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 The  
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 Edited by  
 W. Robertson Nicoll, D.D., LL.D.  
  
  
  
  
  
[Illustration]  
  
  
  
  
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 THE  
 BOOK OF REVELATION  
  
  
  
  
  
 BY  
 WILLIAM MILLIGAN, D.D.  
  
 PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY AND BIBLICAL CRITICISM IN THE UNIVERSITY  
 OF ABERDEEN. AUTHOR OF "THE RESURRECTION  
 OF OUR LORD," ETC.  
  
  
  
  
  
  
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 PREFATORY NOTE.  
  
  
In ordinary circumstances one who undertakes to comment upon a book of  
the New Testament may be justly expected to make every effort to  
explain each successive clause and each difficult expression of the  
book on which he writes. My aim in the following Commentary is rather  
to catch the general import and object of the Revelation of St. John  
considered as a whole. The latter purpose indeed cannot be attained  
unless the commentator has himself paid faithful attention to the  
former; but it is not necessary that the results of these inquiries  
should in every case be presented to the English reader. To him this  
book is for the most part a perplexity and enigma, and he would only  
be embarrassed by a multitude of details. It seemed well, therefore,  
to treat the book in its sections and paragraphs rather than verse by  
verse; and this is the course pursued in the following pages. The  
translation used is for the most part that of the Revised Version. An  
examination of the words and clauses of the book, conducted upon a  
plan different from that here adopted, and much more minute in its  
character, will be found in the Author's Commentary on the Apocalypse,  
in the Commentary upon the books of the New Testament edited by  
Professor Schaff and published by Messrs. Clark, Edinburgh. The  
principles upon which the Author has proceeded have been fully  
discussed in his Baird Lectures.  
  
 THE UNIVERSITY, ABERDEEN,  
 \_May 1889\_.  
  
  
  
  
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 CHAPTER I.  
  
 \_THE PROLOGUE.\_  
  
 REV. i.  
  
 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show unto  
 His servants, even the things which must shortly come to pass: and  
 He sent and signified it through His angel unto His servant John;  
 who bare witness of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus  
 Christ, even of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that  
 readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep  
 the things which are written therein: for the season is at hand  
 (i. 1-3).  
  
  
The first chapter of Revelation introduces us to the whole book, and  
supplies in great measure the key by which we are to interpret it. The  
book is not intended to be a mystery in the sense in which we commonly  
understand that word. It deals indeed with the future, the details of  
which must always be dark to us; and it does this by means of figures  
and symbols and modes of speech far removed from the ordinary simplicity  
of language which marks the New Testament writers. But it is not on that  
account designed to be unintelligible. The figures and symbols employed  
in it are used with perfect regularity; its peculiar modes of speech are  
supposed to be at least not unfamiliar to the reader; and it is taken  
for granted that he understands them. The writer obviously expects that  
his meaning, so far from being obscured by his style, will be thereby  
illustrated, enforced, and brought home to the mind, with greater than  
ordinary power. The word \_Revelation\_ by which he describes to us the  
general character of his work is of itself sufficient to show this.  
"Revelation" means the uncovering of that which has hitherto been  
covered, the drawing back of a veil which has hung over a person or  
thing, the laying bare what has been hitherto concealed; and the book  
before us is a revelation instead of a mystery.  
  
Again, the book is a \_revelation of Jesus Christ\_; not so much a  
revelation of what Jesus Christ Himself is, as one of which He is the  
Author and Source. He is the Head of His Church, reigning supreme in  
His heavenly abode. He is the Eternal Son, the Word without whom was  
not anything made that was made, and who executes all the purposes of  
the Father, "the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever."[1] He is at  
the same time "Head over all things to the Church."[2] He regulates  
her fortunes. He controls in her behalf the events of history. He  
fills the cup which He puts into her hand with prosperity or  
adversity, with joy or sorrow, with victory or defeat. Who else can  
impart a revelation so true, so weighty, and so precious?  
  
Yet again, the revelation to be now given by Jesus Christ is one  
\_which God gave Him\_, the revelation of the eternal and unchangeable  
plan of One who turneth the hearts of kings as the rivers of water,  
who saith and it is done, who commandeth and it stands fast.  
  
Finally, the revelation relates to things that \_must shortly come to  
pass\_, and thus has all the interest of the present, and not merely of  
a far-distant future.  
  
Such is the general character of that revelation which Jesus Christ  
\_sent and signified through His angel unto His servant John\_. And  
that Apostle faithfully recorded it for the instruction and comfort of  
the Church. Like his Divine Master, with whom throughout all this book  
believers are so closely identified, and who is Himself \_the Amen, the  
faithful and true witness\_,[3] the disciple whom He loved stands forth  
to bear witness of \_the word of God\_ thus given him, of \_the testimony  
of Jesus\_ thus signified to him, \_even of all things that he saw\_. He  
places himself in thought at the end of the visions he had witnessed,  
and re-traces for others the elevating pictures which had filled, as  
he beheld them, his own soul with rapture.  
  
Therefore may he now, ere yet he enters upon his task, pronounce a  
blessing upon those who shall pay due heed to what he is to say. Does  
he think of the person by whom the apostolic writings were read aloud  
in the midst of the Christian congregation? then, \_Blessed is he that  
readeth\_. Does he think of those who listen? then, Blessed are \_they  
that hear the words of the prophecy\_. Or, lastly, does he think not  
merely of reading and hearing, but of that laying up in the heart to  
which these were only preparatory? then, Blessed are they that \_keep  
the things which are written therein, for the season\_, the short  
season in which everything shall be accomplished, \_is at hand\_.  
  
The Introduction to the book is over; and it may be well to mark for a  
moment that tendency to divide his matter into three parts which  
peculiarly distinguishes St. John, and to which, as supplying an  
important rule of interpretation, we shall often have occasion to  
refer. There are obviously three parts in the Introduction,--the  
Source, the Contents, and the Importance of the revelation: and each  
of these is again divided into three. Three persons are mentioned when  
the Source is spoken of,--God, Jesus Christ, and the servants of  
Jesus; three when the Contents are referred to,--the Word of God, the  
Testimony of Jesus, and All things that he saw; and three when the  
Importance of the book is described,--He that readeth, They that hear,  
and They that keep the things written therein.  
  
 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you, and  
 peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and  
 from the seven Spirits which are before His throne; and from Jesus  
 Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and  
 the ruler of the kings of the earth. Unto Him that loveth us, and  
 loosed us from our sins in His blood; and He made us to be a  
 kingdom, to be priests unto His God and Father; to Him be the glory  
 and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Behold, He cometh with the  
 clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they which pierced Him; and  
 all the tribes of the earth shall wail over Him. Even so, Amen. I am  
 the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord, God, which is and which was  
 and which is to come, the Almighty (i. 4-8).  
  
