate state. "And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." That is, they were reunited to their bodies; for this of course is what is meant by "they lived." It might have been thought that they had missed their blessing, or at least the privilege of reigning with Christ during the thousand years. There were thrones, and persons in their risen bodies who already occupied them. What then was to become of those who, after the removal of the former to heaven, were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God, and who were not till long after raised from the dead? What was to be the portion not only of these, but of the last class that at a still later day refused to worship the beast or receive his mark? "They lived." They are now seen, just before the reign, united to their bodies; and, together with those that had been previously raised and already seen enthroned, they

reigned with Christ a thousand years.116 Thus we have a bright and interesting light thrown by and on the Revelation. For there are passages in it which this verse helps to clear up; while they, on the other hand, throw light back on a verse which is not intelligible unless these distinctions are seen.

Let us consider yet a little more the different classes here spoken of. “I saw thrones, and they sat upon them.” Evidently these first objects are introduced most abruptly. We are not told where they came from, nor who they were — probably because the Holy Ghost takes for granted. that we know enough about them through the previous statements of the book. Just before they had come out of the opened heaven. (Rev. 19.) When the rider on the white horse, the Lord Jesus, came out as a man of war, the armies that were there followed Him on white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and pure. I have already tried to prove that these were the saints who had been already taken up to heaven, and ever and anon shown to be there from the commencement of Revelation 4. They were seen then and repeatedly afterwards under the symbol of the twenty-four crowned elders. It will hardly be disputed that these elders represent the heavenly saints. I do not pretend to decide whether it is the church exclusively or not. Very likely both the church and the Old Testament saints are included; but one thing at least is very clear, that heavenly saints are meant. They follow Christ out of heaven when He comes to make war with the beast, etc.; and now, when Christ takes His throne, when He is not merely seen on a white horse going forth to conquer and subdue, but He takes the throne to reign triumphantly, they too are seen on thrones along with

Him. “I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them.”

Every believer knows that in some sense Christ is to sit on His throne and to judge; but some might think that it was too high a place for Christians to be on thrones with Him; while others, who have etherealized into mist the direct meaning of the mass of scriptures that treat of the hopes of the saints and the prospects of the world, imagine that they will be merely in the vague distance of heaven, enjoying everlasting happiness with Christ, but having nothing whatever to do with the earth. For my own part, I do not believe that governing the world is by any means the highest part of the saint’s glory; but it will be an important element of Christ’s glory, and therefore surely not beneath the church. None can overlook or deny this without loss to their soul. When rightly held, it has no little practical influence. For if I am to judge the world then, God would not have me meddling with the world now. This was the very argument that the apostle Paul used when blaming the Corinthian believers, because they went before the judgment-seat of men. It is beneath the Christian calling. Of course, I do not mean by this in any way to slight the powers that be. A Christian ought to be ready any day and in all things to show them respect. He can afford to be the humblest man in the world, because he is the highest one. He has got a better exaltation that will shine most when this world has come to nothing. What a wonderful thing that we are anointed kings now, before the actual glory dawns, like David, who was consecrated king long before, as a fact, he was exalted to the kingdom! The holy, royal oil was upon him, even when he was hunted about by king Saul upon the

mountains. So, in a yet higher sense, we too are anointed by the Holy Ghost, and this not only that we may be able to enter into the things of God, but as made kings and priests to God. Hence God looks for us not only to offer spiritual worship to Him now, but under all circumstances to preserve the sense of our dignity as His kings. (Compare 1 Peter 2:5, 9.) The world may mock and call us fanatics, but the world has done worse to God Himself. Alas! evil communications corrupt good manners; and Christians have fallen from the truth that is according to godliness as to this.

They have sought to have the world and Christ too. People may object that at best it is a hope so purely future as to have no present bearing. But the Spirit of God addresses us as possessing this treasure now, as having in principle all that Christ is going to display in us in His kingdom by and by. Hence we are responsible to God to walk in the faith of it now. It was so in the highest way in the Lord Jesus Christ. He knew that he was a king; and when Satan came and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, offering to five them to Him if He fell down and worshipped him, the Lord utterly rejected all. But Satan, as it were, repeated the offer to the church, and she at length accepted it. In seeking the glory of the world, she has sought honour where Satan is the prince. Can any man read his Bible and not own the truth of this? What did the Lord Jesus do when men wanted to make Him a king? He departed from them. When He stood before Pilate, He admitted that He was a king, but said, “My kingdom is not of this world.... Now is my kingdom not from hence.” By and by it will be. “The kingdom of the world shall become our Lord’s and his Christ’s.” And

when it passes into His hands, the reign of Christians will begin. His people will share the kingdom along with Him. Hence faith waits for this: and meanwhile we are put to the test now, “as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.”

To some it will appear presumption to claim such a privilege now. But not so. It is faith, and its fruit is growing separation from the world. The principle is the thing of value. For if a man only strive for the simplest thing in this world that is an object to him, — for some present (even if it be a petty) distinction, there is the trace of the enemy’s work. God looks for holy separateness from the world in all” His saints: they are not of the world, even as Christ is not of it. Let it only be in proportion to a man’s spirituality and intelligence. Thus, when a Christian begins his path of faith, God does not say to him all at once, You must cut off this and renounce that; He leaves room for the exercise of grace and progress in truth. In the day that salvation came to the house of Zaccheus, the Lord said not a word of his odious position in the world as a Jewish tax-gatherer. Nor are we told, in the case of Cornelius, that he must forthwith give up his place as a centurion of the Italian band; because the whole blessedness of God’s ways would be destroyed by laying down and enforcing rules in that fashion. The church is not governed by a code of formalities. She is led on by the power of the Spirit of God according to His word. Just as with a child; when of tender years he speaks as a child, understands as a child, and thinks as a child. One could not wish babes to assume the ways of adults. So it is with spiritual children. The Lord does not look for such to be occupied with the things of men and fathers in Christ. He leaves

room for growth in grace. Now, if a man is in a bad state, he takes advantage of grace, and asks, Is there any harm in this? Is there any command for that? Sometimes a soul only refrains from evil doings, in the thought that if he persists he is in danger of being lost. But what God values is simple-hearted obedience; the doing God's will because it is His will, because it is delight to do His will, because it glorifies Him. He saves us by His grace, and saves us so as not to see a single fault in us. And now He says, If I have saved you and put you in such sureness and perfection of blessing before me, the thing that I look for is your heart, its confidence in my love and wisdom, your worship and your obedience.

But God also gives us the knowledge of the coming kingdom that we are to share with Christ our Lord. It is well to remember that the Spirit of God does not bring about the kingdom. Not He, but the Lord Jesus only is the king. Thus Christ's presence is essential to the kingdom, at least in the full manifested sense. It would be a kingdom without a king, if Christ were not personally there; and therefore it is said, "They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." Christ Himself was present, and He is the centre of all glory, and blessing, and joy. In Rev. 19 we had Christ and them coming out of heaven in judgment, and thereon in Rev. 20 the kingdom is established in peace over the earth.

This may answer the first question, as to who they are whom John first saw sitting on the thrones, and of course in risen bodies. They are heavenly saints, including (if not exclusively) the church. The next question is, Who are those whose souls were seen not at first united to their bodies? The answer is plain. If Rev.

4, 5 show us glorified saints under the symbol of the twenty-four elders, and corresponding with those first mentioned in our verse, Rev. 6 lets us into another scene. It tells us that there will be saints called to suffer after that, whose souls John then saw under the altar. They had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held, and they call upon God to judge and avenge their blood on them that dwell on the earth. Who are these saints that appeal to God's vengeance? It is not the church in this case, one can answer with the utmost confidence. It could not be indeed; for the church had been already removed to heaven. But, besides, is the church ever said, in scripture, to call upon God to judge and avenge the blood of saints shed on the earth? It would falsify the very design of God in the church, and in the individual Christian too. We are the epistle of Christ, called expressly to show out His glory in Christ, and His grace towards the world ever since the cross. And as God has allowed men to put to death His own Son, and, so far from judging the guilt, has only made it an occasion for showing more grace still, so the church is called to suffer, and if need be even to death, for His name's sake, without such a thought or wish as calling for vengeance.

Take a plain and signal example of this in Stephen. He was most grievously trodden down. they cast him out of the city and stoned him. But he kneels down and cries, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." It was with a loud voice too, for it was not a thing that his heart did not feel earnestly; and the Holy Ghost desired that those who were round him should know his heart's desire about them, guilty as they were of his blood. Was this calling upon God to avenge his blood? The very

contrary; and so all through. Look at the apostles Peter and John, who when they were beaten depart from the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus. Look again at the first Epistle of Peter; and what do you find there? This is the principle: “If when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called.”

On the other hand, the world could not go on for a day on such a around as this; it must go to pieces, if evil were not to be punished, and those who did well and suffered wrongfully were merely to give thanks. But such exhortations were not intended for the world. And there is the mistake so often made. Men forget that the church was called to be a witness of heaven — was meant to express the mind and grace of Christ, while walking upon the earth. This is our “one thing” — our business here below. Of course, this need not hinder the providing things honest in the sight of all men. It is right for the Christian to do this, but let him weigh well how he does it. Our behaviour in the most ordinary employment should be a testimony to this — that we are not of the world; that we look not for honour and credit in the world, but to glorify Christ in heaven; that instead of seeking to help on the plans of men, and to be an ornament in the world, our mission is to make Him known to it, and to do His will during the little while we are here.

But to return. We have seen that, though the enthroned elders are in heaven (Rev. 4, 5), there are afterwards saints on earth, new witnesses who are called to suffer unto death for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus; but who, when they die, cry for God to avenge

their blood on their enemies. Nor is that wrong in them, though it would be foreign to us, because it is not the will of God concerning us. But when God has formed the church, and, after it has been taken to heaven, has raised up fresh witnesses for Himself on earth, He will begin to deal with the world judicially Himself. And therefore when these holy sufferers cry to God against their adversaries, they will have communion with Him; and this is what faith always seeks — communion with God in what He is actually doing or about to do. God does not thus interfere to judge the world now, and therefore His saints should not ask Him, as these do, to judge and avenge. God now endures in perfect patience the wickedness of the world; and therefore a Christian should rather ask God to turn His long-suffering into salvation for souls. But when Rev. 6 is being fulfilled, God will pour down judgment upon judgment; and the witnesses for God in that day will ask God to judge, and rightly. They take up the language of the Psalms, in general so misunderstood and misapplied now, but then most appropriate and prophetically provided of God.

This shows then, that there is to be a very different state of things after the church has been taken away. God begins then to act in the way of judgment, and those whose hearts are converted, and who desired His glory, will be in great darkness compared with the church. Still, their godly testimony will be intolerable to the powers of the world, who will spill their blood like water. The sufferers will cry to God for judgment, and He will hear them. Look at Revelation 6:9, 10, 11: “And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.” Observe how this agrees

with the two classes mentioned in Revelation 20:4: “I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God.” For mark the answer. They cry, “How long, O Master, holy and true,” etc. “And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them that they should rest yet for a little while, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.” When the earlier sufferers, after the removal of the church, had been called out and slain, they were told of another and subsequent class who should be killed as they before the full judgment.

This is exactly what we find in our Revelation 20. First, there are those who sit on the thrones, invested with royal judgment; next, there are those who were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God; and, thirdly, their brethren who, as it was said in Revelation 6, had yet to be completed. These, when the beast brought out his idolatry, etc., and it was a question of being killed or of worshipping him, refused… they were faithful unto death. Well, here they are. “I saw.… and those who had not worshipped the beast, nor his image, and had not received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands.” Thus the Revelation gives us the full answer, as to these three classes. The twenty-four elders correspond with those who sit on the thrones; the second class are the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, etc., we had in Revelation 6; and then the latter part of the book shows “their brethren that should be killed as they themselves were,” and for whom they were told to wait. In Rev. 13:7, it was said that it was given to the beast to make war with the saints, and to overcome them. And move

than that The latter half of the chapter supplies another part of the description, and shows us how these saints came to be characterized in Revelation 20 as those who had not worshipped the beast nor his image, neither had received his mark on their forehead, or in their hand. In verse 14 the second beast is said (Rev. 13) to deceive "them that dwell on the earth, on account of those miracles which he had power to do in the presence of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword and did live. And he had power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed." Now this most clearly pertains to the last or third class. Those referred to in Revelation 14:12, 13, are probably the same. But again, see Revelation 15:2: "I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God." Thus the Revelation answers fully the question, Who are these saints? It shows us, first, the risen saints, who had been taken up to heaven, and who come out with Christ. This is one reason why they are seen separate from the two other classes. They are viewed on the thrones at once, because they are already changed into the likeness of Christ's glorious body. But the others are merely seen, up to this moment, as souls, and of course not glorified. We hear of glorified bodies, but never of glorified souls in scripture. The soul of the believer goes to be with Christ after death, but it has to be reunited with the body, before it can be spoken of as in a glorified condition. The only perfect state is, when we shall bear

the image of the heavenly; when we shall be raised or changed into His likeness.

If we look at 1 Cor. 15 we shall see that quite plainly. It is said there, “The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.... and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible, must,” not merely put off corruption, but “put on incorruption, and this mortal” must not merely slip off this mortal coil, as men say, but “put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality”-evidently the glorified state — “then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.” Death is not swallowed up in victory when a Christian dies and goes to be with Christ; but when He comes, and the dead are raised, and the living changed. What was done individually in the case of Enoch and Elijah, will be done on a grand scale at His coming. All the living saints then will be changed, and will go to be with the Lord, without passing through death. These, risen or changed, having been taken up to heaven, will come thence with Christ, and are here seen on thrones.

But what next is the history of those saints on earth, who are called after the previous saints have been

removed to meet the Lord? The Revelation shows us their sufferings for righteousness' sake and their death. What becomes of them afterwards? The church had been already raised and glorified, and these sufferers are slain before the reign of Christ commences. Are these then, who have so suffered, not to reign? Are they to forfeit their blessings, because they have resisted unto blood, striving against sin? This could never be. "I saw the souls of them that were beheaded.... and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." They too are raised from the dead; they join the others already glorified, and all reign together with Christ in "the kingdom."

I apprehend, but I only give it as an opinion, that their resurrection takes place at or about this time. The beast and the false prophet have been put down; Satan has been cast into the abyss, and the millennial reign of Christ and His risen saints is now about to commence. The Lord waits, as it were, for the very last moment. He wants not a soul of His holy sufferers to be left out of this their special reward. The beast had persecuted up to the last, and God delays till that moment, that every one who has suffered with Christ be included in the privilege of being glorified together. If the account of the resurrection had been given when the previously-risen saints were translated to heaven (i.e., before Rev. 4), there might have been doubt and anxiety as to the fate of those who suffer after the church was taken up. One can understand why this notice of resurrection is put here. It was the special object of God to comfort those who subsequently had to suffer and die for Christ, and to show that they would not be forgotten by Him. They are now raised to join the saints already risen; "and they

lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." God puts off their resurrection till just before Christ's reign, and then those that had meanwhile suffered for Him are raised up.

"But the rest of the dead lived not till the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection." "The rest of the dead:" — who were they? The beginning of verse 4 includes, as I conceive, not only the church, but the Old Testament saints; that is, all the heavenly saints taken up to be with Christ, when He will have come to receive them unto Himself in the air. Next we had the first band of sufferers before the beast came to the height of his power; and then the last band that suffer because they will refuse to worship him. These were the three classes of saints now alike living and reigning with Christ. "The rest of the dead" must then be the wicked dead, because the first resurrection included all the righteous dead.

It answers, in fact, to what our Lord called "the resurrection of the just" (Luke 14:14), save that it is more detailed, if not more comprehensive. So then there is a special resurrection that belongs to the just, and this without a word about the unjust. There is a resurrection of the unjust; and when the Apostle Paul spoke in Acts 24 before Felix, he testified to his belief in the resurrection both of just and unjust. But when the Lord Jesus was raising the consciences of his disciples to what was good and of value before God, He set forth the resurrection of the just alone.

But this is not all. There were men trying to bring the doctrine of the resurrection into ridicule.

We find on another occasion that certain of the Sadducees came to Him, putting a difficulty, because of

a woman supposed to be married to seven brethren. In the case reasoned on these seven successively died, and last of all the woman died also. In the resurrection then, they ask, whose wife should she be of the seven? The Lord at once points out that the difficulty was founded on ignorance of scripture or of the power of God. In the resurrection they shall neither marry, nor be given in marriage, but shall be like the angels; that is, like them in that respect, not in all things, for they will judge angels; but like them in so far as this, that there will be no distinction of sex — neither marrying nor given in marriage. “Neither can they die any more.” But He adds, “They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, [or rather ‘dispensation’] and the resurrection from the dead,” etc. This would be an extraordinary expression, if all were raised at the same time. “They that shall be counted worthy to obtain that age;” for the last word does not refer to the material world, but to a special dispensation or age, which the unworthy do not obtain. Weigh the force of the phrase. The resurrection of the saints is in an age peculiar to themselves. “They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that age (the other dead are only raised after it), and the resurrection from the dead.” The resurrection of Christ was not merely a resurrection of the dead, but out of the dead. He left them undisturbed in their tombs. There were certain saints who rose with Him, or rather came out of their graves after His resurrection; but the great mass of the dead were so far unaffected by Christ’s resurrection. And so is it with the saints in principle. Theirs is to be a resurrection from among the dead. The rest of the dead must rise at another time; but they who shall be accounted worthy shall obtain that age, and the resurrection from the dead. They shall not die any more.

Could God show more strongly, than by this language, a distinct and prior resurrection of the saints of God?