From the Introduction we pass to the Salutation, extending from ver. 4  
to ver. 8. Adopting a method different from that of the fourth Gospel,  
which is also the production of his pen, the writer of Revelation  
names himself. The difference is easily explained. The fourth Gospel  
is original not only in its contents but its form. The Apocalypse is  
moulded after the fashion of the ancient prophets, and of the numerous  
apocalyptic authors of the time; and it was the practice of both these  
classes of writers to place their names at the head of what they  
wrote. The fourth Gospel was also intended to set forth in a purely  
objective manner the glory of the Eternal Word made flesh, and that  
too in such a way that the glory exhibited in Him should authenticate  
itself, independently of human testimony. The Apocalypse needed a  
voucher from one known and trusted. It came through the mind of a man,  
and we naturally ask, Who is the man through whom it came? The enquiry  
is satisfied, and we are told that it comes from \_John\_. In telling us  
this St. John speaks with the authority which belongs to him.  
By-and-by we shall see him in another light, occupying a position  
similar to ours, and standing on the same level with us in the  
covenant of grace. But at this moment he is the Apostle, the  
Evangelist, the Minister of God, a consecrated priest in the Christian  
community who is about to pronounce a priestly blessing on the Church.  
Let the Church bow her head and reverently receive it.  
  
The Salutation is addressed \_to the seven churches which are in Asia\_.  
On this point it is enough to say that by the Asia spoken of we are to  
understand neither the continent of that name, nor its great western  
division Asia Minor, but only a single district of the latter, of  
which Ephesus, where St. John spent the later years of his life and  
ministry, was the capital. There the aged Apostle tended all those  
portions of the flock of Christ that he could reach, and all the  
churches of the neighbourhood were his peculiar care. We know that  
these were in number more than seven. We know that to no church could  
the Apostle be indifferent. The conclusion is irresistible, that here,  
as so often in this book as well as in other parts of Scripture, the  
number seven is not to be literally understood. Seven churches are  
selected, the condition of which appeared most suitable to the purpose  
which the Apostle has in view; and these seven represent the Church of  
Christ in every country of the world, down to the very end of time.  
The universal Church spreads itself out beneath his gaze; and before  
he instructs he blesses it.  
  
The blessing is, \_Grace to you, and peace\_; grace first, the Divine  
grace, in its enlightening, quickening, and beautifying power; and  
then peace, peace with God and man, peace that in the deep recesses of  
the heart remains undisturbed by outward trouble, the peace of which  
it is said by Him who is the Prince of peace, "Peace I leave with you;  
My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let  
not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful."[4]  
  
The source of the blessing is next indicated,--the Triune God, the  
three Persons of the glorious Trinity, the Father, the Holy Spirit,  
and the Son. Probably we should have thought of a different order; but  
the truth is that it is the Son, as the manifestation of the Godhead,  
who is mainly in the Apostle's mind. Hence the peculiarity of the  
first designation, \_Him which is, and which was, and which is to  
come\_, a designation specially applicable to our Lord. Hence also the  
peculiarity of the second designation, \_The seven Spirits which are  
before His throne\_; not so much the Spirit viewed in His individual  
personality, in the eternal relations of the Divine existence, as that  
Spirit in the manifoldness of His operation in the Church, the Spirit  
of the glorified Redeemer,--not one therefore, but seven. Hence,  
again, the peculiar designation of Christ, \_Jesus Christ, who is the  
faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the  
kings of the earth\_; not so much the Son in His metaphysical relation  
to the Godhead, as in attributes connected with His redemptive work.  
And hence, finally, the fact that when these three Persons have been  
named, the Seer fills up the remaining verses of his Salutation with  
thoughts, not of the Trinity, but of Him who has already redeemed us,  
and who will in due time come to perfect our salvation.  
  
Now, therefore, the Church, reflecting upon all that has been done, is  
done, and shall be done for her, is able to raise the song of  
triumphant thanksgiving, \_Unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from  
our sins in His blood, and He made us to be a kingdom, to be priests  
unto His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion for ever  
and ever. Amen.\_ In these words the possession of complete redemption  
is implied. The true reading of the original is not that of our  
Authorised Version, "Unto Him that washed," but "Unto Him that loosed"  
us from our sins. We have received not merely the pardon of sin, but  
deliverance from its power. "Our soul is es

caped as a bird out of the  
snare of the fowler; the snare is broken, and we are escaped."[5] The  
chains in which Satan held us captive have been snapped asunder and we  
are free. Again, this loosing has taken place "in" rather than "by"  
the blood of Christ, for the blood of Christ is living blood, and in  
that life of His we are enfolded and enwrapped, so that it is not we  
that live, but Christ that liveth in us. Once more they who are thus  
spoken of are "a kingdom, priests unto His God and Father," the former  
being the lower stage, the latter the higher. The word "kingdom" has  
reference, less to the splendour of royalty than to victory over foes.  
Christians reign in conquering their spiritual enemies; and then, in  
possession of the victory that overcometh the world, they enter into  
the innermost sanctuary of the Most High and dwell in the secret of  
His Tabernacle. There their great High Priest is one with "His God and  
Father," and there they also dwell with His Father and their Father,  
with His God and their God.  
  
The statement of these verses, however, reveals not only what the  
Christian Church is to which the Apocalypse is addressed; it reveals  
also what the Lord is from whom the revelation comes. He is indeed the  
Saviour who died for us, the witness faithful unto death: but He is  
also the Saviour who rose again, who is the firstborn of the dead, and  
who has ascended to the right hand of God, where He lives and reigns  
in glory everlasting. It is the glorified Redeemer from whom the book  
of His revelation comes; and He has all power committed to Him both in  
heaven and on earth. More particularly, He is "the ruler of the kings  
of the earth." This is not a description of such honour as might be  
given by a crowd of loyal nobles to a beloved prince. It rather gives  
expression to a power by which "the kings of the earth," the  
potentates of a sinful world, are subdued and crushed.  
  