Hear also the language of Paul in Phil. 3:11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection from the dead." In common Bibles, no doubt, it is "the resurrection of the dead;" but I have no hesitation in saying that this is a complete mistake. The true and only meaning of the verse, according to the best authorities, is, "if by any means I might attain to the resurrection out of (or from among) the dead." It may seem to some but a slight change; but if we want to know the mind of God, it makes a weighty difference; because, if it is "resurrection from the dead," it implies that while the rest of the dead remain in their graves, there is a resurrection not common to all mankind, bad and good, but belonging only to those that are dear to God. The apostle considered this resurrection to be so bright and blessed, that he says in effect, I care not what the sufferings and trouble may be, let the road be what it may — if I am but there; this is what I wait for and desire at all cost, For when he said, "if by any means I might attain," not a shade of doubt is implied as to his having part in the first resurrection; but rather that he so valued the prize as to mind not what the path of suffering might be that led to the goal.

Now let us carry the light of this back to the Revelation. The reference in "the rest of the dead" is to the wicked dead. A resurrection was shown of all the departed saints up to the display of the kingdom. "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished" (verse 5). There is no difficulty really in the passage; but men have their own thoughts and opinions, and cannot make scripture square with them, whereas

all is as plain as God could make it. “This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection” (verse 6). How beautifully this answers to what the Lord had said to the Sadducees, “They that are accounted worthy to obtain that age, and the resurrection from the dead!” So again St. Paul: “If by any means I might attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

“On such the second death hath no power.” Mark once more the force of the Lord’s words in the gospel: “Neither can they die any more.” As for the persons left to be raised after the thousand years are over, they are to die another and most woeful death — the second death. By it all those who had not part in the first resurrection are to die. Theirs shall be the second death — meaning that extinction of all hopes of blessing when all else is blessed in heaven and earth, and they perpetually abide under the wrath of God. They are cast into the lake of fire. As for those who have part in the first resurrection “they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years;” and afterwards shall they reign in life by Him for ever and ever.

The last three verses that we looked at form a kind of parenthesis in the chapter, something like what we saw in Revelation 12. There the war in heaven and the consequent casting down of Satan came in, and then the history which had been alluded to before (verse 6) was resumed in verse 13. Here is something similar, for the seventh verse continues the history that had been already begun just at the close of the third verse. We find there Satan bound for a thousand years, and consequently his power of seducing the nations into

rebellion against God intercepted for a time. After these things, we are told, he must be loosed for a little season. The seventh verse anticipates his loosing and its effects. “When the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together unto the war: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea” (verse 8). Evidently therefore verses 4-6 form a parenthesis — important, no doubt, but still a parenthesis, and not a part of the regular history found here. One reason why it is given here may be to show that, during this same period when Satan is bound, there is the blessed side — not only the evil one restrained, but Christ and His saints reigning over the earth. It is never said that we shall reign on the earth.

In Revelation 5:10, I have already shown that the common version of that verse which conveys this is somewhat inaccurate, and that the true thought of the Spirit of God is not the place where the saints of God then dwell, but the sphere of their reign. “They shall reign over the earth.” The importance of the change is not so much as an isolated fact, but because it is connected with the whole scheme of truth; and it is a part of this scheme that the heavenly saints are never to be mingled with people on the earth. The promise of the first place of earthly blessing belongs to Israel, and therefore it would make the utmost confusion, if the heavenly, glorified saints were jumbled with men in their natural bodies in this world. In fact, one of the strongest objections that many Christians urge to the reign of Christ over the earth is founded on the notion that premillennialism supposes the glorified saints to be

mixed up with the people then alive here below. But this is a great mistake.

The church will have its own proper glory; but withal there will be two orders or spheres of blessing, and one of a higher character than the other. All things in heaven will be gathered under the headship of Christ; but, beside this, all things on earth will be at the same time under the same government. Such is the peculiarity of the millennium. There will be the heavenly portion above, and the earthly one below, connected together, but not confounded. This is distinctly taught in Eph. 1:10, where the apostle says that the mystery of God's will has been made known "according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself for the administration of the fulness of times, to gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him." I am aware there are many who suppose that it speaks of the gospel dispensation now going on. But this is unfounded The church is not a gathering of all nations, but on the contrary an elect body out of them all. It never was and never will be a gathering of all nations, peoples, and kindreds, and tongues, into one. Besides, the verse speaks of a gathering of all things. There is a gathering together of the children of God; for Christ died that He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. But here it is a question not of persons, but things. When the glorious administration takes place of which the apostle speaks, all things are to be put under Christ's headship. He has all under His headship now in title, but not as an actual displayed fact.

Daniel does not say that all was to be put under the Son of man, nor does the Holy Ghost reveal that secret of God's will in the Old Testament. There was the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven. But the New Testament shows us more; it teaches us that, at the very same time when all things on earth will be put under His government, all things in heaven will be put under Him too. Nor this merely in a providential way as now, but directly and personally. The Lord, of course is above Satan, the god and prince of the world that now is. He does act providentially now; and, beside that, He has the full personal title to exercise all glory, heavenly and earthly. But the time when He enforces the title, and takes all things under His hand, is future. If He had taken it now in an immediate way, all wickedness would be put down. None could sin without judgment; neither would there be such a thing as righteousness suffering, or iniquity exalted. All this is a proof that, in the full actual sense, the Lord Jesus Christ is not yet reigning, however true it may be to faith. Look, for instance, at Psalm 97: "The Lord reigneth." People quote this, as if applied when the Holy Ghost wrote, or now at any rate. But the next words refute this; because, when the Lord does reign as here meant, the earth will rejoice, etc. Whereas, it is plain from Romans 8, not to speak of every day's experience, that the earth is groaning in misery, and that the whole creation travails in pain until now, which is the very reverse of rejoicing. But when the Psalms meet their full accomplishment, all creation will be delivered and will rejoice under the reign of Jehovah. Faith can say that the Lord reigns now: but He is not yet exerting royal power over the earth.

When Christ comes in His kingdom every opponent will have to be put down, and consequently there must be judgment. The beast and the false prophet were set aside, as we see in Revelation 19, and then comes the reign. And although everyone is not to be converted, no open sin will be permitted. It may be a “feigned obedience” that is rendered by a large part of the people upon the earth, but still in some sort it will be obedience, even from “the sons of the stranger.” That is the true thought of the millennial reign. It means a time, not when there will be no evil, but when evil will be suppressed by the presence of the Lord; when the heavenly glory will be in immediate connection with the delivered and gladsome earth; when the earthly people will be restored to their own land, converted, and owning that blessed One whom their fathers crucified; for in Zech. 12-14 we see the very circumstances, at least as to the earth, that I allude to. In the last chapter the Lord is “king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord and his name one.” This is precisely the millennium. All nations are seen coming up to own the Lord: if any refuse, they are to be chastised. The Spirit of God particularly notices the punishment, viz., the withdrawal of rain from such nations as should not come up to keep the feast of tabernacles. In Egypt, where such a want would not be felt, the land having other sources of fertility, there should be another punishment, “the plague wherewith the Lord will smite the heathen,” etc. Plainly, then, the prophecy shows us the earthly glory under the reign of the lord.

But Ephesians 1 points us not merely to the heavenly glory, but to the union under Christ of the heavenlies and the earthlies — of all things both which are in the

heavens and which are on the earth. It is not that all are to be reduced to the same level, but that all must be gathered in one united system, as having one head over all, even Christ. But the church is not included in any of these things. We are not confounded with either; on the contrary, we are spoken of as those who have obtained an inheritance in Christ over all. The church is not to be a glorious people only, over which Christ is to reign. We are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ — not merely heirs under Christ, but with Him — according to the blessed type given at the very beginning of man's history, where, while Adam had the glory of being head over this lower world, his wife shares the dominion in virtue of her union with him. The church is the spiritual Eve of the Lord Jesus, the bride of the last Adam. This may somewhat explain the force of the words in Ephesians 1:10, 23, and it shows us the importance of the day we are looking at in Revelation 20. For "the thousand years" answer to this very period, when the administration will be in the hands of the Lord Jesus, the exalted and manifested Head over all things, and the church will share all along with Him.

There is another remark that I would make. It is the New Testament alone that gives us the statement of the period of the reign. It is there that we find its duration of a thousand years defined. Almost all prophecy refers to it, but here its bounds are assigned, and its relation to the eternal state which succeeds.

In one sense Christ will reign, and the saints also, for ever and ever. So it is laid down doctrinally, apart from time, as in Romans 5:17, where it is said, "they shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." This does not refer to the millennial reign particularly, which is only a part of

the reigning in life by Christ Jesus. Our life in Christ, being an everlasting one, involves to my mind that in a certain real and important sense there will be a reigning blessedly and gloriously with Christ for ever and ever. But, on the other hand, where we hear of a kingdom given to Christ, which He surrenders before the end to God even the Father, this special reign for a limited time has also a bearing on the heavenly saints. Of course the proper divine glory of Christ is distinct from these glories and can be communicated to none. But God spoke of a special reward — the reward of suffering for Christ. “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him.” “If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.” All this bears on the millennial reign. Christ will be then publicly exalted in the world — in the very place where He was despised and rejected. And the saints will be publicly exalted with Christ in the place of their shame and sorrow, where they have followed Christ with feeble and faltering steps, but where they clave to the name of Jesus, in spite of loss and reproach. But besides these special rewards, there is the glory, blessedness, and joy which will never pass away.

The millennium will be a time when many saints are to be brought to the knowledge of the Lord. It will be the great harvest of blessing — the time celebrated with such rapture in the Psalms and Prophets, when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea. This does not imply necessarily that every person who knows the glory of Jehovah will know His grace, and be converted. Nevertheless, many will be brought to the Lord. But there will also be a true and real knowledge of God given at that very time. For the Holy Ghost will be poured out from on high in a

special manner, of which the day of]Pentecost was in comparison only like the former rain, while that will be as the latter rain. It was the foreshadowing of future fulness of blessing — greater at least in extent — which will be realised in the millennium.

Now the saints of “that day” will never suffer as a privilege, never know what it is to follow Christ in reproach, and to be cast out with Him. Consequently they will not reign in the kingdom. All saints from the beginning, and up to the millennium, will have suffered with Christ more or less. But the church having pre-eminently known the fellowship of His sufferings, will have special glory. And those saints who will be brought in after the millennium has commenced, and who have never known His sufferings, will not so share the kingdom. Those before it will be brought into the scene of glory, and changed, because corruption never can inherit incorruption. Therefore, when they are brought in where God makes all things new, there can be no question of their bearing the likeness of Christ, because they are part of the family of the last Adam, and as being in connection with Christ, and having His life, that life will have all its way as to both body and soul: they will be changed into His likeness. It is true that we have no positive statement as to the millennial saints, when this change will take place. But we may gather, I think, from general principles, that it will be in the interval after the millennium is over, and before the new heavens and new earth appear with their blessed inhabitants. But this silence of scripture has left room for some to be beguiled into the strange notion that the millennial saints will remain in their natural bodies, marrying and giving in marriage, throughout all eternity! Such a

notion as this has no warrant whatever in the word of God. It resulted from always interpreting the expression “for ever and ever,” as if it must mean eternity necessarily and in every case; whereas in some places it does, in others not.

Supposing that God’s word speaks of an earthly state of things, and uses the expression, “reigning for ever and ever,” as in Daniel 7 and Luke 1, it cannot be understood absolutely. The words must be limited by the subject-matter of which God is speaking. Thus in human things, if a man buys a house “for ever,” it does not mean throughout eternity, but as long as the world goes on in its present form and way; his right holds good while the earth subsists as left in the hands of man. So God uses the phrase, “for ever and ever,” when treating of earthly things and people. Only the case is far stronger than in ordinary human transactions: for a revolution may despise and destroy every such deed of conveyance. But the kingdom of Christ, before which all opposing authority must bow and become null, will assuredly secure Israel in all the promises of God. Thus “reigning over the house of Jacob” cannot but be modified by this — as long as the house of Jacob exists as such. But when the expression is in connection with the new heavens and earth in the full sense, Israel is no longer found nationally: such earthly distinctions disappear, when men are raised from the dead or changed. When eternal life or eternal punishment is spoken of, we must take the expression in the largest sense, because these things have nothing to do with the earth; they belong to the resurrection-state. If applied to earthly things, it must be taken in a limited sense, but when applied to things outside this world, it must be taken absolutely in all its

extent. So in Daniel 7:27 “the kingdom under the whole heaven,” which is given to the people of the saints of the high places, is said to be an everlasting kingdom. This, I apprehend, is the same period that is called here the thousand years.

The Holy Ghost, in the New Testament, gives us the winding up of all the ways of God, and shows us that what may have appeared to the Old Testament saints to be an absolutely everlasting condition, is limited and qualified by further revelations, which make known to us two stages, as it were, instead of one. Thus the earthly kingdom spoken of in Daniel is to be “everlasting” in this sense, that it will never pass out of the dominion of Christ — never be taken out of His hands and given to another (as previous empires had been taken from their respective rulers), but it will remain as lone, as God has an earthly kingdom at all in His hands, and in the hands of the saints of the high places. When the earthly state ceases, and that kingdom is given up, Christ reigns everlastingly, though in another way. For in the eternal state it will evidently not be a question of all people, nations, and languages serving Him.

This chapter passes cursorily over the millennial state, as far as men on earth are concerned. If persons wish to look at the earthly part of the thousand years, they must search into the Old Testament. There it is spoken of constantly as “that day” — when the Gentiles will be brought in and blessed — when God’s name will be exalted — when there will be a suspension of all warfare and strife. It is the day when the wilderness shall rejoice and blossom like the garden of Eden, and when the ransomed of the Lord shall come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads — and all sorrow and

sighing shall flee away. These words are descriptions that the Holy Ghost gives of this blessed period in the kingdom. Many have been disposed to take the prophetic accounts of the millennium figuratively; but they must allow that these figures may be much more fully accomplished than they suppose. In other words, I take the glowing accounts given of the millennium in the Old Testament prophecies as emblems of real and abundant blessings on earth. These figures may have a sort of spiritual meaning too. But, allowing this, we do not take away the simple and natural meaning of the phrase. For instance, scripture speaks of the wolf and the lamb, and other animals that now devour one another, living together in union and peace. They may be applied as figures to describe what will be morally true of men, though I do not myself believe that this is the real intent.

For why should not God bring back the creatures that He has made, and about which He takes a far greater interest than men suppose, to a state at least as good as that in which they were created? Why should not God root out all the evil consequences that sin has brought in, physically as well as morally? Because the sin of Adam had effects far beyond his own race: all that was put under his dominion got into ruin and disorder. And this is not a mere imaginative notion of ruin, nor a fanciful exposition of Old Testament prophecy. It is the doctrine plainly and positively laid down in Rom. 8. It is written there that “the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him that had subjected the same,” in plain allusion to the fall of him that was over the creature. He fell; and creation, being under the headship of Adam, fell alone, with him. It was

he who made it subject to vanity; misery and death came in through him. For there is no reason to suppose that death would have reigned with regard to the brute creation of the Adamic world, any more than with regard to man, if sin had not entered. I am aware that the wise men of this world often speak of fossil remains which show the death of animals before man was created. Into such disquisitions I do not enter, but would only say that there was not the same state of things under Adam. Supposing now the facts and inferences of geologists to be sound — whatever living creatures may have been made and destroyed in the earth before Adam was created, scripture is entirely silent about them; and so I desire to be in expounding it. They are questions of no moral importance, and therefore a Christian need not meddle with them. I add that these theories, if true, do not contradict scripture in the slightest degree. For there is no trace of man connected with that state of things which preceded Adam; and scripture passes over it, hastening to what is immediately connected with him. When the human race begins upon the earth, the moral dealings of God are gradually developed. But man quickly fell, and then creation was degraded through its fallen head. Death, as far as regards the Adamic world, entered through the disobedience of Adam — death directly as to men, and, as a consequence, its ravages spread throughout all the lower living creation.

When the Second Man, exalted above the heavens, shall come again, He will not merely have such a dominion as the first Adam had, when all things in heaven and earth shall be put under His glorious sway. There is not a single spot or creature of God’s universe but what will feel the effects of His glorious power, whereby He is

able to subdue all things unto Himself. Thus, if once man fell, bringing in sin and death and misery, and if all the attempts of the race to remedy the mischief, outward and inward, have been but expedients and no real cure, the Lord Jesus will be the good and sovereign and almighty Healer of every evil and sorrow of creation. And God will have such joy — His own joy — in relieving all the wretchedness that sin had brought about according to His estimate of the worth of His Son. And if all up to this time will have been but the filling up of man's cup of woe, how blessed will be the time when God reverses the history, and when His own Son, no longer rejected and despised, shall fill the throne of His earthly and heavenly glory! When all wickedness shall be put down, and righteousness for ever exalted, not by bare power and glory, but by the One who in grace had borne all the sorrow first, and suffered the consequences of all the wickedness, according to the full holiness of God, upon the cross! And how sweet to think that God will there show that there is not an evil, nor a degradation, nor a pang for which He has not some suited and glorious answer in and through His Son! For He will then put forth all His might to glorify His own Son in the presence of all flesh, even of those who sent the message after Him, "We will not have this man to reign over us." But when the blessed One returns, having received the kingdom, and will reign as the risen exalted Son of man, all creation will feel the gladdening effects of the Saviour's headship and rule.

The Lord will exalt Israel on earth and make them, who have been so peculiarly His bitter enemies, to lead the song of praise with their once rejected Messiah, now in the midst of the congregation. Then it is that they will

take up Psalm 100, the psalm of thanksgiving, and will invite all lands to come and praise the Lord; yea, to enter His courts with praise. What a contrast to all that has gone on, or is going on still! How different from the hatred which the Jews have ever shown against the mere sound of grace going out to the Gentiles! For when Paul tells them how the Lord had said to him as he prayed in the temple at Jerusalem, “Depart, for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles, they heard him to that word; but it was more than their proud hearts could brook, and so they lifted up their voices and said, “Away with such a fellow from the earth: it is not fit that he should live.” But how will grace have changed and enlarged the narrow hearts of Israel, when they will themselves go forth with the invitations of mercy to the Gentiles who had insulted them in all their weary wanderings over the face of the earth, and who had trodden down Jerusalem during their appointed times The Jews, like Cain, have the mark of the Lord on them that they shall not be utterly extinguished, in spite of their blood-guiltiness. But the Lord will give them repentance in the latter day, and thenceforward they will be the suited and blessed heralds of His grace to the uttermost parts of the earth.

This time of blessedness under the Messiah is what is found so often and so fully in the Old Testament scriptures. The gospels, too, open with similar expectations on the part of the Jewish saints. But farther light begins to dawn as the rejection of Christ becomes more decided, till at length, redemption being accomplished, the Holy Ghost was sent down from heaven, and He brought out the full mind of God. Then it was that the distinction between the kingdom and the

eternal state was made plain. (1 Cor. 15:24-28.) It was shown that the earthly reign of Christ, which in the Old Testament might have appeared unlimited, will in reality come to a close when He shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power.

There are many who think that the millennial state of things is to be gradually brought in by the preaching of the gospel, and other agencies that are now in operation. No doubt they look for God to bless them in a still greater degree; for no Christian, perhaps, would say that present appearances warrant such expectations. But they think that if, instead of the few, there were many servants of God, and that if it pleased God to bless the word to the conversion of multitudes everywhere, and if a spirit of greater love and union and devotedness prevailed among those that love the name of Christ generally, there and then would be the reign of Christ on the earth.

Now, I would ask, How do we know that there is to be a millennium at all? You answer, From the word of God. But how is the millennium to be brought about? Humility would answer, we must learn this too from the word of God. We all acknowledge that the earth is to be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea. How is this to be effected? It is remarkable that in the very scripture (Isaiah 11:9) where these. words occur, the Holy Ghost intimates that judgment must precede this time of blessing. (See verse 4.) In that passage the universal spread of the knowledge of Jehovah is made to follow His smiting the earth with the rod of His mouth, and His slaying the wicked with the breath of His lips — the very scripture that the apostle Paul applies in 2 Thess. 2:8 to the destruction of

antichrist, the man of sin. The lord Jesus shall consume him with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy him with the brightness or manifestation of His coming.

It is perfectly true then and agreed, that there is to be a millennial time of blessing on the earth; and the answer to the question how it is to be introduced is this: the same scripture which reveals that blessed change tells us that it is to be brought in by the Lord's coming and smiting the wicked one; in other words by judgment, and not by the preaching of the gospel, The gospel is of all importance for calling souls from earth to heaven; but it is not the means of dealing with the whole world, and filling it with blessing. It is the means of gathering the church out of the world to Christ. When judgment has had its full course, then the Lord will send out His servants. The Lord will give the word, and great will be the company of those that publish it. "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem." The present dispensation is one of gathering out in separation from the world. The gospel ought to be preached to all but not with the vain hope that all are ever to believe it. Thus the Lord, in Mark 16, while bidding His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, takes pains to add, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." He prepares them for an individual and partial reception of it. Thus they would not be cast down, if they found but a few here and there who received the word of life. It might be but a Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them. And what were they to the crowds who listened to the apostle on Mars' hill? It was a matter of joy and thankfulness to hear of any who believed to

eternal life, for it is thus that God preserves His servants from being cast down. It is well to know that all are not going to receive the gospel, but that God is accomplishing His own purposes. Therefore, when the Lord blesses the word and awakens the conscience of a poor sinner here and there, it is a cause of rejoicing.

But we know that as a whole evil will increase, and "evil men and seducers wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." How can that be, if the millennial blessing is to be the result of the present or such like efforts of Christians in the gospel? But the Lord is to smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and to slay the wicked with the breath of His lips, which is said to be like a stream of brimstone. (Isaiah 30:33.) Is that like the gospel? It is the exact opposite — a figure of destructive judgment. The gospel delivers from Tophet, but the judgment of the Lord casts into it irrevocably. Clearly then it is a judgment from the hand of God Himself, and not one which man, much less the church, will execute. It is not the business of the church to cast into Tophet. No power but God's can consign to hell.

But there is another thing that characterizes the millennium — the binding of Satan in the abyss. Can the church bind Satan? Will anyone tell me that Satan can be absolutely hindered from deceiving the world by men? But there can be no universal blessing for the world till he is bound; and every Christian must acknowledge that God alone can either bind or crush Satan. He may employ an angel, or associate the saints with Himself, as it is said in Rom. 16:20, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." The church is united to Christ, and then will be actually with Him who, as the woman's seed, is to bruise the serpent's

head; but the power is in Christ, and not in the church. He will put down all adversaries when that day of judgment comes; as it is said, “He will smite the nations, and rule them with a rod of iron.” (Rev. 19.) And we shall do the same in virtue of our association with Christ. (Rev. 2.) In the reign of peace (Rev. 20:4, 6) we shall still be associated with Him. It is by the church in its heavenly condition, not while we are on the earth, that Satan will be thus bruised.

But it is perfectly clear, on the other hand, that the millennium is not exclusively the reign of the glorified saints; the earth as such, with its inhabitants, will be brought into deliverance and blessing This we saw in Eph. 1:1.0, where the true key to its character appears — the union of heavenly and earthly glory under one and the same Head, in whom also we, the body, have obtained an inheritance. There will be Jews and Gentiles, blessed as such in their natural bodies on the earth, the subjects of the kingdom; while the glorified saints will be the instruments of blessing to the earth.

Now the earth is made miserable, and men hardly know how far they are gone in rebellion through sin. This is not all; for there is an unseen enemy, a dark and untiring adversary of God and man, who has his hosts of wicked angels subject to himself (Rev. 12), and uses them as the instruments of his seduction. All this will pass away; and those very scenes which are now filled by wicked spirits, the heavenly places (not of course the place where God dwells in His unapproachable glory, but the lower heavens that are connected with the earth) will be a part of the dominion of the church in glory, and the heavenly saints will be as much used to be the means of joy and blessing to the world as the wicked spirits are now the

chief agents of all its misery. They may for a little season emerge from their prison after the millennium, to lead the distant nations of the earth into a last conspiracy against the Lord; but they will never regain their former access to the heavenly places, where their influence was the more subtle and dangerous.

Then will dawn the day of the greatest glory for the world. Of course, I am not speaking of the cross; for there is no exaltation Christ will ever have given Him that can be compared with the real, deep glory of His death. It has as it were put it into the power of God to show mercy according to His own heart; and therefore there is not a single joy of the millennium but what will flow from the cross of Jesus. Nay, it has eternal consequences, and not for the millennium only. But the age to come, or millennium, while very important, and a time of wonderful blessing, will be imperfect. And for this reason: there will be men still in their natural bodies upon the earth, many of whom will be unconverted. Accordingly, this chapter shows us that, after the termination of the thousand years, “Satan will be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together unto the wax; the number of whom is as the sand of the sea” (verses 7, 8). We do not read this in the Old Testament; for as it does not intimate the close of the reign, so neither does it show us the epoch when Satan will be let loose. The terms in which the judgment, upon the evil one is spoken of there might be construed into a single stroke, which made an end of the matter, From Isaiah 24 we learn that the scene of the punishment of the high ones is to be on high, as the kings of the earth will be

punished on the earth. It is evident that by the host of the high ones the Spirit of God does not refer to exalted men on the earth (for they are in contrast with the kings of the earth), but to the powers of evil in the heavenly places. (Compare Eph. 6:12.) This is exactly what we find, though with fuller detail, in Rev. 12, 19, 20. The kings of the earth meet with their punishment on the earth, while Satan and his minions suffer, the host of the high ones, on high. Satan is cast out to the earth, and his angels are cast out with him. Their place is found no more in heaven. The particulars are not given till the Revelation. That day will see the judgment of all foes above or below. For that this is the millennial day requires no proof.

Next in Isaiah 25:6 it is said, “And in this mountain shall Jehovah of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.” It is a time of blessedness never known before. Nor is it confined to a certain number gathered out as now, but “in this mountain shall Jehovah of hosts make unto all people a feast,” etc. “This mountain” is said of the land of Palestine, because it will be to the whole earth the spot where Jehovah will be exalted. Of course this is to be understood morally, not physically. Remark what we have in the next verse. “And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people.” The Lord will destroy the darkness that is over the face of all nations now, “and the veil that is spread over all nations.” But this era will be also characterized by the resurrection. “He will swallow up death in victory,” evidently referring to the first resurrection spoken of in the Revelation. Then only is the victory complete.

(Comp. 1 Cor. 15.) “And the Lord Jehovah will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for Jehovah hath spoken it.” It is the time of blessing for the Jewish people, “And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us.” Here beyond a doubt it is persons upon earth that need to be saved. The church is saved already, and we do not wait for “that day” to come that our God should save us. They will be saved in the day of glory; we are saved in the day of grace. “This is our God: we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. For in this mountain shall the hand of Jehovah rest, and Moab shall be trodden down under him, even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill.” There we have one of the neighbouring enemies of Israel trodden down; for it is to be a day of judgment as well as blessing In Isaiah 26 it is written, “In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city,” etc. In the latter part of it, which I would refer to because of its importance, Israel says, “We have been with child, we have been in pain.... we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth,” etc. “Thy dead men shall live” (the words “together with” having no kind of business there), “my dead body shall they arise.” “Thy dead men,” that is the Jewish people, who are regarded in a figure as being dead; just as in Ezekiel, where they are represented as not only dead but in their graves. But as the Lord causes His wind to pass over those dry bones, and they live; so here, “Thy dead men shall live, my dead body shall they arise.” Not merely thy dead body, but mine. I own them — they belong to me. Jehovah appropriates them as His, dead though they may be. But they are to be so no longer; they shall “arise.” “Awake and sing, ye that dwell

in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead. Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee." This is not like the church. The heavenly saints do not enter into their chambers on earth, but are taken away to be in the Father's house in heaven. But here is a question of the Jewish people. They are comforted, and are told to arise out of their degradation; "for thy dew is as the dew of herbs." "Come, my people..... hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast." The indignation that God had so long against His people will be turned now into indignation against their enemies. The Assyrian, used heretofore as God's rod for chastening Israel, must now meet with his own final doom. "For, behold, Jehovah cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain." And yet this is manifestly the time when He introduces the millennium, not after it is over. Jehovah comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth. Is this Eke the gospel, where instead of proclaiming the remission of their sins He comes to punish them? Not at all. Further, "In that day Jehovah, with his sore and great and strong sword, shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent: and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea." Doubtless there is a general reference to the wicked one, Satan the ancient serpent. Only here he is not viewed as having a place on high, but defeated and rejected here below. He is not spoken of with the same minuteness as in the Revelation, which gives us the full light of God on the subject and the details.

Moreover we find that at the end of the millennium God will show that the day of glory (the thousand years, which form the part of the day of Jehovah, when Satan is bound and the Lord Jesus reigns manifestly) will no more convert souls of itself than the day of grace and the publishing of the gospel to the ends of the earth. For if the day of grace requires the immediate power of God to save an individual soul, of course the same power will be requisite here below in the day of glory. Whilst the Lord is there, evil will be kept down; there will be no leader of man in his evil. But the moment Satan is allowed to come out of his place, and again exercises his power, we have plain proof that the heart of man is unchanged. He goes out to the four corners of the earth to deceive the nations, and gathers them together for destruction.

These nations are called by a symbolic name, which is a sort of allusion to the enemies of Israel spoken of in Ezek. 38, 39. But they are not the same, and must be carefully distinguished. For in Ezekiel Gog is literally an individual person — the prince of the vast north-eastern territories and peoples, known in our time as the empire of Russia. Gog is to be the then leader of that country, which is called in scripture “the land of Magog.” Indeed this is the positive meaning of the words rendered in our Bibles “chief prince.” It ought to be “prince of Rosh.” But when the scriptures were translated into Latin, which had a great influence on succeeding versions, the Russian empire did not exist, and could not be known by that name. For the north of Europe and Asia was then merely inhabited by hordes of wandering barbarians, called Sarmatians, Scythians, etc. So when the corrector of the old Latin, Jerome, came to the Hebrew “Rosh,” he

thought it must be taken not as the name of a people, but as a common noun, meaning “head” or “chief;” just as the Franks, besides giving their name to a neighbouring country which they conquered, also meant “free men.” Hence probably in our version “Rosh” was translated chief, which the Hebrew word might equally well bear, if a proper name were not required by the context; for “prince of chief, Meshech and Tubal” makes no good sense. Therefore, I suppose the translators, not knowing what better to make of it, put the clause down vaguely as “chief prince of Meshech and Tubal.” However, it is well known that learned persons who had no light, or a very partial one, on prophecy — scholars who examined the subject a hundred years ago — concluded that Russia was meant. But what is much more important, the Greek version, or Septuagint, made nearly two centuries before Christ, left it as Ῥώς. They did not know what place or race was meant; but seeing that Meshech and Tubal were given as proper names, they understood the preceding word similarly. Thus Gog is really to be “the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal,” which will all be found in the Russian empire.117 Ezekiel then shows that, when God restores Israel and plants them in their own land, Russia is to be the last great enemy that comes up to attack them, and meets with its own demolition from the hands of God on the mountains of Israel. His prophecy, I think, does not bear on recent events, save as these may lead on to it; much less is it to be confounded with the gathering of Gog and Magog described in verses 8, 9. It cannot mean the same as these; for the Jewish prophet speaks of a vast confederacy before the millennium, or at least at the very beginning of it; while in the Revelation it is after the thousand years are past.

Gog and Magog here are symbolical expressions, founded, it is true, upon the prophet of the Chebar, but entirely distinct. The word by Ezekiel has its accomplishment when Israel is restored. (See Ezek. 36, 37.) Gog comes up when they are dwelling in their unwalled villages, and thinks to make them an easy prey; but the Lord interferes. Gog is put down, and Israel live and flourish quietly in their land. Here they are symbols borrowed from Old Testament circumstances, but applied to a time long subsequent. The last enemy which Israel had to encounter before the millennium was the literal Gog; the last rebellion after it derives its name from that well-remembered effort, of the outside nations. Countless swarms from the four quarters of the earth, under the guidance of Satan, will repeat (never to be repeated again) what the Russian chief will have done before them. They will go up on the breadth of the earth, and compass the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city. Of course the earthly people and city are meant; for Israel will then be a body of saints, a holy people, and Jerusalem will be the beloved city, not in mere name, but then in truth the city of the great King. These nations come up and surround them, and God will, if I may say so, be compelled to destroy them for ever. “Fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them” (verse 9). Fire is always the figure of God’s judgment. Thus do they perish. Their leader is not touched by this judgment: a worse fate is reserved for him. “And the devil that deceiveth them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where also [are] the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.” His followers are destroyed by a divine judgment upon

earth, but the devil who had led them by his deceits is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone.

But there is another scene that follows — the most solemn for man where all indeed is solemn. “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sitteth on it, from whose face fled the earth and the heaven; and there was found no place for them” (verse 11). Mark it well. There are many persons who suppose this to be the time of the coming of Christ, and who consequently put the millennium before His coming. But this will not bear the light of scripture. Without going to proofs outside the chapter, I would just take another ground, which is short and simple, and to my mind perfectly conclusive of the question. When the Lord Jesus comes, He comes to the earth from heaven. This is the universal belief, as far as I know, of all persons who have any defined thoughts about the matter. But such is not the case here. For the Lord sits on a great white throne, and instead of His coming from heaven to earth, both earth and heaven are all gone. It cannot be His coming to the earth, for there is no earth to come to. The entire system of earth and heaven, as they now are, will have vanished out of the scene not annihilated but destroyed; for there is a great difference between those two thoughts. However, the earth is no longer found filling its own place; it has disappeared. The great white throne is not therefore on the earth at all; for from the face of Him that sat on it the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. Lest it should be thought that their fleeing away was a mere figure of speech, it is added that “there was found no place for them.” And it is said in 2 Peter 3 they shall be dissolved and their elements melt with fervent heat. Observe then that, when Christ

is seen seated on the great white throne, the earth and the heaven are fled away. What are we to draw from it? Either the Lord Jesus Christ must have come before this, or He will never come to the earth at all; for it would not be the same thing to suppose that He merely comes to the new earth. after all judgment — even of the wicked dead — is over. Now we know that “the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son” — “ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.” The general faith of Christians is that He will come back to this earth. His feet shall stand in a day yet future on the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and which thenceforward is to be not destroyed, but divided in the midst as a witness of it. These circumstances cannot apply to what St. John calls the new heaven and new earth, but before the last physical change. When the great white throne is found the earth is gone, and therefore the coming of Christ to the earth must have been before that final scene of judgment. In point of fact, too, we have had the coming of Christ already described in Revelation 19, and His reign in the early part of Revelation 20. This gives distinctness to the character of the great white throne.118 Nothing can be more simple, if you take it in the order in which God arranges it. But man is ever perverse; and so he blots out the coming of Christ from chapter 19 where it is given, and imagines it in Revelation 20:11, where it is not and cannot be.

Observe also that the judgment of the great white throne is not a general judgment, any more than the resurrection spoken of here is a general resurrection. The idea of mixture then is mere imagination. I hold that every soul of man (i.e., of those that have died) must be

in one or other resurrection. But scripture shows us that, the resurrection of the just is a totally different thing and at a different time from the resurrection of the unjust: they have nothing in common, save that in both cases soul and body must be reunited for ever. There is no scripture for an indiscriminate rising of all. A few passages are used to make out a show of proof. The Lord says in John 5:28, “The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice,119 and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment.” But this does not show that they will rise at the same time. The hour is coming in which both these classes shall rise; but instead of saying that they are all to rise in one common or indiscriminate resurrection, He takes pains to state that they that have done good are to come forth from their graves for a life-resurrection, and they that have done evil for a judgment-resurrection. There are two resurrections, then, not a common one. The very passage that men cite to prove a general resurrection teaches in fact the reverse. St. John’s Gospel shows their distinctness in character; his Revelation shows their distinctness in time.