Lastly, the Salutation includes the thought that He who is now hidden  
in heaven from our view, will yet appear in the glory that belongs to  
Him. He is the Lord who "is to come"; or, as it is expanded in the  
words immediately following the doxology, \_Behold, He cometh with the  
clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they which pierced Him; and  
all the tribes of the earth shall wail over Him. Even so, Amen.\_ It is  
of importance to ask what the glory is in which the glorified Lord is  
thus spoken of as coming. Is it that of one who shall be the object of  
admiration to every eye, and who, by the revelation of Himself, shall  
win all who behold Him to godly penitence and faith? The context  
forbids such an interpretation. The tribes "of the earth" are like its  
kings in ver. 5, the tribes of an ungodly world, and the "wailing" is  
that of chap. xviii. 9, where the same word is used, and where the  
kings of the earth weep and wail over the fall of guilty Babylon,  
which they behold burning before their eyes. The tones of that  
judgment which is to re-echo throughout the book are already heard:  
"Give the king Thy judgments, O God, and Thy righteousness unto the  
king's Son. He shall judge the people with righteousness, and Thy poor  
with judgment"; "Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily,  
He is a God that judgeth in the earth."[6]  
  
And now the glorified Redeemer Himself declares what He is: \_I am the  
Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord, God, which is and which was and  
which is to come, the Almighty.\_ It will be observed that after the  
word "Lord" we have interposed a comma not found in either the  
Authorised or the Revised Version.[7] On various other occasions we  
shall have to do the same, and the call to do so arises partly from  
the connexion of the thought, partly from St. John's love of that  
tripartite division of an idea which has been already spoken of. The  
former does not lead us to the Father; it leads us, on the contrary,  
to the Son. He it is Who has been described immediately before, and  
with Him the description which follows is to be occupied. No doubt the  
thought of God, of the Father, lies immediately behind the words. No  
doubt also "the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the  
Father doing"; yet "what things soever He doeth, these the Son also  
doeth in like manner."[8] By the Son the Father acts. In the Son the  
Father speaks. The Son is the manifestation of the Father. The same  
Divine attributes, therefore, which are to be seen in the Father, are  
to be seen in the Son. Let us hear Him as He seals His intimations of  
coming judgment with the assurance that He is God, who has come who is  
and who is to come, the Almighty.  
  
 I John, your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and  
 kingdom and patience which are in Jesus, was in the isle that is  
 called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I  
 was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a great  
 voice, as of a trumpet, saying, What thou seest, write in a book,  
 and send it to the seven churches; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna,  
 and unto Pergamum, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto  
 Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice  
 which spake with me. And having turned, I saw seven golden  
 candlesticks; and in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto a  
 Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt  
 about at the breasts with a golden girdle. And His head and His  
 hair were white as white wool, white as snow; and His eyes were as  
 a flame of fire; and His feet like unto burnished brass, as if it  
 had been refined in a furnace; and His voice as the voice of many  
 waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars: and out of His  
 mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword: and His countenance was  
 as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at  
 His feet as one dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying,  
 Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the living One; And I  
 became dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the  
 keys of death and of Hades. Write therefore the things which thou  
 sawest, and the things which are, and the things which shall come  
 to pass hereafter; the mystery of the stars which thou sawest upon  
 My right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars  
 are the angels of the seven churches; and the seven candlesticks  
 are seven churches (i. 9-20).  
  
After the Introduction and Salutation, the visions of the book begin,  
the first being the key to all that follow. The circumstances amidst  
which it was given are described, not merely to satisfy curiosity, or  
to afford information, but to establish such a connexion between St.  
John and his readers as shall authenticate and vivify its lessons.  
  
\_I John\_, he begins, \_your brother and partaker with you in the  
tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus, was in the  
isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of  
Jesus.\_ It is no longer only the Apostle, the authoritative messenger  
of God, who speaks; it is one who occupies the same ground as other  
members of the Church, and is bound to them by the strong deep tie of  
common sorrow. The aged and honoured Evangelist, "the disciple whom  
Jesus loved," is one with them, bears the same burden, drinks the same  
cup, and has no higher consolation than they may have. He is their  
"brother," a brother in adversity, for he is a partaker with them of  
the "tribulation" that is in Jesus. The reference is to outward  
suffering and persecution; for the words of the Master were now  
literally fulfilled: "A servant is not greater than his lord. If they  
persecuted Me they will also persecute you;" "Yea, the hour cometh,  
that whosoever killeth you shall think that he offereth service unto  
God."[9] The scorn, the hatred, the persecution of the world! for such  
as were exposed to these things was the Apocalypse written, by such  
was it understood; and if, in later times, it has often failed to make  
its due impression on the minds of men, it is because it is not  
intended for those who are at ease in Zion. The more Christians are  
compelled to feel that the world hates them, and that they cannot be  
its friends, the greater to them will be the power and beauty of this  
book. Its revelations, like the stars of the sky, shine most brightly  
in the cold, dark night.  
  
"Tribulation" is the chief thing spoken of, but the Apostle, with his  
love of groups of three, accompanies it with other two marks of the  
Christian's condition in the world,--the "kingdom" and "patience" that  
are in Jesus. St. John therefore was in tribulation. He had been  
driven from Ephesus, we know not why, and had been banished to Patmos,  
a small rocky island of the ?ean Sea. He had been banished for his  
faith, for his adherence to "the word of God and the testimony of  
Jesus," the former expression leading our thoughts to the revelation  
of the Old Testament, the latter to that of the New; the former to  
those prophets, culminating in the Baptist, of whom the same Apostle  
who now writes tells us in the beginning of his Gospel, that they  
"came for witness, that they might bear witness of the light;"[10] the  
latter to "the true light, even the light which lighteth every man  
coming into the world."[11] Driven from the society of his friends and  
"children," we cannot doubt that St. John would be drawn even more  
closely than was his wont to the bosom of his Lord; would feel that he  
was still protected by His care; would remember the words uttered by  
Him in the most sublime and touching moment of His life, "And I am no  
more in the world, and these are in the world, and I come to Thee.  
Holy Father, keep them in Thy name which Thou hast given Me";[12] and  
would share the blessed experience of knowing that, on every spot of  
earth however remote, and amidst all trials however heavy, he was in  
the hands of One who stills the tumults of the people as well as the  
waves of the sea beating upon the rock-bound coast of Patmos.  
  
Animated by feelings such as these, the Apostle knew that, whatever  
appearances to the contrary might present themselves, the time now  
passing over his head was the time of the Lord's rule, and not of  
man's. No thought could be more inspiring, and it was the preparation  
in his soul for the scene which followed.  
  