Persons may say, “the hour is coming implies that all are to be raised much about the same time. But the word “hour” is often used in scripture (and indeed everywhere else) in a large sense. It might comprehend a thousand years or more; so that if one resurrection took place at the beginning of the millennium and the other at the end of it, it might still be the same “hour.” “The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear it shall live.” (John

5:25.) This refers to what has been going on ever since Christ was on earth up to this very moment. “The hour” there takes in nearly two thousand years; and surely it is not too much to infer that “the hour” in verse 28 might embrace, if necessary, a period equally long. Scripture decides it. The same John who shows us the rise of all flesh from the grave, divided into two contrasted resurrections of men characterized by opposite moral qualities, shows us with no less plainness and certainty the interval between these resurrections. The chapter that we are now examining in the Revelation is the answer to the question, and proves that there will be an interval of at least a thousand years between the two.

But this is not all. There is a deep fundamental difference in the nature of the resurrections, as well as a distinction of time. In the gospel of John, the first is said to be a resurrection of life, the second is one of judgment. In the former are the righteous; all who are judged in the latter are the evil. Our translators call it the resurrection of “damnation” though the Teal meaning of the word is “judgment.” It is the same word that is used in a verse or two before (verses 21-27). “The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son..... and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.” And it is necessary to bear this in mind, that Christ, while as the Son of God He gives life, as Son of man comes to execute judgment in His kingdom. He gives life to the believer, and executes judgment on the unbeliever. So there are two resurrections answering to these titles. There is the resurrection of life or the resurrection of the believer. It is the application to his body of that power of life which he has already in his soul. But those

who have refused Christ, what will they have? The resurrection of judgment. They have despised Christ now; they cannot escape the resurrection of judgment then.

Looking then at Revelation 20, is not this what we have here? First there was the resurrection of life, of “those that have done good.” “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection.” What was said about them? They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. It is a life-resurrection. But look at the others, the wicked — “they that have done evil.” “The rest of the dead lived not again till the thousand years were finished.” What have you here? “The rest of the dead lived not again till,” etc. So they do rise. “I saw the dead, small and great, stand before the throne.” None but dead are there, and how differently do they appear before the throne! “And the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works” (ver. 12).

Now I fully believe that the saints of God will have all their works examined: what they have done in the body will come out. We shall have praise or censure according to our faithfulness or unfaithfulness, when the Lord Jesus takes His place on the judgment-seat, and we stand before Him and are manifested there. It is St. Paul that tells us this. (Rom. 14; 2 Cor. 5)

But the Holy Ghost’s object by St. John is to contrast the two resurrections. Therefore not a word is said in the account of the first resurrection about our appealing before Him, that each may receive the things done in the body, whether good or bad; but we are represented

as judging others. Such is the way in which the life-resurrection is described. “I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them.” They do, of course, give an account of themselves to the Lord, and receive accordingly; but the Holy Ghost has His own wise reasons for omitting all allusion to it here. It is a resurrection of life in the gospel; and so it is in the Revelation. But when we come to the rest of the dead who have not done good, when they are raised and stand before the throne, what a contrast to a life-resurrection! They have only done evil; and when the book of life is opened, no name is to be found there; for this is not a resurrection of life but of judgment. They are to be judged according to their works, written in these other books; but their works are calling aloud for judgment. Their works being only and always evil, they are judged according to them; and what is the result? There might be a difference among them in some respects: there were great and small. But they were all alike in this — they were not found written in the book of life; and whosoever was not found written there, “was cast into the lake of fire.” Not a word is said or hinted that they were written there. This is a resurrection of those who have no part in that book, and they are cast into the lake of fire. It is, as if God were saying, The books of their works call for judgment: is there nothing to be said in defence of these wretched men? The book of life is accordingly opened; but they are not found there: the last hope is gone; and if “any one was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire” (verse 15). It is the resurrection of judgment. There is no life, no mercy there. Those that had their part in the life-resurrection had been raised long before, and never come into judgment at all; for it is said (John

5:24), “He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment [the same word as in verses 22, 27, 29]; but is passed from death unto life.”

Nothing then can be more certain than that this is a separate resurrection, distinct in character, and long severed in time. The resurrection of life had taken place long ago, and now comes the resurrection of judgment. “And the sea gave up the dead which were in it.” The depths which man could but imperfectly explore cannot hide for a moment longer. Nay, the unseen world, over which he has no control, is also forced to give up its miserable inmates. “Death and Hades delivered up the dead that were in them: and they were judged each according to their works” (verse 13). And their works condemn them Not a word is said about them in the book of life, and they are cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. They are raised from their first death to be cast for ever into that place of torment, whence there is no escape.

The, other scripture of most weight, often used for the purpose of proving a general resurrection, is the one in Daniel. What do we find there? It is written in Daniel 12:1: “And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people [meaning Daniel’s people, the Jews]; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time.” Evidently, this is not the millennium. “And at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.” This is not the time when the church is delivered; for we have been delivered long ago through the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. But since the cross of Christ,

the Jewish people have only been in misery: that cross was their guilt. They cried, “His blood be on us and on our children.” The time of their greatest suffering is to be immediately before the hour of their deliverance. (Jer. 30:7.) Our deliverance, as theirs, is through the sufferings of Another; but what we suffer is after our deliverance. For the Jews it is a different destiny. They have a tremendous tribulation to go through yet; and it is to be the worst they will have ever had. But immediately after this their final deliverance comes — “At that time thy people shall be delivered,” etc. They will not only be delivered as a people, but they will be saved and converted individually, according to God’s purpose — “every one that shall be found written in the book.” “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”

This is commonly applied to the resurrection; but I am persuaded that it does not apply to the rising of the body. It is a figure which is taken from it indeed, and which supposes that great truth to be known. But it is the same kind of expression, and applied to a similar subject and end, that I have referred to in Isa. 26:19, where Israel was described as “my dead body,” and was called on, as one dwelling in the dust, to awake and sing. So here it is said, “Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” This does not suit any scheme of interpretation, if it be applied to a literal bodily resurrection of good and bad at the same moment. You will observe that this is before the millennium. It is evidently before the time of deliverance and blessing. There is a time of trouble immediately

after which Daniel's people are delivered, and those who might have been forgotten (sleeping as it were among the Gentiles), reappear, but not all for the same end — some to shame, and some to everlasting life. (Compare also Isaiah 66:20, 24.) This does not answer the purpose of those who quote the text. For their idea is, that there is the millennium first, and then the resurrection of good and bad. This resurrection, literal or figurative, is before the millennium, and after it is a time of greater trouble than Israel ever knew.

My conviction therefore is that Dan. 12 refers to the Jews. First, in verse 1, those who are to be delivered are spoken of in connection with the land of Palestine. Then it is shown that many of them who have been sleeping in the dust of the earth will come out of their degradation, will awake, some to everlasting life, etc. Some of those Jews that are to come forward out of their hiding-places all over the earth would prove to be rebels and be treated accordingly; while others will learn that the Lord has wrought with them for His name's sake. We may compare this with Ezekiel 37, where the dry bones set forth the house of Israel. No doubt can be left on any serious mind as to that passage; for the Lord Himself has interpreted it as the figure of the future resurrection of Israel. "Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves." And if in Daniel it is said that some are to have everlasting life, Ezekiel says that the Lord will put His Spirit in them. It is a spiritual as well as a national restoration. So the passage in Daniel refers to a figurative resurrection of Israel, when some will awake out of their moral death.

We may now come back to Rev. 20 with the increased conviction that the doctrine of one general resurrection

is a total mistake, and that God's word teaches a resurrection of the just and another of the unjust. This which is spoken of at the close of our chapter is solely of the wicked dead; it is a resurrection of judgment. I appeal to you whether you could rest the salvation of your souls on your works. I admit that our works will be examined, and that we shall receive accordingly; but this is not the same thing as being judged according to them. In the one case the person is accepted, but his works are reviewed for praise or blame; in the other, the person is judged according to works that are not mingled, but altogether bad and only such. For a natural or unconverted man has no life towards God; therefore he can have nothing but evil works to be judged for. Not so with the believer. No doubt there are works sometimes mingled, sometimes even worse in him: but he has a standing beyond all that he is; else salvation were impossible righteously and in peace. He has the new nature that God has given and will not take away; he has also redemption, the forgiveness of sins — both in Christ. His works will be examined, and they have a most important bearing on the position that the Lord will assign him in His kingdom. To be saved or lost is never a question of reward, but of the grace and power of Christ. When we talk of reward, it is a debt due for work done; but when of salvation, it is never spoken of in scripture as a reward of works. It is the grace of Christ — the fruit of His work and suffering, which God has given us in sovereign love.

And when we stand before Christ, it will not be to take our trial for condemnation or acquittal: this would be to deny our justification and the value of His own work. All our ways will be manifested in God's light, and the Lord

will bring us triumphantly through; but He will not pass over a single deed, word, or thought that has been against Him. And as a Christian now can before God examine his ways, pass judgment upon them, and thank God for His faithful discipline; so it will be in a still brighter and more blessed and perfect way before the judgment-seat of Christ. It will then be no question of being saved only, but of vindicating the Lord's glory and goodness. Solemn certainly; but is it a thing that we ought to dread? We shall have to be thankful for it through all eternity. For self-judgment even now is no small blessing — next perhaps in value to the joy of grace which leads to our worshipping God and serving Him faithfully in the Spirit. We shall not have a word to say in justification of any fault; but the Lord will have much to say for us. He will bring out all that we have done, and we shall receive according to it. For evil we shall suffer loss; for good He will give us reward.

But what a difference is here! The dead now stand before the throne: what an end! Not annihilation, but incomparably worse — destruction. They have no life — nothing but dead works. They refused Christ; they rejected whatever testimony God tried them by; and what do their works deserve? They are cast into the lake of fire. Death and Hades are now no longer needed; they are personified as the enemies of God and man, and as such are in the vision (verse 14) cast into the lake of fire also.120 We hear of none but unbelievers here. Only such indeed come into judgment, as we know from Him who assures us that believers do not come there; and none with whom God enters into judgment are or can be justified. It is the judgment of the dead after all the righteous who slept in Christ had been raised to reign

with Him long before. The saints who lived do not enter this judgment, though no doubt they, like ourselves, shall render an account of all to God.

114 Daubuz notices another distinction well worthy of remark, but in a way which needs correction. “These thrones, whose number is not defined [as in Rev. 4], are to be very carefully distinguished from the twenty-four thrones here mentioned.” (Perp. Comm. p. 925.) So say I; but when he goes on to teach that the state of the Christian church and its primitive and militant institution were signified by the enthroned elders, I reject such an explanation, as do almost all Christians. Yet that there is a notable difference between that state of things and the millennial one before us now is manifest. The only satisfactory solution, I am satisfied, depends on the rapture of the heavenly saints, previous to the fulfilment of Revelation 4, and the interval spent before they appear with Christ in glory, as we ace in Revelation 19, 20.

115 There is no doubt that the earliest Christian writers show that a personal millennial reign of Christ was the early prevalent doctrine. But truth needs no exaggeration. It is painful that such a man as Mede (Works, book iii. p. 683, 4th edition) should have insisted on interpolating a negative in the statement of Justin Martyr (Dial. cum Tryph. § 80), where the father, after confessing the faith of himself and many others in a future rebuilding of Jerusalem and the literal reign and blessedness of risen saints with Christ, admits on the other hand that there are many holding the true and godly doctrine of Christians who do not acknowledge it. The fact is that there is not the slightest manuscript authority for the insertion, and the internal evidence is,

in my opinion, decidedly against it. Thirlby has very properly pointed out that Justin distinguishes between two sets of the orthodox, as may be seen by comparing the close of the same section: one of them, in all respects (κατὰ πάντα) right minded, has no doubt about the millennial reign, etc.; the rest were sound in general, but opposed to chiliasm. Nevertheless, Mede's οὐ has been allowed by many in England from Tillotson down to Mr. Bickersteth, and Daillè's μή (De Poenis et Satisfact. p. 493) has found favour abroad till recently. Even Mr. Jenour (Rat. Apoc. vol. ii. pp. 318, 319) continues to cite the passage in its corrupted form, and without remark.

116 "I cannot consent (says Dean Alford) to distort the words from their plain sense and chronological place in the prophecy, on account of any considerations of difficulty, or any risk of abuses which the doctrine of the millennium may bring with it. Those who lived next to the Apostles, and the whole church for 300 years, understood them in the plain literal sense; and it is a strange sight in these days to see expositors, who are among the first in reverence of antiquity, complacently casting aside the most cogent instance of consensus which primitive antiquity presents. As regards the text itself, no legitimate treatment of it will extort what is known as the spiritual interpretation now in fashion. If, in a passage where two resurrections are mentioned, where certain ψυχαὶ ἔζησαν at the first, and the rest of the νεκροί only at the end of a specified period after that first, — if, in ἔζησαν such a passage, the first resurrection may be understood to mean spiritual rising with Christ, while the second means literal rising from the grave; then there is an end of all significance in

language, and scripture is wiped out as a definite testimony to anything. If the first resurrection is spiritual, then so is the second, which I suppose none will be hardy enough to maintain; but if the second is literal, so is the first, which, in common with the whole primitive church and many of the best modern expositors, I do maintain, and receive as an article of faith and hope." (Vol. iv. part ii.) I have only to add, as to "chronological place," that as the sitters on thrones, or first group in this vision, are not represented as souls, so they are not meant to be included in "they lived." Their living and destiny to reign with Christ was plain enough from their session on thrones. Of the subsequent martyrs, and the confessors in the final crisis, it is now said, these join the others in resurrection, and share the reign just beginning.

117 So even Gesenius in the later results of his researches. It has been objected on the authority of Luitprand's Chronicle, etc., that the only people then called Russians by way of distinction were the dynasty of Norsemen, who under Ruric acquired the throne of Muscovy. "Gens quaedam est sub Aquilonis parte constituta, quam a qualitate corporis Graeci vocant Russos; nos vero a positione loci vocamus Nordmannos." (De Rebus Impp. et Regg. v. 6, p. 95, ed. Antverpiae, 1640.) But I do not see the force of the argument. If Ezekiel predicts that the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal shall come up to Palestine in the latter day, what has the mediaeval history of the people Rosh to do with it? If Cush or Phut is to suffer in Egypt or in the lower Euphrates, it matters little from what point they first migrated The prince of Rosh may have sprung from the Northmen, and acquired sway over the

descendants of Meshech and Tubal: how does the coming of the Russi from Scandinavia hinder this? Besides there is no doubt of the emigration of a large part at least of the Northerns from the East. The Cushites, Goths, Scyths, are pretty nearly at bottom the same people, as the Druidical religion is of an Oriental source, the north of India having been one great settlement. It is too much to assume that this ecclesiastic nicely distinguished the men of the north who were beginning to make themselves felt and feared at Constantinople. The plain fact is before us that the Seventy translate this, ἄρχοντα Ῥώς, Μεσὸχ και Θοβέλ. Now Ῥως is the designation the later Greeks use for the Russians, as we see in the Byzantine historians.

118 Most extraordinary is the error for which the later editions of the Horae Apoc., vol. iv. pp. 210-218, are distinguished from their predecessors: the great white throne is now supposed to have been in exercise at the opening as well as at the close of the thousand years. The late Duke of Manchester and a few others had endorsed the same fancy. If Mr. E. “does not see anything in St. John’s description” of the blessed reign over the earth, in contrast with the fleeing away of heaven and earth in the subsequent picture, to negative the idea, reasoning, I fear, would be vain. The omission of a detailed account of the Lord’s throne in the previous verses is no real difficulty. His reign, and that of the glorified saints generally, we have seen to be distinctly implied in verse 4: they had been amply promised and predicted elsewhere. The needed revelation in this place is exactly what God provides — the comfortable assurance that those called to testify and auger, after the translation of the Old Testament saints and the

church, would equally reign with Him during the thousand years, not to speak of eternal blessedness, which was a matter of course.

119 Not a syllable intimates that there will be one majestic uttered summons, as Dr. Brown assumes. (Christ's Second Coming, 4th ed., pp. 193, 194.) Nor is the last trump, or the trump of God, connected with any save the righteous. This trumpet-sound, we know from scripture, is one. The voice of the Son of God, scripture with equal distinctness informs us, is to call from the grave both those that have practised good and those that have done evil; but the passage itself indicates two contrasted resurrections, which are separated by a distinction far deeper than, though confirmed by, the difference of their respective epochs. The question whether His voice is to be kept up through a thousand years is a mere cavil. There is nothing to forbid, but on the contrary everything, in my opinion, to strengthen the thought that the Lord will cause His glorious voice to be heard in closing judgment after the millennium, as in crowning grace before it.

120 Some will be startled to hear that Mr. E. (H. A., vol. iv. pp. 197-204) applies Matt. 25:31, etc., to the rapture of the living saints, the dead having been immediately before raised and caught up. Then follows, as he conceives, the catastrophe of an unprecedented disruption of the earth's crust, as far as the Roman world is concerned, the risen saints being perhaps (!) the attendants of the Lord's coming and judgment. In a note to page 291 it is said that, though there may be a primary reference to the judgment of the living at Christ's coming, yet secondarily a more extensive judgment of the dead too may be included. The truth is

that all is confusion. In fact the sheep are distinguished from the King's brethren, as well as contrasted with the goats. Not a word implies resurrection or rapture to heaven. It is a glorious scene on earth, subsequent to Christ's appearing, and therefore to the removal of the heavenly saints, and a judicial dealing not with the dead but the living; and not with all the living, but all the nations or Gentiles who are disposed of on the ground of their behaviour to the King, as presented by His brethren who had announced the kingdom (cf. Matt. 24:14) before the end came. There is not a trace of resemblance to the scene of the great white throne, nor any judgment of the dead. There is no issue beyond the solemn and final one, for those concerned, of honouring or despising the King in His messenger Besides, the insuperable difficulty for Mr. E and for most expositors is the place which the revelation of the first resurrection occupies, viz., after the destruction of the beast. The non-recognition of a previous rapture of saints, to whom the Apocalyptic sufferers are added just before the millennium, is the occasion of these errors, the denial of the true and proper character of the church being probably the grand source of all.

Revelation 21

It would have been a happier division of these chapters if Revelation 21:1-8 had been made a part of the same series of events which was given in Revelation 20, following it in unbroken succession. There is a very decided termination of the chain at the close of the eighth verse of this chapter. Thence to the end, and taking in the first five verses of Revelation 22, we have another connected portion. The first eight verses refer to a totally different time from what follows. From Revelation 21:9 we have to go back again to the millennium; whereas the previous verses of the chapter are the fullest account that the word of God furnishes of the new heavens and new earth, in the proper sense of the words. This is subsequent to the thousand years' reign, to the great white throne, and of course to the complete dissolution of the heavens and earth that now are, which were found when that throne was set up. Then, when this account of the eternal state is closed, the Spirit of God supplies a very important appendix, if I may be allowed the expression, on the state of things during the millennium, which was not given when that epoch was noticed in the historical sequence of Rev. 19, 20, 21:1-8.

But perhaps it may be asked by some objectors, What is the authority for dividing the chapters thus? Why not take the whole of Revelation 21 (as it was probably understood by those who made the division) as one and the same time? Why not suppose that the account of the New Jerusalem in verse 10 refers to the same date as the mention of it in verse 2? The answer is simple. In the

eternal state God has to do with men. All time distinctions are at an end. There is no such thing then as kings and nations. Accordingly, this we do find in the first eight verses. Take for example the third verse: “And I heard a loud voice out of heaven [or the throne], saying, Behold the tabernacle of God [is] with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, their God.” Whereas, if we look at the latter part of the chapter, we have again to do with nations and earthly kings. “And the nations shall walk by means of its light; and the kings of the earth do bring their glory,” etc. When eternity begins, God has done dealing with things according to the order of the world-kings and nations, and the like provisions of a temporal nature. All this implies government, as government supposes that there is evil which requires suppression. Consequently, in the latter part of our chapter it is not the eternal condition which we have, but a previous state, the early verses (1-5) of Revelation 22 being the continuation of this description. There a tree is described, “and the leaves of the tree [are] for healing of the nations.” That is, at the time of which the verse speaks not only are there nations, but they are not removed from the need of healing, and God supplies what they want. This must convince any unprejudiced mind that the Spirit of God in Revelation 22 does not refer to what follows the last judgment, when all that is connected with the world is entirely closed, but that He goes back to a previous state when God is still governing It will be observed also that in the portion relative to the millennium (that is, from verse 9 of Rev. 21) we have dispensational names, such as the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb; not so in

Revelation 21:1-8, which discloses eternity, where God shall be all in all.

But it may help souls still further to remark, that it is the manner of God in this book to take a retrospect. I say this to show that I am not at all arguing for something without precedent, in the order in which, as I conceive, these events are arranged. Take, for instance, Revelation 14. There we had seen a regular sevenfold series of events, in the course of which the fall of Babylon occupies the third place. After that comes the judgment on the worshippers of the beast; next the Holy Ghost pronounces the blessedness of those that die in the Lord; then the Lord's coming in judgment, presented in two ways, as reaping the harvest, and as trampling the winepress (the harvest, a judgment of discrimination, and the vintage one of pure vengeance). Babylon there has got its place assigned very clearly. But long after this in the prophecy, when the Spirit of God has given us the seven vials of God's wrath, we have Babylon again. The fall of Babylon is under the seventh vial. And this is important: for the Holy Ghost then proceeds to describe the character and conduct of Babylon, that required such a fearful visitation from the hand of God. In this case the Holy Ghost has carried us down in Revelation 14 to events subsequent to Babylon's fall, and even to the Lord's coming in judgment; and then He returns to show us details about Babylon and her connection with the beast, and the kings of the earth, in Revelation 17-18.

Now it appears to me that this exactly answers to the order of the events in Revelation 21. There is a striking analogy in the way in which Babylon and the heavenly Jerusalem are introduced, and though, of course, there

is the strongest and most marked contrast between the two objects themselves, still there is enough to make it manifest that the Holy Ghost had them together in His mind, as it seems to me. Thus, in Rev. 17:1, it is said, "There came one of the seven angels that had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither; I will show thee the judgment of the great harlot that sits by the many waters." Such is the announcement, where the vision goes back to describe Babylon and her doom. Just so are we introduced to the counterpart of this vision in Rev. 21, which looks back at the bride, the Lamb's wife. "And there came one of the seven angels that had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." As Babylon had had its place defined in the historic line of events, and then that line being completed, the Holy Ghost stopped to disclose, retrospectively and at full, those moral ways which had forced God, so to speak, to judge her; so exactly the Lamb's wife, the New Jerusalem, had been seen in both capacities, in the final sketch of the history up to the very end. And now the Holy Ghost goes back to describe the same New Jerusalem, with reference to the millennial reign, and the kings and nations then to be on earth. We have seen the bride, the Lamb's wife, that had made herself ready, in Revelation 19:7. We have had in Revelation 21:2 the New Jerusalem spoken of as coming down from God out of heaven, still fresh in bridal beauty, after more than a thousand years have passed away. But now in 21:9 the very important fact comes out, that the bride, the Lamb's wife, is the holy city Jerusalem. "There came unto me one of the seven angels... and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the

Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me [not that great city, but] the holy city Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God." John was called to see the bride, and looking, he saw the heavenly Jerusalem. Thus, if we had the bride in relation to the Lamb in Revelation 19, and as the holy city, New Jerusalem, in relation to the eternal state, verse 9 and the following verses of this chapter show us that, during the interval between the marriage of the Lamb, and the new heaven and earth in the eternal state, she has a very blessed place in the eyes of God and man. It is the church's millennial display.

These few prefatory remarks may clear the way, and prove that I am not assuming more than can be demonstrated in taking the first eight verses as the proper sequel of the series of events found in Revelation 19 - 20, and the rest of this chapter from verse 9, as a retrogressive description of the millennial state. There are evidently the strongest reasons for it, and indeed, any other interpretation is, I conceive, out of the question, if the context be duly weighed. It is impossible for an unbiassed and instructed person, who carefully considers the circumstances here described, to suppose that what follows the 9th verse can synchronize with the section which immediately precedes. They are, as already remarked, two irreconcileable states of things. 121 What is it that the Holy Ghost shows the apostle, after the old heaven and earth had disappeared and the last judgment? "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and the sea was no more." These words are not to be taken in a mere preparatory and moral sense. The prophet Isaiah had spoken in that way. In

Isaiah 65 a new heavens and a new earth were announced: but how differently! There the language must be taken in a very qualified sense indeed. “For, behold (verse 17), I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people; and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old, but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed.” Clearly this is a very bright change, but it is an earthly condition. There are infants and old men here; and though the description is purposely contrasted with anything the world has yet seen, still it is a time-state of blessedness, and not of eternity. The apostle John shows us in the Revelation the new heaven and the new earth, not in a relative sense but in the most absolute. In the Old Testament they are limited, because connected with Israel upon the earth. So it is said of the Lord, “He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end.” This is an Old Testament hope, though said in the New, and it means of course that He shall reign over the house of Jacob as long as it exists as such upon the earth. When the earth disappears and Israel is no longer seen as a nation, they will be blessed, no doubt, in another and better way; but there will be no reign of Christ over them as an earthly people here below; so that this kingdom, while it has no end as lone, as the earth subsists, must necessarily be, limited by the earth’s continuance. It is thus that I

understand the new heavens and the new earth spoken of in Isaiah. The New Testament uses the phrase fully and absolutely, as an unending state; but in the Old Testament it is tied down to the earthly relations of which the Holy Ghost was then speaking.

What makes it still clearer is that the next verse (Isaiah 65:21) goes on to say, “And they shall build houses and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build and another inhabit.... mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord,” etc. Now all this is most cheering. So again, “The wolf and the lamb shall feed together.... They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord.” Glowing and beautiful as this picture is of what the Lord can accomplish, it is in connection with the earth and an earthly people. It is not the eternal state, but an exceedingly glorious day when death will be the exception and life the rule. I say that death will be thus rare, at least in the Holy Land, because of that verse, “The child shall die an hundred years old, but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed.” The meaning is, that if a person dies at a hundred years old, he will still be comparatively a child; and that even when death occurs at that age, it is only as the result of an express curse of God. Thus will it be during the millennium.

And this seems to answer a question often asked: What will become of all the righteous people during that wonderful reign? If the first resurrection is then past, and in the second resurrection none but the wicked dead are raised, what can be the destiny of the

righteous who live during the millennium? The truth is, there is no scripture proof that such die during the thousand years. What is said supposes the contrary. Therefore, if they die not during the millennium, there are no righteous to be raised at the end of it. The resurrection at the end remains consequently for the wicked dead solely. The righteous will be raised before the millennium the wicked after it. The just who live during the reign of Christ are not called to die at all, as far as scripture informs us. We may be sure that these millennial saints will be changed into the likeness of Christ; they will be transplanted into the new heavens and earth. We are not called upon to conjecture how this will be. It is sufficient for us to know that, though they are not described as dying during the millennium, and therefore do not need to be raised; yet when the new earth appears men are found upon it quite distinct from the New Jerusalem (i.e., the symbol of the glorified heavenly saints). I believe that verse 3 warrants this statement. “Behold, the tabernacle of God [or the city that descends] is with men,” etc.

Another proof that Isaiah does not speak of the eternal state described here is this: When the new heavens and earth are seen by the New Testament prophet, the old are said to be passed away, and the sea no longer exists. Not so in Isaiah’s prophecy. There it was rather the spirit or pledge of the new that came into the old; a shadow of what was to be, and not the very image or accomplishment of the thing. They are said prophetically to be “new,” because of the great joy and blessing that God will give to His people Israel in their land. In the Revelation “there was no more sea.” In the Old Testament, on the contrary, “the abundance of the sea (it

is said) shall be converted unto thee.... Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first." (Isaiah 60.) There can be no just doubt that this chapter speaks of the same time as Isaiah 65. "For thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." This and other passages prove that there is still to be sea at the time spoken of by Isaiah: the isles and ships necessarily suppose it; and "the isles afar off" are introduced between the two statements of the new heavens and new earth in Isaiah 65 and Isaiah 66.

Here in Revelation not merely the present dispensation but the present heaven and earth have passed away, and give place to "all things made new." Doubtless the new heaven and earth will be made out of the old. Just as the resurrection-body will be formed out of the present body of humiliation by the power of God, so are the present earth and heavens destined to a kindred transformation. After the dissolution they will reappear in the form of the new heavens and earth. "No more sea" would be impossible without a miracle, as long as life in its present condition has to be maintained. The sea, as my reader knows, is absolutely necessary to animated nature as it is. Man could not exist without it; and so with regard to every animal and even vegetable upon the face of the earth, not to speak of the vast world of waters. But when time is done — when there is no longer the natural life that is sustained by God — when the millennium shall have yielded the brightest witness to this as well as to every other fruit of His wisdom and goodness and power — a new state of things altogether will ensue, and this perfect and everlasting. There will be new heavens and a new earth; for the first heavens

and first earth are passed away; and there is no more sea. Perfection is come for the universe.

But that is not all — Into this dwelling-place and scene of order that God will have made, so remarkably distinguished from all that has been before, and even from that which accompanies the reign of His own Messiah, John sees “the holy city, New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice out of heaven, saying, Behold the tabernacle of God [is] with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, their God” (verses 2, 3). I apprehend that the New Jerusalem is the tabernacle of God. It is where He abides in a very special sense. And this tabernacle of God descends out of heaven to be with men. The heavenly saints compose the tabernacle of God; while those that are found upon the new earth are simply described as “men.” They are no longer Jews and Gentiles then, as in the millennium; this will have all passed away with “the first or former things.” Every distinction which had to do with time is at an end. When a saint is risen or changed, he is no longer a Jew or a Greek; he is a man, though bearing the image of the heavenly. So here God has to do with men, and “he shall dwell with them and they shall be his people; and God himself shall be with them, their God.” Instead of regarding it from a distance, God will not merely come to visit the scene that His hand has made for man as of old in the garden of Eden; but He will dwell eternally in their midst. “And God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; and no sorrow, nor crying, nor pain, shall any more be; for the first things are passed away” (verse 4). Unquestionably

the figures that are used to describe this state of things are derived from Isaiah — figures which the Spirit of God had applied primarily to millennial blessedness. Isaiah predicts a glorious but earthly condition, which God will make true of the just during the millennium. Blessedness will then be the rule, sorrow the exception. Similar terms, but with striking differences, the Holy Ghost now takes up and applies in a far deeper and really unqualified sense.

And if we look for a moment at 2 Peter 3 we shall find, I think, a link between Isaiah and Revelation. It, is written in 2 Peter 3:10, “The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.... The heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.” Now it appears to me plain that this is what takes place at the epoch of the great white throne. For the moment the Lord is on that throne, the earth and heaven flee from before His face, and there is found no place for them. It is a part of “the day of the Lord.” which day comprehends the whole time from the Lord’s interference to judge the world, taking His great power and reigning, until He delivers up the kingdom, after the millennium and the subsequent judgments are over.122 “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his

promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

Now this is the state described, with fuller details of time and character, by the apostle John. The new heaven and earth are what we find in the beginning of Revelation 21. These are the new heavens and earth, "wherein dwelleth righteousness." Righteousness is at home there, because there God dwells, and this can only be because righteousness is the pervading feature. It is plain that the Holy Spirit in St. Peter refers to the passage of Isaiah, as it is said, "We according to his promise." But still He gives it a larger and deeper meaning. And St. John, the last of the New Testament writers, takes up the same thought, and puts each truth in its place. He shows us that while the millennium may be a partial fulfilment of it, the full force of the expression will not appear till the millennium is over; and then, when all is according to divine thought and purpose, God will rest, and men — not Israel only, but redeemed and glorified men — shall be His people, and He their God.

To one other scripture I must refer, in order to connect the various passages which bear on the eternal state. In 1 Cor. 15:23 we read that every one is to be raised in his own order: "Christ the first-fruits [who is raised already]; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming. Then cometh the end, when he delivers up [which is the true reading] the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall put down all rule and all authority and power." This is the task of Christ during the millennium: He will abolish all opposing rule, subjecting to Himself every adversary and all things unto the glory of God the Father; for such is the ultimate object of His exaltation,

as we see from Phil. 2. “For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” This exactly harmonizes with Rev. 20 - 21, where we find, first the reign of Christ, then death destroyed, and after that the new heaven and earth, which is the time when Christ is said in 1 Cor. 15:24 to deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father. Not that Christ will cease to reign divinely: but the special human reign of Christ will terminate — that is His reigning for a given period over an earthly people, and the world at large, which the heavenly saints in glory will share along with Him. This will end. All the righteous will at last be in a risen or changed condition, all the wicked dead cast into the lake of fire, and the kingdom closes. Its surrender to God the Father in no way touches the personal glory of the Lord Jesus. The kingdom that Christ has during the millennium is not what He has as God, but as the risen man — as the One who was humbled, but has been exalted. This He delivers up to God, even the Father (Himself also as man taking the place of subjection in glory, as of old He did in grace on the earth), that God — Father, Son, and Holy Ghost — may be all in all — God as such having the place of supremacy throughout eternity. But although the human or mediatorial kingdom of Christ will terminate, not so the divine kingdom; and therefore we, being made partakers of the divine nature, are said to reign for ever and ever. (Rev. 22.) So in Romans 5 it is said, “We shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.” Of course, partaking of the divine nature does not touch the incommunicable glory of the Godhead. But it remains true that we have an eternal life, and that its endless character flows from the fact that it is given to us by One who, though truly man, is a divine person, by Him

who is the living One and was dead, and, behold, is alive for evermore. “We shall reign in life by One, Jesus Christ” — a reign which is not limited in time any more than sphere.

You will observe that it is God who is prominent through this portion, exactly answering to what we saw in 1 Cor. 15:28. “And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he saith [to me], Write; for these words are true and faithful” (verse 5). He speaks that sits on the throne. We do not get the Lamb mentioned. It is the glory of God in the fullest possible sense that we have here. “And he said to me, They are done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.” No doubt Christ is the Alpha and the Omega too, as we find in Revelation 22:13; but it is not the Lord as such that acts and speaks here, but God. “I will give him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be a God to him, and he shall be a son to me” (verses 6, 7). Nothing can be plainer than that it is God as such who is speaking all through. “But for the cowardly, and unbelievers, and abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers and idolaters, and all the false, their part [shall be] in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (verse 8). A most awful word of warning, and especially as used here! For mark the force of it. It is then God shall be all in all — God who is love. But He is not merely love, which is a false and infidel thought; He is light as well as love. It as much appertains to God to be holy as to be gracious; and the very same portion of His word teaches us both these truths. And here is the final proof of it. In love He comes down to be with His

people. They may be men, but they are no longer in weakness and sorrow; for God Himself has wiped away every tear from their eyes. But He is light, and therefore in presence of all things new, where righteousness dwells in peace, when there is no evil or sin, but separation from it for ever by the power of God; even then the portion of the wicked is in the lake burning with fire and brimstone. Note well that this is the eternal state. Remember that in the eternal state there is the doom, the never-ending doom, of those who have rejected Christ and taken their stand on their own miserable self. Here is the award from God Himself. Their part is the second death, where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched, as the Lord Jesus so touchingly expresses it No declaration can be more solemn than that of Rev. 21:8, not only because of its character, but because of its place. When God will have rest in the new heavens and earth — when He will come down to abide among men, because there will no longer be any evil to check — His dwelling with them — then it is that the awful scene presents itself of evil and its hopeless unending torment. This is what God teaches us in His picture of the eternal world. There is not only the bright side, but none the less the lake of fire, which has its course; nor does a word intimate that its horrors will ever come to an end.