\_I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a great  
voice, as of a trumpet, saying, What thou seest, write in a book, and  
send it to the seven churches; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto  
Pergamum, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia,  
and unto Laodicea.\_ The \_Lord's day\_ here referred to may have been  
the Sunday, the first day of the Christian week, the day commemorative  
of that morning when He who had been "crucified through weakness, yet  
lived through the power of God."[13] If so, there was a peculiar  
fitness in that vision, now to be granted, of the risen and glorified  
Redeemer. But it seems doubtful if this is the true interpretation.  
Proof is wanting that the first day of the week had yet received the  
name of "The Lord's Day," and it is more in accordance with the  
prophetic tone of the book before us, to think that by St. John the  
whole of that brief season which was to pass before the Church should  
follow her Lord to glory was regarded as "The Lord's Day." Whichever  
interpretation we adopt, the fact remains that, meditating in his  
lonely isle upon the glory of his Lord in heaven and the contrasted  
fortunes of His Church on earth, St. John passed into a state of  
spiritual ecstasy. Like St. Paul, he was caught up into the third  
heavens; but, unlike him, he was permitted, and even commanded, to  
record what he heard and saw.[14]  
  
\_And I heard behind me\_, he says, \_a great voice as of a trumpet,  
saying, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it to the seven  
churches; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamum, and unto  
Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.\_  
We need not dwell now upon these churches. We shall meet them again.  
They are "the seven churches which are in Asia" already spoken of in  
ver. 4; and they are to be viewed as representative of the whole  
Christian Church in all countries of the world, and throughout all  
time. In their condition they represented to St. John what that Church  
is, in her Divine origin and human frailty, in her graces and defects,  
in her zeal and lukewarmness, in her joys and sorrows, in the  
guardianship of her Lord, and in her final victory after many  
struggles. Not to Christians in these cities alone is the Apocalypse  
spoken, but to all Christians in all their circumstances: "He that  
hath an ear, let him hear." The Apostle heard.  
  
\_And I turned to see the voice which spake with me. And having turned I  
saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the candlesticks one  
like unto a Son of man.\_ It was a splendid vision which was thus  
presented to his eyes. The golden candlestick, first of the Tabernacle  
and then of the Temple, was one of the gorgeous articles of furniture in  
God's holy house. It was wrought, with its seven branches, after the  
fashion of an almond tree, the earliest tree of spring to hasten (whence  
also it was named) into blossom; and, as we learn from the  
elaborateness and beauty of the workmanship, from the symbolical numbers  
largely resorted to in its construction, and from the analogy of all the  
furniture of the Tabernacle, it represented Israel when that people,  
having offered themselves at the altar, and having been cleansed in the  
laver of the court, entered as a nation of priests into the special  
dwelling-place of their heavenly King. Here, therefore, the seven golden  
candlesticks, or as in ver. 4 the one in seven, represent the Church, as  
she burns in the secret place of the Most High.  
  
But we are not invited to dwell upon the Church. Something greater  
attracts the eye,--He who is "like unto a Son of man." The expression  
of the original is remarkable. It occurs only once in any of the other  
books of the New Testament, in John v. 27, although there, both in the  
Authorised and Revised versions, it is unhappily translated "the Son  
of man." It is the humanness of our Lord's Person more than the Person  
Himself, or rather it is the Person in His humanness, to which the  
words of the original direct us. Amidst all the glory that surrounds  
Him we are to think of Him as man; but what a man!  
  
\_Clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about at the breasts  
with a golden girdle. And His head and His hair were white as white  
wool, white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; and His feet  
like unto burnished brass as if it had been refined in a furnace; and  
His voice as the voice of many waters. And He had in His right hand  
seven stars; and out of His mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword: and  
His countenance was as the sun shineth in His strength.\_ The particulars  
of the description indicate the official position of the Person spoken  
of, and the character in which He appears. (1) He is a priest, clothed  
with the long white garment reaching to the feet that was a  
distinguishing part of the priestly dress, but at the same time so  
wearing the girdle at the breasts, not at the waist, as to show that He  
was a priest engaged in the active service of the sanctuary. (2) He is a  
king, for, with the exception of the last mentioned particular, all the  
other features of the description given of Him point to kingly rather  
than to priestly power, while the prophetic language of Isaiah, as he  
looks forward to Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, language which we may well  
suppose to have been now in the Seer's thoughts, leads to the same  
conclusion: "And I will clothe him with thy robe and strengthen him with  
thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand."[15] The  
"Son of man," in short, here brought before us in His heavenly glory, is  
both Priest and King.  
  
Not only so. It is even of peculiar importance to observe that the  
attributes with which the Priest-King is clothed are not so much those  
of tenderness and mercy as those of power and majesty, inspiring the  
beholder with a sense of awe and with the fear of judgment. Already we  
have had some traces of this in considering ver. 7: now it comes out in  
all its force. That hair of a glistering whiteness which, like snow on  
which the sun is shining, it almost pains the eye to look upon; those  
eyes penetrating like a flame of fire into the inmost recesses of the  
heart; those feet which like metal raised to a white heat in a furnace  
consume in an instant whatever they tread upon in anger; that voice loud  
and continuous, like the sound of the mighty sea as it booms along the  
shore; that sword sharp, two-edged, issuing from the mouth, so that no  
one can escape it when it is drawn to slay; and lastly, that countenance  
like the sun in the height of a tropical sky, when man and beast cower  
from the irresistible scorching of his beams,--all are symbolical of  
judgment. Eager to save, the exalted High Priest is yet also mighty to  
destroy. "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them  
in pieces like a potter's vessel. Be wise now, therefore, O ye Kings; be  
instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and  
rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish  
from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all  
they that put their trust in Him."[16]  
  
The Apostle felt all this; and, believer as he was in Jesus, convinced  
of his Master's love, and one who returned that love with the warmest  
affections of his heart, he was yet overwhelmed with terror. \_And when  
I saw Him\_, he tells us, \_I fell at His feet as one dead.\_ In  
circumstances somewhat similar to the present, a somewhat similar  
effect had been produced upon other saints of God. When Isaiah beheld  
the glory of the Lord he cried, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I  
am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of  
unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of  
hosts."[17] When Ezekiel beheld a vision of the same kind, he tells us  
that he "fell upon his face."[18] When the angel Gabriel appeared to  
Daniel in order to explain the vision which had been shown him, the  
prophet says, "I was afraid, and fell upon my face."[19] Here the  
effect was greater than in any of these instances, corresponding to  
the greater glory shown; and the Apostle fell at the feet of the  
glorified Lord as one "dead." But there is mercy with the Lord that He  
may be feared; and \_He laid His right hand upon me\_, adds St. John,  
\_saying, Fear not\_: and then follows in three parts that full and  
gracious declaration of what He is, in His eternal pre-existence, in  
that work on behalf of man which embraced not only His being lifted on  
high upon the cross, but His Resurrection and Ascension to His  
Father's throne, and in the consummation of His victory over all the  
enemies of our salvation,--1. \_I am the First and the Last, and the  
Living One\_; 2. \_And I became dead, and behold, I am alive for  
evermore\_; 3. \_And I have the keys of death and of Hades\_.  
  