But now the Holy Ghost, having brought us to “the end” in the most absolute sense, leads us back again. We have seen the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, when this eternal condition begins. But what is its relation to the millennial earth? If we had only the previous revelations, we could not have answered this

clearly. The bride, the Lamb's wife, has had her joy consummated in heaven; then as the New Jerusalem, after the millennium, she has taken her place as regards the new heavens and earth; but what is her relation to those here below during the millennium? This is now made plain. "There came one of the seven angels that had, etc.... and talked to me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Its lustre [was] like a stone most precious, as a jasper stone crystal-clear." It appears to me that this account of the city's bright lustre like a jasper has a very close connection with what had just before been said of it, as having the "glory of God." For when God Himself was seen on the throne in Revelation 4, He was in appearance like a jasper and a sardis. Here the New Jerusalem has God's glory, and its lustre is jasper-like. But this is not all. "It had a wall great and high," and after this we are told in the 18th verse that "the building of its wall was of jasper." Hence it is plain that this is peculiarly the stone which is used to describe the glory of God, as far as it can be seen by a creature — not the glory of God which the creature cannot see. For God has a glory which no man eau approach unto. But He is pleased also to display His glory suitably to the capacity of a creature; and the precious stone used to set this forth is in the book of Revelation the jasper.

Besides this, we are told it had "twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names inscribed, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel." The number "twelve" is particularly mentioned throughout

the account of the New Jerusalem. It was just before said that the city had the glory of God, in the hope of which we rejoice. (Rom. 5:2.) Here we find that this hope, for which we wait and in which we rejoice, is enjoyed. But God is pleased to remember that He is dealing with people on the earth, and the New Jerusalem has a very special relation to men during the millennium. Accordingly, there are twelve gates with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel written upon them. At the gates stand twelve angels, showing their subordination. In this day of glory the angel is happy to be a porter at the gate of the heavenly city — happy, if he do not enter, to have his work and mission outside. "Unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak." (Heb. 2.) "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?.... Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" (1 Cor. 6.) "And the wall of the city hath twelve foundations, and on them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (verse 14:). Eph. 2:20 gives us, I think, the force of the symbol. "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the. saints.... and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." No doubt the whole building is growing up into an holy temple in the Lord. But we are built upon "the foundation of the apostles and prophets," both of the New Testament. If Old Testament prophets had been meant, they would naturally, to avoid mistake, have been set before apostles; but the expression as it stands seems purposely framed to guard against such a misconception. The prophets of the Old Testament were the filling up of the law, besides testifying future things, judgments, the new covenant, etc. The law and the

prophets, as it is said, were until John. (See also Matt. 5:17.) Their authority never can be destroyed. But when Messiah was rejected by Israel, and redemption was accomplished on the cross, there was a new foundation laid for a new work of God, entirely distinct from what the law or the prophets, or even John the Baptist, contemplated. It is the foundation of the [New Testament] apostles and prophets, and it is upon this that the New Jerusalem is built. Now God has brought out His full mind as a foundation of truth.

Certain things were yet reserved in Old Testament times. Look at Deuteronomy (Deut. 29:29). “The secret things,” says Moses there, “belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the works of this law.” Revealed things here have to do with the law and its consequences, for the purpose of enforcing obedience. But the secret things, which then belonged to God, are themselves now revealed — the resources of grace, when all was ruin under the law. And this is what the apostle Paul lays such stress on, while he tells us how that by revelation God made known to him the mystery or secret, “whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ; which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.” And so Col. 1:26. The Holy Ghost had brought out what had been a secret thing in the days of old. The mystery is revealed. This full revelation of truth appears to be called the foundation of the apostles and prophets on which the Church is built. Therefore it is said in 1 Tim. 3:13, that the Church is “the pillar and ground of the truth.” The truth has come

out, and God has as it were no secrets now. All that He chose to reveal. all that would be of service to the creature, and to the glory of His own Son, God has brought out; so that, in this sense and in every other, it may be said, that “the darkness passeth, and the true light now shineth.” So then upon this broad and deep foundation — where not merely the dealings of God with individuals, or a people connected with His promises or His government are shown out; but where all that can be known of God by the creature has been revealed in His Son — upon this foundation the Church is built. And this is now made manifest to His saints, which was hidden but is now revealed. “The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.” They were the instruments of this revelation.

“And he that talked with me had a golden reed as a measure, that he might measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth quadrangular, and the length is as great as the breadth.... The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal” (verses 15, 17). It was the image of the perfection of a city “whose builder and maker is God.” I do not mean that this description is to be taken as if it were of a literal city. I conceive that it is a purely symbolical picture as to certain relations of the bride, the Lamb’s wife. The scripture itself most positively says that it is (not the dwelling-place of the redeemed, but) the bride herself described as a city. Just as the apostate church, the vast idolatrous ecclesiastical system so often spoken of in this book, was symbolized as the great city Babylon; so here the glorified Church is characterized as the bride, the Lamb’s wife, in contrast with the great

harlot, and as the holy city descending out of heaven from God, in contrast with the great city which rules over the rulers of the earth. When we read, then, of the city forming a quadrangle, of equal length, breadth, and height, it is simply to be understood as figurative of its perfectness. At the same time these symbols must not be run into one another. For immediately after it is said, “he measured the wall thereof, of an hundred and forty-four cubits, — a man’s measure, that is, of an angel” (verse 17). Now the city’s height was previously given as equal to the length and breadth, i.e., twelve thousand furlongs. This of course is enormously greater than a hundred and forty-four cubits, which is expressly made to refer to the height of the wall First, we have the general idea of a city which is every way square, a cube in fact; then, when we come to the details of the wall, a height is given which shows that we are not to look for mere literal consistency as if it were a portrait. The number twelve keeps up the idea of a perfection in reference to man.

“And the building of its wall was of jasper; and the city [was] pure gold, like clear glass” (verse 18). We have already found the meaning of these two figures, the gold and the glass, in an earlier part of the book The Lord counselled the Laodicean church in its fallen state to buy of Him “gold tried in the fire.” It is invariably the figure of divine righteousness — of righteousness that can stand the searching fire of God’s judgment. Human righteousness could not bear it, and so is never represented by gold, but rather by white linen. God could cleanse this and leave it without spot or slain. But fire would be destruction to it; whereas, with regard to the gold, it would only bring out its perfection.

Accordingly this city is of pure gold, “like clear glass.” Holiness, now fixed and without flaw, also marks the city. With regard to our need of holiness, the means of it are represented under the figure of water, because it is a question of cleansing from defilement in a practical way. In the Revelation this is not the case; for from the fourth chapter the saints who are put in connection with holiness are risen saints, and consequently are beyond the means of cleansing. They are therefore represented, as also in the case of that body of saints mentioned in Revelation 15, as on a sea of glass, because it is purity and this in a fixed unalterable condition. Their state is no longer that which might need to be cleansed. It is holiness that repels everything defiling. So here the city is of pure gold, like unto clear glass. In Rev. 15 it is remarkable that the sea of glass is said to be mingled with fire, which was not the case in Rev. 4; and this because the saints spoken of there had not only gone through this complete purging, and were now in a state of unalterable purity, but they had gone through the last terrible tribulation, of which fire is the known figure. From this tribulation the raptured saints of Rev. 4 had been exempt. Thus then we have the city of pure gold, like clear glass; that is, divine righteousness has its full way now, and holiness beyond nature that nothing can touch.

“And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones: the first foundation jasper, etc. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one severally of the gates was out of one pearl:123 and the street of the city was pure gold, as transparent glass” (verse 19-21). Without pretending to give the spiritual meaning of the various precious

stones, we may learn thence that in every variety of beauty will God array His people in that day of glory. There will be different rays of His glory reflected through them, set forth by these different precious stones. In God's own case it is not so. His essential glory is not described after this fashion. It is full concentrated light. It is not what is broken up into a variety of hues, if we may so say, as in the case of the glory He confers on the church. God is light, and He dwells in light which no man can approach unto. The rainbow of many colours was the sign by which God showed His covenant with creation, and His various ways with poor man. But when it is the lustre of the saints in heavenly glory, and the way in which God will display the beauty of His people, — for He does see beauty in them, — these precious stones are the emblems employed.

"And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one severally of the gates was of one pearl." Such they appeared to men outside: something quite beyond nature. It is a description that alludes to the earthly Jerusalem; but in the latter city, what is really found existing in nature will be brought to adorn it. Here the beauty of the church is set forth by a supernatural imagery: each one of the gates was made out of one pearl. They are symbols which set forth the perfect and divine beauty that God will put upon His people. This is already true of them in Christ, but actually and personally will they thus shine in that day. Each gate being of one pearl would show I suppose, the special likeness of Christ and fellowship with Christ, which God will grant to His people — to the church. In Matthew 13 we have, as I conceive, the Lord Jesus as a merchantman in quest of goodly pearls; who, when He

had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that He had and bought it. It is the beauty of the church, as viewed in God's mind, which if one may say it, fascinated the Lord Jesus, so that He parted with all His earthly glory to get that pearl: a strong expression indeed, but not too strong to convey His appreciation of the church. But we know that if the Lord saw any beauty in the church, it was all derived from Himself. He saw the church as she was in the mind and purpose of God, and sells all that He might purchase this pearl of great price, which after all is but the reflection of His own beauty. So here, the spotless pearl, the perfection of moral beauty that had been so precious in the eyes of Christ, is the figure of what, even at the entrance, will appear in the eyes of men and angels.

"And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God, the Almighty, is its temple, and the Lamb" (verse 22). This is very important For perhaps some one may say, What has all this to do with the saint now? I answer, The world must wait for the day of glory to see the beauty of the church. And we, like the world, are so often unbelieving, that we are apt to see only the dark painful circumstances of the church, if we escape the delusive dream of an improving Christendom. Which of us carries habitually constantly in our hearts the delight of the Lord Jesus in opening out what the church is going to be — nay, what it is in His eye and to His heart? Our unbelief as to this is one main secret source of our murmuring and rebellious spirit. I do not say that we ought not to feel the failure of God's church as things are on earth: God forbid such a thought! But we might feel it more lovingly and more keenly too had we a deeper sense of its nearness to Christ and the glory it is

soon to shine in. A good deal of what we feel, when evil is seen in the children of God, is because self is touched. We are all inclined to deal hardly enough with a person's vanity, pride, or things of the kind. Why? Is it not too frequently because it wounds us? We have possibly not had the share of respect and importance to which we fancied ourselves entitled, and we are readily sore about it. But this is not according to Christ. Not that we should be insensible to the ways of the flesh and the world, but we should feel all with Christ and not for ourselves. What can enable us? Nothing but the heart filled with Christ and the exceedingly blessed place in which He puts us. We are called to exhibit the Lord Jesus now. It is not merely that we are to be members of His flesh, and of His bones, but that so we are now; and therefore love and desire for God's glory would lead us to seek ways answering to this in the church and before men. What God will show to the whole universe by and by, He would have. us to look for in His people now.

When that day comes there will be no hindrances; but the action of the Holy Ghost is to make good in us what will be perfectly manifest then, and what is true in principle now. If there is a spot upon another who is to shine alone, with Christ then, this stirs up our affections that the evil may be removed in God's way and for His glory. And this it is which so increases our sense of shame that such blots should be upon ourselves. It is evident to me that the Holy Ghost reveals the description of the divine glory that is to be in the church, in order to act with great practical power on our souls now, the word being mixed with faith in them that hear it. The real reason why it so little profits us is that we are such unbelieving believers. We are believers; but

is it not humiliating that we can pass over such precious fruits of Christ's love, such bright visions of assured glory, as if we did not need them now, or as if they were not the faithful and true words of God? We shall be in glory by and by, and know as we are known; but it is revealed to those who are not in it yet, that their souls may be full of the joy of it now, and that the effects of it may be manifest even to the world that despises them. The Holy Spirit is the earnest of the inheritance, as well as the seal of redemption.

But this is true not of the beauty only in which the church is to shine then; there is another thing, which ought to have a mighty influence upon us now. There is an immediate relation to God in the way of worship: and what then? The symbol here used is that of a city, and therefore we are not described as priests. If we were spoken of as persons, we should be described as brought near to God, that is, as priests; and so we are in Rev. 20:6. But here it is a city — and a city in which there is no temple: not because there was no special seat of the presence of God there, but because His presence filled it all and equally. The access to God is immediate. But this also is a truth applicable now. (Hebrews 10.) Here below there is no temple nor priests now between us and God. Undoubtedly we have above the great and faithful High Priest — a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. But there will be below, during the future kingdom, for those on earth that need Him, when "He shall sit as a Priest upon his throne." Thus, to the Christian there is neither temple nor priest on earth now. We stand, as to our faith, in the immediate presence of God, with His perfect favour shining on us. If persons do not feel this, it is

because they do not believe it. We must always believe a. thing on God's word first; and the more simply we believe, the more shall we enjoy the comfort, strength, and fruits of the truth.

"And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God, the Almighty, is the temple, and the Lamb. And the city hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon, that they should shine on it." No earthly nor even heavenly lights of the old creation are. wanted there. "For the glory of God lightened it, and the light [literally, lamp] thereof is the Lamb" (verse 23). How wonderfully all this description falls in with a few words in John 17, to which I must refer before going farther.

In His astonishing prayer (if we can call that a prayer, which is more like the Son unbosoming Himself to the Father) the Lord says, "The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them." It was divine, but not His Godhead glory, for this never can be given, belonging to God, and none else. The Lord Jesus had Godhead glory, but not given to Him, because He had it essentially; He had it in His own right, as being God, from all eternity. But what the Father gave to Him as man, He gave to His disciples: "that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." Now this exactly corresponds with what we have in the Revelation, for the holy city is seen there descending out of heaven from God: and the Lamb is in it, and the Lord God makes Himself known, so to speak, specially in Him; for the Lamb is not merely the light, but the vessel of it, or light-bearer. We may consider the light diffused, as it is said, "the glory of God had lightened it;" but if we

want to see the light concentrated, where are we to look? The Lamb is that light. Thus does God make Himself to shine through all the glorious city: the Lamb is the great concentrating object, diffusing light over the whole scene. This, then, is the order of it — “I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know,”124 etc. The Lamb makes God known to them, as they make Him known to all others. This is what appears in the Revelation. “The nations shall walk by means of its light.” not in the light of the Lamb immediately, but by means of the light of the heavenly city: precisely what we find in John 17; “that they may be made perfect in one; that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.” There is, I apprehend, what answers to the nations walking by means of the light of the city. Through these nations the church had passed in the days of her pilgrimage, and been despised because of her fellowship with Christ. (1 John 3: l.) For, as He had been there and unknown, “therefore the world knoweth us not.” But now, when the bright day shines, when Jesus, long absent and rejected, the blessed and exalted man, the Lord from heaven, comes in His glory, Himself the faithful witness and accomplishment of the glory of God, as indeed He is the brightness of it, He will not be seen apart from His bride.

“We shall appear with Him in glory;” and the nations shall walk by means of the light of the glorified whom they had so long cast out. Even their kings bring their glory to it.125 It is necessary to state this, lest persons should imagine that there was a communication of a direct kind between the inhabitants of the earth and the heavenly city. But though the city was seen to come

down from heaven, it is not here said to come down to the earth, so as to be with men, as it does when the new heaven and earth are come. Here its glory is over the earth; accordingly the kings and the nations bring their glory and honour unto it, in the way of homage, I suppose, to Him who dwells there. “And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day; for there shall be no night there.” No danger threatens the city; on the contrary, “They shall bring the glory and the honour of the nations to it.” Of course, it is in the same sense as in verse 24. “And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing unclean, or one that works abomination and a lie: but those that are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” Thus, the fullest scope is given to the holiness of God, and the impure and abominable and false excluded from His presence, as indeed they are morally and altogether unfit for it; but withal His sovereignty is maintained intact. None enter there, except those enrolled in the book of life of the Lamb.

It has been already remarked that the first five verses of Rev. 22 are necessary to complete the vision: but I think it better to reserve them for my next lecture, when the conclusion of the book will also be shown in due order.

121 Had Mr. Elliott sufficiently weighed these considerations, I cannot think that he would have left the readers of the Horae Apoc. (vol. iv. pp. 210-218) in such perplexity as to the chronological place of these visions of the New Jerusalem. The reason why “such strong arguments,” as he confesses, “press antagonistically” for the millennial and the post-millennial reference is, because each aide has a measure of truth left out of the account by the ether. On the one hand, it is not only the cursory but the most careful

reader who is compelled to allow that Revelation 21:1-8, fairly interpreted, is post-millennial. On the. other hand, the internal evidence from verse 9 is equally conclusive that, with this new vision of the Seer, we begin a retrospective glance at the same city during the millennium, though of come its own intrinsic blessedness and glory will abide for ever.

122 My friend Dr. Brown will forgive me for thinking that the argument, even in its amended shape (Second Advent, p. 289), which he “believes it to be impossible to answer,” is a complete and obvious fallacy. I deny that the day of the Lord, as St. Peter uses it, is the mere epoch of the Lord’s coming, but rather the entire period covered by His reign and judgment. Hence the millennium, as well as the final dissolution of the actual heaven and earth, may and do occur within the compass of His day, while His coming may precede them both. His mistake lies in identifying the day with the coming of the Lord.

123 Some readers will be astonished to hear that a man of Michaelis’ reputation should adduce this as an instance of “false translation.” (Int. N. T., vol. iv. p. 507.) It is not uninstructive to mark the process of mind it betrays — the very same which leads many to reject the Bible, and this writer himself to asperse the Apocalypse. “A pearl, whether we consider the rotundity of the figure, or the softness of its mass, is very ill-qualified to become the gate of a city, even if that city exists only in poetical description.” But what if it be morally didactic in a symbolic prophecy? “The word used in the Greek is margarith”, and that ought to be rendered precious stone! for this is the meaning ascribed to the word in Chaldee... M. is used perhaps in the same sense, Matt.

13:45, 46.” To refute this seems to me quite needless. Every one can see how definite is the Seer’s description of the various precious stones, and the spiritual man will feel the blank created by the absence of the “pearl.”