A few more words are spoken by the glorified Person who thus appeared  
to St. John, but at this point we may pause for a moment, for the  
vision is complete. It is the first vision of the book, and it  
contains the key-note of the whole. As distinguished from the fourth  
Gospel, in which Jesus clothed as He is with His humanity is yet  
pre-eminently the Son of God, the Saviour while here retaining His  
Divinity is yet pre-eminently a Son of man. In other words, He is not  
merely the Only Begotten who was from eternity in the bosom of the  
Father: He is also Head over all things to His Church. And He is this  
as the glorified Redeemer who has finished His work on earth, and now  
carries it on in heaven. This work too He carries on, not only as a  
High Priest "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," but as One  
clothed with judgment. He is a man of war, and t

o Him the words of the  
Psalmist may be applied:  
  
 "Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O Mighty One,  
 Thy glory and Thy majesty.  
 And in Thy majesty ride prosperously,  
 Because of truth and meekness and righteousness:  
 And Thy right hand shall teach Thee terrible things.  
 Thine arrows are sharp;  
 The peoples fall under Thee;  
 They are in the heart of the King's enemies."[20]  
  
Yet we cannot separate the body of Christ from the head, who is Son of  
man as well as Son of God. With the Head the members are one, and they  
too therefore are here contemplated as engaged in a work of judgment.  
With their Lord they are opposed by an ungodly world. In it they also  
struggle, and war, and overcome. The tribulation, and the kingdom and  
patience "in Jesus,"[21] are their lot; but living a resurrection life  
and escaped from the power of death and Hades, salvation has been in  
principle made theirs, and they have only to wait for the full  
manifestation of that Lord with whom, when He is manifested, they also  
shall be manifested in glory.[22]  
  
Thus we are taught what to expect in the book of Revelation. It will  
record the conflict of Christ and His people with the evil that is in  
the world, and their victory over it. It will tell of struggle with  
sin and Satan, but of sin vanquished and Satan bruised beneath their  
feet. It will be the story of the Church as she journeys through the  
wilderness to the land of promise, encountering many foes, but more  
than conqueror through Him that loved her, and often raising to heaven  
her song of praise, "Sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed  
gloriously, the horse and his rider He hath cast into the sea."[23]  
  
Now then we are prepared to listen to the closing words of the  
glorious Person who had revealed Himself to St. John, as He repeats  
His injunction to him to write, and gives him some explanation of what  
he had seen: \_Write, therefore, the things which thou sawest, and the  
things which are, and the things which shall come to pass hereafter;  
the mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest upon My right hand,  
and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of  
the seven churches; and the seven candlesticks are seven churches.\_  
The golden candlesticks and the stars, the churches and the angels of  
the churches, will immediately meet us when we proceed to the next two  
chapters of the book. Meanwhile it is enough to know that we are about  
to enter upon the fortunes of that Church of the Lord Jesus Christ in  
the world which embraces within it the execution of the final purposes  
of the Almighty, and the accomplishment of His plans for the  
perfection and happiness of His whole creation.  
  
FOOTNOTES:  
  
[1] John v. 19; Heb. xiii. 8.  
  
[2] Eph. i. 22.  
  
[3] Chap. iii. 14.  
  
[4] John xiv. 27.  
  
[5] Psalm cxxiv. 7.  
  
[6] Psalm lxxii. 1, 2; lviii. 11.  
  
[7] Compare the Greek text of Westcott and Hort.  
  
[8] John v. 19.  
  
[9] John xv. 20; xvi. 2.  
  
[10] John i. 7.  
  
[11] John i. 9.  
  
[12] John xvii. 11.  
  
[13] 2 Cor. xiii. 4.  
  
[14] Compare 2 Cor. xii. 4.  
  
[15] Isa. xxii. 21; comp. also ver. 22 with Rev. iii. 7.  
  
[16] Psalm ii. 9-12.  
  
[17] Isa. vi. 5.  
  
[18] Ezek. i. 28.  
  
[19] Dan. viii. 17.  
  
[20] Psalm xlv. 3-5.  
  
[21] Ver. 9.  
  
[22] Col. iii. 4.  
  
[23] Exod. xv. 1.  
  
  
  
  
 CHAPTER II.  
  
 \_THE CHURCH ON THE FIELD OF HISTORY.\_  
  
 REV. ii., iii.  
  
 To the angel of the church in Ephesus write; These things saith He  
 that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, He that walketh in  
 the midst of the seven golden candlesticks: I know thy works, and  
 thy toil and patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men, and  
 didst try them which call themselves apostles, and they are not, and  
 didst find them false; and thou hast patience and didst bear for My  
 name's sake, and hast not grown weary. But I have this against thee,  
 that thou didst leave thy first love. Remember therefore from whence  
 thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I come  
 to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou  
 repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the  
 Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear  
 what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh, to  
 him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise  
 of God. And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things  
 saith the first and the last, which became dead, and lived again: I  
 know thy tribulation, and thy poverty (but thou art rich), and the  
 blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and they are not, but are  
 a synagogue of Satan. Fear not the things which thou art about to  
 suffer: behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison,  
 that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be  
 thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life. He  
 that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the  
 churches. He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.  
 And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write; These things saith  
 He that hath the sharp two-edged sword: I know where thou dwellest,  
 even where Satan's throne is: and thou holdest fast My name, and  
 didst not deny My faith, even in the days of Antipas My witness, My  
 faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwelleth. But I  
 have a few things against thee, because thou hast there some that  
 hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a  
 stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things  
 sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication. So hast thou also  
 some that hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans in like manner.  
 Repent therefore; or else I come to thee quickly, and I will make  
 war against them with the sword of My mouth. He that hath an ear,  
 let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that  
 overcometh, to him will I give of the hidden manna, and I will give  
 him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no  
 one knoweth but he that receiveth it. And to the angel of the church  
 in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath His  
 eyes like a flame of fire, and his feet are like unto burnished  
 brass: I know thy works, and thy love and faith and ministry and  
 patience, and that thy last works are more than the first. But I  
 have this against thee, that thou sufferest thy wife Jezebel, which  
 calleth herself a prophetess; and she teacheth and seduceth My  
 servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to  
 idols. And I gave her time that she should repent; and she willeth  
 not to repent of her fornication. Behold, I do cast her into a bed,  
 and them 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 shall know that I am He which searcheth  
 the reins and hearts: and I will give unto each one of you according  
 to your works. But to you I say, to the rest that are in Thyatira,  
 as many as have not this teaching, which know not the deep things of  
 Satan, as they say; I cast upon you none other burden. Howbeit that  
 which ye have, hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and he  
 that keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give authority  
 over the nations: and as a shepherd he shall tend them with a  
 sceptre of iron, as the vessels of the potter are they broken to  
 shivers; as I also have received of My Father: and I will give him  
 the morning star. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit  
 saith to the churches. And to the angel of the church in Sardis  
 write; These things saith He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and  
 the seven stars: I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou  
 livest, and thou art dead. Be thou watchful, and stablish the things  
 that remain, which were ready to die: for I have found no works of  
 thine fulfilled before My God. Remember therefore how thou hast  
 received and didst hear; and keep it, and repent. If therefore thou  
 shalt not watch, I will come as a thief, and thou shalt not know  
 what hour I will come upon thee. But thou hast a few names in Sardis  
 which did not defile their garments: and they shall walk with Me in  
 white; for they are worthy. He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed  
 in white garments; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the  
 book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father, and  
 before His angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the  
 Spirit saith to the churches. And to the angel of the church in  
 Philadelphia write; These things saith He that is holy, He that is  
 true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and none shall  
 shut, and that shutteth, and none openeth: I know thy works (behold,  
 I have set before thee a door opened, which none can shut), that  
 thou hast a little power, and didst keep My word, and didst not deny  
 My name. Behold, I give of the synagogue of Satan, of them which say  
 they are Jews, and they are not, but do lie; behold, I will make  
 them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have  
 loved thee. Because thou didst keep the word of My patience, I also  
 will keep thee from the hour of trial, that hour which is to come  
 upon the whole inhabited earth, to try them that dwell upon the  
 earth. I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no one  
 take thy crown. He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the  
 temple of My God, and he shall come no more forth: and I will write  
 upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the  
 new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God, and Mine  
 own new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit  
 saith to the churches. And to the angel of the church in Laodicea  
 write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness,  
 the Beginning of the creation of God: I know thy works, that thou  
 art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So because  
 thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of  
 My mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches,  
 and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched  
 one, and miserable and poor and blind and naked: I counsel thee to  
 buy of Me gold refined by fire, that thou mayest become rich; and  
 white garments, that thou mayest clothe thyself, and that the shame  
 of thy nakedness be not made manifest, and eyesalve to anoint thine  
 eyes, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I reprove and  
 chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the  
 door and knock: if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will  
 come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me. He that  
 overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with Me in My throne, as  
 I also overcame, and sat down with My Father in His throne. He that  
 hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches  
 (ii., iii.).  
  
  
The fortunes of the Church are to be traced in the Revelation of St.  
John; and the first thing necessary therefore is that we shall learn  
what the Church is. To accomplish this is the leading aim of the second  
and third chapters of the book. An object precisely similar appears to  
determine the arrangement of the fourth Gospel. The Introduction or  
Prologue of that Gospel is found in chap. i. 1-18; and there can be no  
doubt that we meet there, in brief and compendious form, the ideas  
afterwards illustrated and enforced by its selection of incidents from  
the life of Jesus. After the Prologue follows a section, extending from  
chap. i. 19 to chap. ii. 11, in which it is obvious that that struggle  
of Jesus with the world, together with His victory over it, which it is  
the chief purpose of the Evangelist to relate, has not yet begun. The  
question thus arises, What is the aim of that section? and the answer  
is, that it is to set forth the Redeemer with whom the Gospel is to be  
occupied as He enters upon the field of history. Thus also here. The  
first chapter of Revelation is the Introduction or Prologue of the book,  
containing the ideas to be afterwards illustrated in the history of the  
Church. The struggle of the Church with the world does not yet begin,  
nor will it begin until we come to chap. vi. In the meantime we are to  
see in chaps. ii. and iii. that Body of Christ the struggle and victory  
of which are to engage our thoughts.  
  
These chapters consist of seven epistles addressed to the churches of  
the seven cities of Asia named in chap. i. 11, and now written to in  
the same order, beginning with Ephesus and ending with Laodicea. Each  
epistle contains much that is peculiar to it, but we shall fail to  
understand the picture presented by the two chapters as a whole if we  
look only at the individual parts. General considerations, therefore,  
regarding the seven epistles first demand our notice.  
  
Each epistle, it will be observed, is addressed to the "angel" of the  
church named. The object of this commentary, as explained in the  
prefatory note, renders an examination of the meaning of the word  
"angel" here used a point of subordinate importance. A few remarks,  
however, can hardly be avoided. The favourite interpretations of the  
term are two: that the "angels of the churches" are either the guardian  
angels to whom they were severally committed, or their bishops or chief  
pastors. Both interpretations may be unhesitatingly rejected. For as to  
the first, there is a total absence of proof that it was either a Jewish  
or an early Christian idea that each Christian community had its  
guardian angel; and as to the second, if there was, as there seems to  
have been, in the synagogues of the Jews, an official known as the  
"angel" or "messenger," he occupied an altogether inferior position, and  
possessed none of the authoritative control here ascribed to the several  
"angels" mentioned. Besides this, both interpretations are set aside by  
the single consideration that, keeping in view what has been said of the  
number seven in its relation to the number one, the seven angels, like  
the seven churches, must be capable of being regarded as a unity. But  
this cannot be the case with seven guardian angels, for such a universal  
guardianship can be predicated of the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Head  
of the Church, alone. Nor can seven bishops or chief pastors be  
reasonably resolved into one universal bishop or the moderator of one  
universal presbytery. The true idea seems to be that the "angels" of the  
churches are a symbolical representation in which the \_active\_, as  
distinguished from the passive, life of the Church finds expression. To  
St. John every person, every thing, has its angel. God proclaims and  
executes His will by angels.[24] He addresses even the Son by an  
angel.[25] The Son acts and reveals His truth by an angel.[26] The  
waters have an angel.[27] Fire has an angel.[28] The winds have an  
angel.[29] The abyss has an angel.[30] On all these occasions the  
"angel" is interposed when the persons or things spoken of are  
represented as coming out of themselves and as taking their part in  
intercourse or in action. In like manner the "angels of the churches"  
are the churches themselves, with this mark of distinction only,--that,  
when they are thus spoken of, they are viewed not merely as in  
possession of inward vigour, but as exercising it towards things  
without.  
  
The interpretation now given is confirmed by the fact that the  
"angels," as appears from the words of chap. i. 20, "The seven stars  
are the angels of the seven churches," are not different from the  
"stars," for it is the province of the star, instead of hiding itself  
in some secret chamber, to shine, and from its place in the firmament  
to shed light upon the earth. The uniformity of treatment, too, which  
must be claimed for the number seven when used both with the churches  
and the stars, is thus rendered possible; for if the former may  
represent the universal Church in what she \_is\_, the latter will  
represent the same Church in what she \_does\_. Thus, then, in the seven  
"golden candlesticks" and in the seven "stars" or "angels" we have a  
double picture of the Church; and each of the two figures employed  
points to a different aspect of her being. It is possible also that  
the double designation may have been chosen in conformity with a rule,  
often observed in the Apocalypse, which leads the writer to speak of  
the same thing, first under an emblem taken from Judaism, and then  
under one from the wider sphere of the great Gentile Church. The  
"golden candlestick" burning in the secret of God's Tabernacle gives  
the former, the "star" shining in the firmament the latter.  
  