124 It is very evident that the author of the H. A. (vol. iv. pp. 184, 196) does not understand this passage, which he justly conceives to be too often misapprehended and misapplied. For while he rightly affirms that verses 22, 23, apply to the time of glorification, the only time of perfect and displayed unity, it is a mistake to confound this with the unity prayed for in verses 20, 21, which is as clearly a question of grace and testimony to the world, as the other will be of glory and the world’s knowledge. The truth is that unity is asked. for in three forms. There is, first, that which is absolute and in the twelve apostles, in verse 11, “that they may be one, as we.” Secondly, there is that which should embrace those who were to believe through the apostles’ word, “that they all” (whether Jew or Gentile, bond or free) “should be one” (not by virtue of the law of Jehovah and the enforced rites and ordinances of the Levitical system, but by the revelation of the Father and the Son); “as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe” (not yet know, but believe) “that thou hast sent me.” Such a testimony the gathered saints were while they walked in heavenly unity here below. Then comes the third and crowning form, which it is impossible for the world to deny, when they behold the saints appearing in the same glory with Christ; and therefore it is added, “that the world may know that thou hast sent me,” but this is not all, “and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.” How gainsay it, when Christ and the church burst upon their astonished

eyes in a community of glory? But this does not interfere with the preceding truth, which ought not to be weakened, that the Lord desired the present unity of all His disciples, as a means and powerful witness to the world that they might believe in His mission from the Father. In fact, this abides an important part of practical responsibility, and it is not wise to turn from it. because it is grossly perverted to purposes of earthly power and pride by the world-church in all its varieties. In the Acts of the Apostles we are shown the facts, while the Epistles demonstrate the importance of the doctrine.

125 Not into, but unto, for which in Greek there is but one word, εἰς.

Revelation 22

It is one of the interesting features of this book, that it can only be properly understood when taken in connection with all the rest of the word of God. And, singular to say too, God has linked together, in a very remarkable manner, the last book of the scripture and the very first. For example, here we fall upon images which the Holy Ghost uses to describe the blessedness of the heavenly city in its relation to the earth during the millennium; and whence are these images derived? I must go to the beginning of the book of God, to Genesis — nay, to the very beginning of Genesis itself. There I find a tree of life, rivers, etc., to which evidently the Holy Ghost refers in the passage before us.

Now this seems to me to be a striking indication of God's object, so dovetailing His whole word together, that in order to acquire the full meaning of any part, I must take it in connection with the whole. And this is all the more important, inasmuch as that same word of God shows us different states and dispensations in total contrast with one another. There was the time of innocence; there was the time when there was nothing but sin, as far as man was concerned — evil without a cheek, until the judgment of God came in the flood and destroyed all, save the few in the ark. Then was given the law, and then the gospel, each having a wholly different object. And now we await the great closing scene of this age, when all that God has wrought on the earth, all that revelation has brought out of His mind, but corrupted by man, will have been manifested in its results. In order to understand what the Holy Ghost tells

me about these results, I must begin at the very beginning. Now, looking at Genesis we find that, though there is a sort of analogy in the time of innocence when God was dealing with the creature responsible of course to maintain his place of innocence, yet there is a most blessed contrast in the future, which brings out still more conspicuously the depths of grace which God will show in this holy city.

Let us look then a little at the differences. In Genesis we find that there were four rivers; and of these rivers, although we know little or nothing of the two first, at any rate it is clear that the two last, the Euphrates and Hiddekel or Tigris, were connected with some of the most painful passages in the history of God's earthly people at a later day. On these rivers were built the two most famous cities of antiquity; the Tigris on which Nineveh stood, and the Euphrates on which Babylon was built. I speak now, of course, of a time long subsequent to Adam, or even the deluge. And though the flood may have effaced, as it doubtless did, many other features of the antediluvian earth, still we find these two rivers again. As for Paradise, it was gone, but these rivers were to play an important part in the history of man, and especially of that which acquires a moment greater than its own, from being mingled with the vicissitudes and the chastenings of God's people Israel. These two rivers were identified with the powers that were to be the ruin of Israel and Judah respectively. Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, which carried the great mass of the ten tribes of Israel into captivity. Babylon was the power afterwards used of God for the captivity of that which seemed to stand firm for God, no less than for David's house, but which ere long fell into greater unfaithfulness

than backsliding Israel. Thus these rivers, which had been at first connected with Paradise, became afterwards the representatives of the powers of men that were used to scourge the guilty people of God.

Then again there were two trees in the garden of Eden: one of the knowledge of good and evil, and the other of life. Now whatever might have been the blessing vouchsafed to man in the tree of life, it was wholly useless to him, because the other tree put him to a test which man could not stand. He broke down; he listened to the voice of his wife who had herself listened to the serpent, and he became rebellious. The consequence was that the tree of life was no longer available for his use: had it been so it would only have perpetuated a life of sin and misery. So that while there was judgment in the act of God that placed the cherubim with the flaming sword to shut out man from the tree of life, mercy was mingled with it. God had reserved for man a better thing — the tree of grace, if we may so say. Thus when we come to the closing account, we have neither the various rivers of Eden nor a tree to test man on God's part. There is but one river and one tree. All that was connected with man's weakness and sin, and the chastening of God's people is gone. The relies of shame and the discipline of sorrow are needed no longer. The paradise of man had failed, Israel had failed, the church had failed. Now it is the paradise, the people, and the city of God, who is showing Himself and His glory there; and therefore all that was merely for the testing or the discipline of man completely disappears; and now shine out God's love, Its heavenly grace, His faithfulness to Israel, His sovereign mercy to the Gentiles, His righteous and beneficent rule. The Lord and Saviour had

come in; He had by Himself borne the effects of what God's people deserved, and had made it possible for Him righteously to show them nothing but love, giving them life and atonement and cleansing through Himself, His Son.

"He showed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and of the river on this side and on that side [was] the tree of life, bearing twelve [manner of] fruits, each month yielding its fruits; and the leaves of the tree [are] for healing of the nations" (verses 1, 2). Now here it is evident that we have pure grace reigning through righteousness, as far as the tree and the river are concerned. There is nothing liable to be corrupted by the power of Satan. Neither is there anything like the cherubim, jealous in keeping away man, alas! sinful. Quite the contrary. This tree of life brings forth fruit every month. Of course it is a figure. There will be no mere literal tree or river; but as the river of life's water symbolizes the abundant life and blessing which will flow through the city (that is, the Bride, the Lamb's wife), so here follows the benignant provision for healing the nations. There is a reserve as to the twelve fruits, which may set forth a far higher and more various supply for the constant refreshment of the heavenly saints; but the leaves are expressly said to be for the healing of the nations.

This is the more remarkable, for it must be familiar to us that, even in the coming day of glory the earthly Jerusalem, though in some respects figures are borrowed thence, furnishes in others a very different picture in the prophets. Take, for instance, the description in Isaiah 60. It had been said in Isaiah 59

that the Redeemer should come to Zion, and then in chapter 60 we have the description of the city. “Therefore thy gates shall be open continually: they shall not be shut day nor night,” etc. But what is the principle of the earthly Jerusalem’s relation to the nations? “The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.” It is unsparing righteousness and judgment which govern God compels honour to be paid to His people who had been despised and trampled down among the nations. For we know how the Jews, even now in Christendom, are looked on with contempt and scorn: and if from their wealth, or other causes they get into favour with the world, it is considered a wonderful piece of liberality Men give themselves a good deal of credit for it, and in general act thus on most mistaken ground, either sceptical or pseudo-Christian. They have been so habituated to despise them that these concessions are only wrung out, and often through such false principles as the rights of men, etc. Of course I am merely referring to facts well known in the history of the world; as Christians, we have nothing to do with such questions, though we may judge them. For a Christian is set here for one purpose only — to witness for Christ, rejected by the world but exalted in heaven; to act in accordance with the grace and glory of a Christ who is now at the right hand of God. When this is lost sight of, he is salt without savour. A person may be philanthropic and essay to do much good in the world; but God has a higher object for us than any plans of ours.

And this brief digression flows out of our present theme. For whether it be the church before glory, or when glory comes, as here, the only becoming thing for us is the

manifestation of grace. It is the character of grace that always gives the truth of God about the church; it is the manifestation of Himself, as He has displayed Himself and still does in Christ. This the apostle brings out in Ephesians 5, where it is said, “Be ye therefore followers [imitators] of God.” And how? “As dear children, and walk in love.” In what way? In the chapter before he had spoken of Christ as the offering through which God could forgive sin (verse 32), and therefore we ought to forgive one another, “even as God in Christ hath forgiven you.” But in chapter 5 he goes much farther. “Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.” There is the full character of grace at once, which gives him who knows and walks in it the power of Christ in going forth among men. If I see my brother here or there, his mind filled with erroneous thoughts and hopes, and himself without conscience or with feeble qualms doing things contrary to the Lord, how would God stir my affections towards him? I must always act out of the grace in which God deals towards the saint, and I must lift up his soul, if I can, to know what God feels towards him and His will about him. If he perceives the grace in which God has acted, he will be prepared to learn what he owes to Him. Thus the apostle always speaks. Look again at the Ephesians. What had St. Paul been doing from the beginning of the epistle to chapter 5? He had shown the perfect love of God towards them, and the place of oneness with Christ in which He has set them: and now he as it were says, Walk you in the love Christ has shown you.

We find the same thing here. It is not now the thunders, and lightnings, and voices out of God's presence. All this has completely disappeared. In Rev. 4 such were the sights and sounds which emanated from the throne. They were suited then, and necessary to uphold and express the holiness of Him who sat there. They were the witness of His feeling when, the church being removed to heaven, man was left to exalt himself, only checked by providential judgments. Here there is nothing of the sort. The throne of God and of the Lamb is seen; and what issues from it? A river of water of life, bright as crystal. And why is this? Because the throne here is set in connection with the heavenly city, and this city being the symbol of the glorified saints, the church's habitual character even in glory is grace. Not only was it a river of life, not of death, but the leaves of the tree were for the healing (not destruction) of the nations.

Jerusalem here below is the city of earthly righteousness — the place where God will have brought the Jews through exceeding trouble. They must undergo a terrible tribulation first — the time of Jacob's trouble, but he will be delivered out of it. It will be a righteously measured chastening, because of their sins. They will pass through all that sorrow which God Himself is judicially to inflict; but the indignation is to cease, and this with the destruction of those who were its instruments. "For yet a very little while and the indignation shall cease, and mine anger in their destruction." God will take up the cause of His people, and the calling of Israel in the millennium will savour of that righteousness which has marked the dealings of God towards them publicly, whatever may have been the hidden spring of grace. All the nations shall go up to

Jerusalem when the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains. And "out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem." The law is the rule of righteousness; grace is another thine, altogether. It is not a rule of righteousness, with death the inevitable penalty. It is true that grace reigns through righteousness, but then it is the righteousness of God, not of man; and this, under His gracious culture, fills the saint with the fruit of righteousness, which is through Jesus Christ to His own glory and praise.

Here we have then a scene of perfect grace. Nothing could exceed the blessing in relation to man. The number twelve is always used in reference to the dealings of God with man by means of human administration. Seven is the number of perfection in relation to the things of God, or rather to the spiritual side, whether good or evil — twelve in relation to the human side, Thus, when God chose the patriarchs, there were twelve: they had a reference, I suppose, not only to the tribes which sprang from them, but to the rest of mankind generally. And again, when the apostles were called, there were twelve, answering to the twelve tribes of Israel. The moment we have the apostle who was specially entrusted with the great work of putting the church on its firm and heavenly foundations, irrespective of earthly arrangement, the number twelve is broken, and apostles independent of the twelve appear. (Acts 14:4, 14; Eph. 4.) This may explain a little further what I meant by saying that the twelve gates, twelve foundations, etc., which we saw in Rev. 21, set forth the aspect of this city towards man. It is viewed in its public governmental character. So in the tree too. By

its bearing twelve manner of fruits, and yielding its fruit every month is shown the aspect of it towards man. Accordingly we are told next that “the leaves of the tree were for healing of the nations.”

Another thing is clear, that this scene refers not to the eternal, but to the millennial state. For in eternity nations will not exist as such; neither will any need healing then. Carefully bear this in mind, however, that if we look at the heavenly city itself, it is eternal. It will make little difference to the city whether seen in the millennium, or in the eternal state that succeeds. There were two descents of the city in Rev. 21 — one at the beginning of the millennium, and the other at the commencement of the eternal state. The second verse of that chapter gives us its descent when the eternal state is come, and the tenth verse its descent for the millennium. The reason, I think, is that at the end of the millennium the old heaven and earth pass away; and naturally the city would disappear from the scene of the convulsion. Then, when the new earth dawns on our view, the heavenly city again comes down, and takes its place permanently in the new heavens and earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. This is necessary to remark; because, while at the end of the thousand years all will be changed, still the heavenly city will abide for ever. “Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.” There will be certain offices which the glorified church will cease to discharge towards the earth after the millennium is over: but its intrinsic blessedness remains the same. Consequently, it is said here, “There shall be no more curse.” Thenceforth this is as true evermore for

the heavenly city, as it can be for the new heaven and earth afterwards.

“And the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it: and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face, and his name [shall be] on their foreheads. And there shall be no night there, [or more,] and they shall have no need of lamp and light [of the sun]” — the one representing the light of man’s making, and the other of God: but all that suited this world is past for the city. “For the Lord God shall shed light upon them: and they shall reign for ever and ever” (verse 3-5). The expression “to the ages of the ages,” I apprehend, must be taken in the strongest sense here. It does not refer only to what is called “the kingdom,” though of course the reigning begins then. In 1 Cor. 15:24 it is a kingdom which Christ delivers up at a definite point called “the end.” “The end” implies that the thousand years and the judgment of the dead have taken place; for this judgment is part of Christ’s “kingdom” — its great closing act, we may say. All this forms a part of the kingdom; and when it is over, and death, the last enemy, has been destroyed, then the Lord Jesus delivers up the kingdom to God.

The object of the kingdom is to reduce every enemy to subjection; and this being accomplished, that special human kingdom terminates. But if there will then be a great change as regards the earthly saints in their natural bodies below, not so with those who are in the heavenly places, already glorified. They will reign for ever and ever: it will be true throughout all eternity. These words seem here to be used without restriction. All the account, from the 9th verse of Rev. 21 to verse 5, inclusively, of Rev. 22, presents the relation of the

heavenly city to the earth during the millennium. But there are certain features in it which are true everlastingly. One of these characteristics, besides its unchangeable intrinsic glory, is, that the service of the saints will be for ever and ever. So as to the reigning. The mode of the reign, as of the service, may be changed after the earthly kingdom is closed; but, in themselves, they will, I apprehend, endure for ever and ever.

Now we are come to the closing comments of the prophet, and the conversation that takes place between him and the angel in reference to the prophecy, as well as the final message from the Lord Jesus Himself. Strictly speaking, the fifth verse ends the prophecy. But just as we have a prefatory charge at the beginning of the book, so here we have a sort of formal conclusion.

You will observe that the coming of the Lord Jesus is referred to no less than three times, and that each has a different connection in these farewell words of the Lord. The first time is in the 7th verse, evidently in dependence on verse 6. “And he said unto me, These words are faithful and true: and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show to his servants the things which must come to pass shortly. And, behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book” (verses 6, 7). The Lord Jesus here links His coming with the blessing of the man who attends to the words of the prophecy. In strict connection with this, the Holy Ghost solemnly commends the prophecy which was now brought to a close. The Lord Jesus, no doubt, foresaw the measure of slight which would be put upon this book, and the efforts of men to put it aside.

I do not like to refer to particular religious societies; but allow me to say a word about one which is a reformed body and well known. And yet, extraordinary to say, in that which is arranged for the express purpose of giving the entire word of God to the people in daily portions, how is it that the book of Revelation is given? — Why, it is only used, a little bit at a time, on one or two special occasions, and at other seasons not at all, while even part of the Apocrypha is read! It appears to me that the Lord was here guarding His people against all such disrespect, open or more subtle, to the book of the Revelation.126 Nor is it merely where these lessons are fixed, that there is a slight put upon it: let not others, differently situated, suppose themselves to be guiltless. Take those who have no formal division of the scriptures day by day: do you find this book honoured by them as the Lord enjoins! You will learn that in general, though God's children have not agreed to dishonour it, yet, as a practical fact, this book has been pushed aside, save for controversial, historical, or imaginative purposes. There is hardly an attempt to expound it simply and practically. Few servants, indeed, deal it out in due season, so as to make it a part of the household bread of the family of God. Even when interpretations of it are ventured on, are they not in general most crude — the far-fetched notions of an antiquarian, or degrading comparisons with an infidel historian or a daily newspaper?

What a solemn thing it is to depart from God's word! The Lord Jesus puts the book before His people as a light shining in a dark place — not at all as a mere exercise for men of learning in a speculative mood. It was meant for all the children of God, for their souls' profit, and to help their communion with God. He

wanted them not only to know His grace, but the judgments that were coming upon the world. He desired them to understand that the book, which shows the world's course and doom, equally indicates their deliverance out of the judgment. For the Revelation makes it plain, that, before there is a word of the judgment, the church is seen in the presence of God: from the beginning of Revelation 4 we see her above. How plain it is that the words of the prophecy are all of the greatest importance to God's people! He desires they should be happy in the fellowship He gives them with Himself before these things come to pass. "Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book." And why has it been comparatively so valueless as to its practical bearing? Because the prophecy has been severed from the promise. The word of grace, "Behold, I come quickly," has not been distinguished from "the sayings of the prophecy of this book." And hence the church's portion has been confounded with the judgments of the world. The Revelation supposes that God's children are waiting for the coming of Christ, which ought indeed to be their bright hope from day to day. Where this is not the case, I believe that it is morally impossible to enter into or enjoy its disclosures. "Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book." The Lord is coming quickly. But if we are not looking for Him with hearts at rest through His grace, we are sure to pervert His sayings, instead of turning them to profit.