Such then being the case, the seven epistles being addressed to the  
seven churches, and not to any individual in each, the following  
particulars with regard to them ought to be kept in view:--  
  
1. They are intended to set before us a picture of the universal  
Church. At first sight indeed it may seem as if they were only to be  
looked at individually and separately. The different churches are  
addressed by name. In what is said of each there is nothing out of  
keeping with what we may easily suppose to have been its condition at  
the time. There is as much reason to believe that each epistle  
contains an actual historical picture as there is to believe this in  
the case of the epistles of St. Paul to Rome, or Corinth, or Ephesus,  
or Philippi. Any other supposition would convey a false idea of the  
principles upon which the Apocalypse is framed, would destroy the  
reality of the Apostle's writing, and would compel us to think that  
his words must have been unintelligible to those for whom, whatever  
their further application, they were primarily designed. The question,  
however, is not thus exhausted; for it is perfectly possible that both  
certain churches and certain particulars in their state may have been  
selected rather than others, because they afforded the best typical  
representation of the universal Church. Several reasons may satisfy  
us that this was actually done.  
  
(1) We have good ground for believing that, besides these seven  
churches of Asia, there were other churches in existence in the same  
district at the time when the Apostle wrote. One of the early fathers  
speaks of churches at Magnesia and Tralles. It is also possible that  
there were churches at Coloss?and Hierapolis, although these cities  
had suffered from an earthquake shortly after the days of St. Paul.  
Yet St. John addressed himself not to seven, but to "the seven  
churches which are in Asia," as if there were no more churches in the  
province.[31] More, however, there certainly were; and he cannot  
therefore have intended to address them all. He makes a selection,  
without saying that he does so; and it is a natural supposition that  
his selection is designed to represent the universal Church.  
  
(2) Importance must be attached to the number seven. Every reader of  
the book of Revelation is familiar with the singular part played by  
that number in its structure, and with the fact that (unless chap.  
xvii. 9 be an exception) it never means that numeral alone. It is the  
number of unity in diversity, of unity in that manifoldness of  
operation which alone entitles it to the name of unity. Such  
expressions, therefore, as the "seven Spirits of God" or the "seven  
eyes of the Lamb," are evidently symbolical. The same idea must be  
carried through all the notices of the number, unless there be  
something in the context clearly leading to a different conclusion.  
Nothing of that kind exists here. Were these two chapters indeed out  
of ha

rmony with the rest of the book, or had they little or no  
relation to it, it might be urged that they were simply historical,  
and that no deeper meaning was to be sought in them than that lying on  
the surface. We have already seen, however, that their connexion with  
the other chapters is of the closest kind; and we cannot therefore  
avoid bringing them under the scope of the same principles of  
interpretation as are elsewhere applicable. Their number--seven--must  
thus be regarded as typical of unity, and the seven churches as  
representative of the one universal Church.  
  
(3) The nature of the call to the hearers of each epistle to give heed  
to the words addressed to them leads to the same conclusion. Had each  
epistle been designed only for those to whom it was immediately sent,  
that call would probably have been addressed to them alone. Instead of  
this it is couched in the most general form: \_He that hath an ear, let  
him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.\_  
  
(4) The character in which the Saviour speaks to each of the seven  
churches is always taken from the vision of the Son of man beheld by St.  
John in the first chapter of his book. It is true that in the case of  
one or two of the particulars mentioned this is not at once apparent;  
but in that of by far the larger number it is so clear that we are  
entitled to infer the existence of some secret link of connexion in the  
mind of the sacred writer even when it may not be distinctly perceptible  
to us. The descriptions, too, of the epistles are no doubt fuller and  
more elaborate than those of the vision; but this circumstance is easily  
accounted for when we remember that the seven different delineations of  
our Lord contained in the second and third chapters are in the first  
chapter combined in one. Keeping these considerations in view, the main  
point is incontestable that the germ of the epistolary description is  
to be found in every case in the preliminary vision.  
  
Thus to the first church--that of Ephesus--Jesus introduces Himself as  
\_He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, He that walketh in  
the midst of the seven golden candlesticks\_[32]; and the description  
is evidently that of chap. i. 12, 13, 16, where the Seer beheld "seven  
golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the candlesticks one like  
unto a Son of man; and He had in His right hand seven stars." To the  
second--the church of Smyrna--Jesus introduces Himself with the words,  
\_These things saith the first and the last, which became dead, and  
lived again\_[33]; and the description is taken from chap. i. 17, 18:  
"I am the first and the last, and the Living One; and I became dead,  
and behold, I am alive for evermore." To the third--the church of  
Pergamum--the introduction is, \_These things saith He that hath a  
sharp two-edged sword\_[34]; and the original of the description is  
found in chap. i. 16: \_and out of His mouth proceeded a sharp  
two-edged sword\_. To the fourth--the church of Thyatira--the Saviour  
begins, \_These things saith the Son of God, who hath His eyes like a  
flame of fire, and His feet are like unto burnished brass\_[35]; and we  
see the source whence the words are drawn when we read in chap. i. 14,  
15, "And His eyes were as a flame of fire; and His feet like unto  
burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace." Of the  
latter part of the salutation to the fifth church--that of  
Sardis--which runs, \_These things saith He that hath the seven Spirits  
of God, and the seven stars\_,[36] it is unnecessary to speak; but the  
first part is more difficult to trace. Comparing chap. v. 6 and chap.  
iv. 5, we learn that the seven Spirits of God are the possession of  
the Redeemer, and that they are symbolized by seven lamps burning  
before the throne of God. Turning now to chap. i., we find the Seer  
speaking in ver. 4 of "the seven Spirits which are before the throne,"  
those very spirits which in chap. v. 6 he tells us that the Redeemer  
"hath." This latter thought therefore he is accustomed to associate  
with them; and though in chap. i. 4 he does not expressly say that the  
seven Spirits there referred to are the possession of Jesus, this view  
of them is obviously a part of his general conception of the matter.  
In chap. i. 4, therefore, the source of the words addressed to Sardis  
is to be found. To the sixth church--that of Philadelphia--it is said,  
\_These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the  
key of David, He that openeth, and none shall shut, and that shutteth,  
and none openeth\_[37]; and we can have no difficulty in recognising  
the germ of the extended description in chap. i. 14, 18, where we are  
told that Jesus Christ, in token of His holiness, hath "His head and  
His hair white as white wool, white as snow," and that He hath "the  
keys of death and of Hades." Lastly, we have the introductory address  
to the seventh church--that of Laodicea--\_These things saith the Amen,  
the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of  
God\_[38]; and the origin of it is to be seen in chap. i. 5, where we  
are told of "Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness, and the  
first-born of the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth." Each  
salutation of the seven epistles is thus part of the description of  
the Son of man in the first chapter of the book; and it is a  
legitimate inference that the contents of the epistles are, like the  
salutations, only portions of one whole.  
  