When John heard and saw these things, he fell down to worship before the feet of the angel that showed them. He had done so previously (Rev. 19:10).127 Possibly the grandeur of the vision may have led him to suppose that

it was Christ Himself taking that form. But he is immediately corrected. The angel says to him, “I am thy fellow-servant,” or rather, “the fellow-servant of thee, and of thy brethren the prophets.” As it stands in our Bible, the statement is somewhat ambiguous. It might seem, as it stands, to convey that the angel was one of his brethren, the prophets. Of course this is not the meaning; but instead of being the Lord, and an object of worship, the angel was the fellow-servant of John, and of John’s brethren the prophets. “See thou do it not; for I am the fellow-servant of thee, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God,”

But he adds more, and a very important thought it is, practically, for God’s children. You may remember in the last chapter of Daniel it is written (verse 4), “But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.” Now mark in what a wonderful place God has put His church, as we gather from comparing Revelation 22.

He was sending His word to the most favoured man that could be found among all the favoured prophets of the Old Testament — “a man greatly beloved.” But although there had been given him so plain and distinct a prophecy of Christ’s coming and death, other words were. added, as to which it was said, “But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book even to the time of the end.” Here the same Spirit addresses John, and says to him, “Seal not the words of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand” (verse 10). How comes this to pass? The whole calling of the church is at the time of the end. From the day that the church began

its actual existence here below, it was the time of the end; and all through her history, still it is the time of the end. Of course I do not mean that it is distinctively the time of the end for the Jews, who must wait for the development of all on the platform of literal facts; but therein lies the peculiarity of the church's calling. She is above times and seasons, though she knows them; she has nothing to do with dates, or signs, or outward events, any more than with the world, of whose history they are the natural and necessary accompaniment. The church is lifted up above such a scene; she is heavenly. Such is the place where we are put by the grace of God, entirely outside all the computations which refer to the government of this world.

As for the Jew, of whom Daniel was the type, he must wait till the time of the end is historically come, till the knowledge is given by God to those who have understanding then. Until that time all is sealed up for Israel. This is not the case with the church represented by John. To him it is said, "Seal not the words of the prophecy of this book."

But here is the error made by many excellent persons. Sir Isaac Newton. a man of the highest reputation in human science, applied this shutting up and sealing of the book in Daniel to the church. The consequence was that he gave it up as a thing that could not be understood till the time of the end. Had he compared the passage in Daniel with the closing words of St. John's Revelation, he would have learnt that the very words that were hidden from the Jewish prophet are expressly opened to the Christian. If Daniel was to seal, John is expressly told not to seal. And why? Because Christ had come, and is gone into heaven. and is on the

right hand of God, ready to judge quick and dead; He was rejected, and from that moment it is morally the time of the end. And so the New Testament writers speak. The apostle John says, “Little children, it is the last time;” Peter writes, “The end of all things is at hand;” James, “The Judge standeth before the door.” So wrote St. Paul: “Now all these things happened unto them as ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” [or ends of the ages are met]. And so Heb. 9:26. Thus you have substantially the same great truth from the Epistles of Paul, of Peter, and of James, down to the Revelation.

This it is, I conceive, that is supposed, when John is told not to shut up the words of the prophecy of this book. It is to be used and understood now in virtue of the knowledge of Christ and with the Holy Ghost given by Christ as an unction whereby we know all things. To us the time is always at hand. The words of this book are not sealed to us; so that it is unbelief, if instead of taking the book as it were to Christ who is the light to reveal this as all else, we submit it to the world and its wisdom which can but darken. This, I doubt not, is the root and reason of the mistakes and difficulties so prevalent with regard to the interpretation of the book. In order to understand this and every other part of scripture, I must see what God is doing for the glory of His Son. As a Christian I am encouraged to read the prophecy: its sayings are not sealed to those who have the mind of Christ. If I were a Jew, I should have to wait till the time of the end arrive in the full prophetic sense, i.e., the end of the age. Then the wise among the Jews shall understand; they are the godly intelligent remnant. With

such a remnant in principle (called, it is true, into better hopes) the church began.

But some may say, There were certain things in Daniel which were to be sealed, and others which were not: why may not these last (not the first) have been the things John was there told not to seal? I reply that the Revelation supposes all the truth we find in Daniel and a great deal more. It could not be understood, if Daniel were not; while there are many truths added in the Revelation which were not given to Daniel. Such a plea is therefore unavailing. The fact is that Daniel speaks in the most general terms, and is told to shut up the words and seal the book — not merely certain parts of it. The Revelation goes over the same ground as Daniel with respect to the last empire, giving many things of a still wider scope and far more profoundly — things which grew out of the Christian apostacy, in addition to the previous ruin of Israel and the future wickedness both of them and the Gentiles. Therefore, if there was any book in the New Testament which one might naturally expect to be sealed up, it is the Revelation; for as it is the last, so it is the most difficult, abstruse, and comprehensive of all the books of the Bible. Therefore when the Holy Ghost says, “Seal not the words of the prophecy of this book,” I conceive that we have implied a clear intimation of the peculiar privileges of the Christian. It supposes him to stand in the full light of God; and thus what may have been hidden before is now fully revealed, seeing that Christ has come and made us members of His body, and given us the Holy Ghost who searches all things, yea, the deep things of God. This, to my mind, is the reason why it is said, “Seal not the words of the

prophecy of this book." It is a consequence of redemption.

It is important in another way not always seen. The events signified by the prophetic visions of the Revelation never enable one to understand the book itself If they were to take place today, this would not of itself give intelligence as to the Revelation. The sole key to prophecy is the Holy Ghost, who is the only One that can make known its relation to Christ; and, without seeing this relation, we never understand it. Take one of the clearest and most defined of prophecies — that of the seventy weeks in Daniel. Persons generally allow that it has been accomplished. But ask of them its real meaning; and they will show how little it is understood. They have a vague idea that it is accomplished, and little more. It is not therefore the events themselves which explain the word: we need the teaching of the Spirit, which is as necessary to interpret prophecy as any other part of the scriptures. Events may be the accomplishments of particular prophecy and a witness of its truth to those who doubt; but they never of themselves afford the just interpretation of the prophecy. They undoubtedly corroborate it when accomplished, and may be useful to stop the mouth of a gainsayer. But (as it has been long ago remarked by another) you must understand the prophecy itself, before you can apply it to the. events; and when you do understand it, you have what God desired to give your faith, independently of the events. In fact, to refute such a notion we have only to weigh what is said here, as everywhere else in it: "Seal not the words of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand." The value to us, to the church, is beforehand, whatever may be the

use for those who shall be in the scene when the events arrive.

But now listen to a most solemn truth. When the time is actually come of which the prophecy treats, what is the condition of men? It is fixed, for ever fixed for all — hopelessly for some. “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him work righteousness still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still” (Verse 11). That is, it is not the time when there can be moral change; not a time when there can be the conversion of sinners — When a man who is under the power of Satan can be delivered from it and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. All this is at an end. Then he that is unjust must remain unjust, and he that is filthy remains filthy still. Men are solemnly settled in the condition in which they are found. The day of grace is over, the day of judgment will be come, and the door will then be shut.

“Behold, I am coming quickly, and my reward is with me, to give each as his work is” (verse 12). Evidently this confirms what has been remarked. When that day comes, it is the judgment of the living. It is the Lord’s coming, not here spoken of as an encouragement to him who hears and keeps the words of the prophecy of the book, but rather in the way of discriminating judgment. “I [am] the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end” (verse 13). That is, the Lord Jesus, beside what is peculiar to Himself, takes the same title here that God Himself did in Rev. 21:6. As God was the sum and substance of all revelation, being, or action, so was Christ. “No man hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He

hath declared Him." "Blessed [are] they that do his commandments [or wash their robes], that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. Without [are] the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the whoremongers, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one loving and practising a lie" (verses 14, 15).

But next we have another thing. It is not the Lord's coming now, as an encouragement to those who should keep the sayings of the prophecy of this book; nor yet His coming as dealing with every man, His advent in the way of judgment and His reward with Him to give each individual as his work is. We have seen the holy and the righteous having their portion, and the filthy and unrighteous their judgment. But the Lord has His own proper and full relation to the church. Consequently His voice is now heard with marked emphasis here: "I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David" (verse 16). That is, He refers to His divine and His human character. But beside this He has a special relationship to us — "the bright [and] the morning star."

When the Lord comes in His glory to the world, it is as the Sun of righteousness with healing in His wings, for those that have been broken, and scattered, and peeled, — a people terrible from their beginning hitherto. But then He appears in terror to tread down those that have despised Him under His feet. Not so does He present Himself to us. It is not for us the image of the sun, when man should sleep no longer. When the Sun of righteousness calls man up, not then to work as he works now; it summons him that he may bow to Him whom he had long slighted, and in due time hear his

doom pronounced by the Lord of glory, whom he can despise no longer. Thus will He appear to the world, and "all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly shall be stubble. And the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith Jehovah of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch."

But for those who watch during the night of man's day before the Lord appears in His glory, for those who watch with bridal affections, not sleeping as do others — how does He speak to such? How is He made known to them? "I am the bright, the morning star." Blessed star of morn before the day comes! We watch not for the day, but for Him during the night, and He will give us the morning star, the harbinger of the dawn. A blessed place it is — the place of our love and hope: it will never be disappointed of its joy, and the Lord Jesus Christ will surely come, as the bright and morning star to us. He cheers us while we wait, and will quickly come for us Himself. We may have to tarry somewhat; at least it may seem long to us. For those who waste their time in slumber, it will be alas! too short; but for those that wait for Him and yearn to see Him, the hope might seem to be long deferred. Instead of growing weary and sick, may our hearts, on the contrary, be filled with the joy and constancy of assurance that the Lord is coming soon! He is the bright and morning star.

But more: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come." What a blessed thought for us that the Holy, Ghost Himself is the One who takes up the word and says, "Come!" He groans with us, entering into our sorrows, now that He is come down. He is not the less divine, I need not say; but withal He has condescended to identify Himself, as it were, with our hearts, and be the

sharer of our feelings. But it is not groans that we have now; not such is the mind of the Spirit, when He thinks of the Lord Jesus coming for us. There is the calm and peaceful earnestness of desire. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come.” It is most strengthening to know that it is the voice of the Holy Ghost Himself which says to the Lord Jesus “Come.” It would not have been nearly so blessed, had only the bride said, “Come.” But it is “the Spirit and the bride.” She had done many things wrong, had made many mistakes in thought and feeling and ways. But now it is the Spirit, the Holy Ghost Himself who says, Come. He it is who leads the heart to desire the coming of Jesus; He is the energy of the church in bidding Jesus welcome. “The Spirit and the bride, say, Come.” It is in looking up to Jesus that the church or the Christian says, Come; not looking down to the poor sinner and telling him to come. The Holy Ghost leads and inspires the heart of the bride thus to cry, not only in sympathy of sorrow, but in communion with the joy with which she looks up in the hope of the Bridegroom’s return.

And not only so, but “let him that heareth say, Come.” If I have only heard the voice of Jesus, I am entitled to say, Come. Perhaps there are some who say, Oh that I could be happy in asking the Lord to come! How can I say, Come, when I am so unworthy? The Lord warrants you to say, Come. It is not merely the bride filled with the Holy Ghost that says, Come — entering into her full privileges; but “let him that heareth say, Come.” Have you heard His voice, and tasted that He is gracious? Do you not know that He is the good Shepherd? I might be the very feeblest and weakest one, shrinking through ignorance from the Lord’s coming at once; yet here I

have the Holy Ghost inviting me to take up the very same word that the Spirit and the bride take up. “Let him that heareth say, Come.”

Most evident it is also here that the going out of the first affections of the heart towards Christ and His coming does not harden the heart towards the poor world, nor make us indifferent to the conversion of the lost; but the very contrary. Whatever estimate man may form of their own efforts, my conviction is, that the people who most desire the conversion of sinners are, caeteris paribus, those who most desire the coming of the Lord Jesus. I do not believe that the men that want to put Him off are those that pray and labour most for the conversion of souls. What is it leads such to desire it? They labour for it because they see souls perishing everlastingly, and they justly feel that all are miserable without Christ. But they have these feelings only in common with all their brethren. We all believe that men will be cast into hell if they do not receive the gospel, and it grieves us to see them rejecting the Saviour; we have these feelings as well as they. But we have another spring which they have not. It is indeed the Lord’s way, and this is better than theirs. He understands what is good for poor sinners and poor saints incomparably better than His servants do. Now He shows here that it is the same Spirit who looks up to Jesus and says, Come, who also can turn us round to lost sinners with the invitation, “let him that is athirst come.” It is there we have the other side. It is not here the Spirit directing the church in looking up to the Lord and saying, Come; but the heart is now directed to the world and saying, “Let him that is athirst come; whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (verse 17).

The sinner is not told to say, Come. Observe the great and plain difference in the latter part of the verse. In the first two clauses they say, Come; but in the latter part they do not bid Jesus come, but are invited to come themselves: “Let him that is athirst come,” etc.

Thus God shows that the first thought of my heart should be towards Jesus. If true to Him, I shall desire His coming. The Spirit prompts and sanctions this desire. And what is the effect on my feelings towards the world? It will give me a heavenly reason for desiring the conversion of sinners. I shall have the same moral motives, and the same affections, which act on my brethren who put off the coming of the Lord. And I shall have besides all the impetus which the hope of Christ’s speedy coming can give me, and the sense of the danger of those to whom His coming can be nothing but certain judgment, even in this world. The more a Christian looks for Christ’s coming at any moment, the more ardent must be his desire, and the more earnest his importuning, that souls should come and take the water of life.

In this verse 17 then God unfolds our twofold relation. He shows me my relation to Christ, which ought to be the first thought of my heart — not merely that my soul should be at peace if He came, but filled with the earnestness of affection that desires His coming. And He shows me that, when I am right there, I shall turn round with quickened zeal in the sense of the grace of Christ, and shall say to every one that is athirst, Come. More than that. If I see a soul that may not perhaps thirst deeply, but who is willing to come, I shall not tell him to wait till he is very thirsty. I shall bid him come at once, and welcome; for the word is, “whosoever let him take

the water of life freely." If there is only the desire of the heart, it comes from God, and no one rightly says, You must wait till you have gone through this or that experience. If a man has not got so far in realizing his state, I am not to keep him away. The water of life is for whosoever will. He is directed to come and drink of it freely. What fulness of grace fills the scene when the Lord brings our place before us!

"I testify to every one that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add to these things, God shall add to him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any one shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, that are written in this book" (verses 18, 19). You will observe that the tree and the city mentioned here answer to what we found in verse 14. Those that do His commandments (or rather, according to the critical text, "those that wash their robes") are blessed, and have a title to the tree of life, and entrance by the gates into the city. But as for such as take away from the words of this book, God shall take away their portion from both the tree and the city which are written of in this book. They shall have no access thereto.

The Lord had said if any man would add to or take away from the words of the prophecy of this book, in either way dishonouring it, He would assuredly know and feel and resent it. But He could not close with such words as these. He has reserved, as it were, the best wine to the last. He had already spoken of His coming in the way of judgment, and of His coming for the church, in full grace; and now He could not leave us with a note of sorrow. He must bring back our hearts to gladness and

joy at the thought of His coming again; and so He says, “He that testifieth these things saith, Surely, I come quickly. Amen.” Immediately John as representing the church answers, “Come, Lord Jesus.” It is the ready reply of his heart to the Lord.

And if it is our privilege to look to Christ and hear His voice; if we have known some little of the joy of being even now in union with Himself, made members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones; if we are waiting as those conscious of our bridal relationship to Christ, and assured that we shall have the bride’s portion, in presence of the Lamb for evermore, the Lord grant that this may be the answer of our hearts and lips — “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. May we not cherish high thoughts for ourselves, nor for the church, much less for the world! It is a blinding delusion to look for better days while Jesus is away. There are good days in store, even for this poor world — days of heaven upon the earth; but the Lord must come before them — and He must have us for Himself first of all. The Lord will never have a time of real abiding joy for the world as a whole, till He has had the Church with Himself. For, as we see in Romans 8, “the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.” The manifestation spoken of there will be in glory St. Paul had been speaking before of the glory which shall be revealed in us, when our bodies shall be changed, and made like the glorious body of Christ. We are not like the Son of God now, as regards our bodies. Too well we know that we bear the image of the earthly still: but we shall bear the image of the heavenly. And then, when God sees us shining in the likeness of His own Son, He will have no reason to be ashamed of us. He will not present us

before the universe, till our bodies are as worthy of Him as is the new life that He has given to our souls. When the sons of God are manifested, then creation will cease to groan, and the earth and heavens, filled with blessedness, will declare both the glory and the goodness of God. “The floods will clap their hands, and the hills be joyful together before Jehovah.” Then it will be found that the blessed hope, and the appearing of the glory that the Lord has set before us, will issue in praises of joy and gladness, which will reach the most distant parts of earth, and the utmost bounds of creation.

May the Lord grant that we may say, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus;” that we may say it for ourselves, as for all the church, and, in a sense for all creation too, the blessing of which depends on our being manifested along with Christ! Meanwhile, the grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints!

126 I have hardly spoken more plainly here than the Dean of Canterbury does on Rev. 1:3. “If the words are to be understood as above, they form at least a solemn rebuke to the practice of the Church of England, which omits with one or two exceptions the whole of this book from her public readings. Not one word of the precious messages of the Spirit to the Churches is ever heard in the public services of a Church never weary of appealing to her Scriptural liturgies,”

127 It may be as well to observe here, that, in the reciprocal proposition, so often vaguely applied or misapplied, “the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus,” we are not to understand a testimony to Jesus,” but that which He gave, and, in general throughout the

Apocalypse, His prophetic testimony, whether committed to an angel or to His servants. It is incorrect therefore to say that this means to Jesus; which is regularly expressed either by the dative, or if a genitive be used, with περί. The angelic communicator was but a fellow-servant of John's: God was to be worshipped.