(5) Many expressions are to be met with in the seven epistles which  
find their explanation only in those later chapters of the book where  
a reference to the Church universal cannot be denied. The \_tree of  
life\_ of the first epistle meets us again, more fully spoken of, in  
the description of the new Jerusalem.[39] The \_second death\_ mentioned  
in the second epistle is not explained till judgment upon the Church's  
enemies is complete.[40] The writing upon believers of the \_new name\_,  
promised in the third epistle, is almost unintelligible until we  
behold the hundred and forty-four thousand upon Mount Zion.[41] The  
\_authority over the nations\_, and more especially the gift of \_the  
morning star\_, referred to in the fourth epistle, cannot be  
comprehended until we are introduced to the vision of the thousand  
years and the last utterances of the glorified Redeemer.[42] The  
\_white garments\_ of the fifth epistle can hardly be rightly understood  
until we see the white-robed company standing before the throne and  
before the Lamb.[43] The mention in the sixth epistle of \_the city of  
My God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My  
God\_, remains a mystery until we actually witness her descent.[44]  
And, finally, the \_sitting in Christ's throne\_ of the seventh epistle  
is only elucidated by the reign of the thousand years with Him.[45]  
  
(6) It is worthy of notice that the descriptions of our Lord given in  
the first and last epistles have a wider application than to the  
churches of Ephesus and Laodicea, to which they are immediately  
addressed, thus making it evident that, while each of these epistles  
has its own place in the series, it is at the same time treated as the  
first or last member of a group which is to be regarded as a whole.  
  
To the church of Ephesus the Saviour describes Himself as \_He that  
holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, He that walketh in the  
midst of the seven golden candlesticks\_[46]; and the description has  
no more reference to Ephesus than to any other of the churches named.  
In like manner to the church of Laodicea He describes Himself as \_the  
Amen, the Witness faithful and true, the Beginning of the creation of  
God\_.[47] The first of these appellations is no doubt derived from  
Isa. lxv. 16, where we have twice repeated in the same verse the  
formula "God Amen;" and the meaning of the name as applied to Jesus  
is, not that all the Divine promises shall be accomplished by Him, but  
that He is Himself the fulfilment of every promise made by the  
Almighty to His people. The second appellation reminds us of John  
xviii. 37, where Jesus replies to Pilate's question in the words, "To  
this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world,  
that I should bear witness unto the truth." His whole mission is  
summed up by Him in the idea of "witnessing." He is the perfect, the  
true, the real Witness to eternal truth in its deepest sense, in its  
widest and most comprehensive range. The third appellation, again,  
cannot be limited to the thought of the mere material creation, as if  
equivalent to the statement that by the Word were all things made. It  
would thus fail to correspond with the two appellations preceding it,  
which undoubtedly apply to the work of redemption, while at the same  
time the addition of the words "of God" would be meaningless or  
perplexing. Let us add to this that in chap. i. 5, immediately after  
Jesus has been called the "faithful Witness," He is described as the  
"first-begotten of the dead," and we shall not be able to resist the  
conviction that the words before us refer primarily to the new  
creation, the Christian Church, that redeemed humanity which has its  
true life in Christ. It may not indeed be necessary to exclude the  
thought of the material universe; but, in so far as it is alluded to,  
it is only as redeemed, in its ideal condition of rest and glory, when  
the new Jerusalem has come down out of heaven, and when the Church's  
enemies have been cast into the lake of fire.[48] The three  
appellations, it will be observed, have thus a general rather than a  
special aspect; and the salutation containing them is to be  
distinguished from the salutations of the other epistles, all of  
which, with the exception of the last, exhibit the closest possible  
connexion with the contents of the epistles to which they respectively  
belong. It is no mere fancy, therefore, when we say that we have in  
this a proof that the first and last epistles are not simply members  
of a continuous series, the last of which may leave the first far  
behind, but that they are binding terms which gather up all the  
members of the series and group them into one.  
  
(7) It ought to be noticed that all the cities to which the seven  
epistles are addressed were situated beyond the boundaries of the Holy  
Land, and that the Christian Church in each was certainly composed, at  
least in large measure, of Gentile converts. These churches cannot  
therefore represent the Jewish Church alone, but must embody that wider  
idea of the Christian Church which was brought in when the middle wall  
of partition between Jews and Gentiles was broken down, and when both  
were reconciled in one body by the Cross, becoming one Church in the Son  
and in the Father. Were we dealing with the Jewish-Christian Church, we  
should unquestionably find it located in Jerusalem or in some of the  
cities of Palestine. When we are taken to heathen soil, and to churches  
known to have been at least for the most part Gentile, it is a proof  
that we have before us that great Gentile Church in the very conception  
of which lies the thought of universality.  
  
(8) The view now taken is confirmed by the general nature of the  
Apocalypse. That book is symbolical. It begins with a symbolical  
representation in the first chapter. Symbolism, by the admission of  
all, is resumed in the fourth chapter, and is continued from that  
point to the end. Now it is certainly possible that between these two  
groups of symbols a passage only strictly historical might be  
introduced. But if there be reason on independent grounds to think  
that here also we have facts used at least to a certain extent to  
serve a higher than a simply historic thought, it cannot fail to be  
allowed that the general unity of the book is thus preserved, and that  
a completeness is lent to it which we are entitled to expect, but  
which would be otherwise wanting.  
  
The seven churches then of chaps. ii. and iii. are thus intended to  
represent the one universal Church. The Seer selects such particular  
churches of Asia and such special features of their condition as  
afford the best illustration of that state of God's kingdom in the  
world which is to be the great subject of his prophetic words. He is  
to keep in view throughout all his revelation certain aspects of the  
Church in herself and in her relation to the world. But these aspects  
were not merely in the bosom of the future. Still less are they an  
ideal picture drawn from the resources of the writer's own  
imagination. To his enlightened eye, looking abroad over that part of  
the world in which his lot was cast, they were also present, one in  
one church, another in another. St. John therefore groups them  
together. They are "the things which are," and they are types of "the  
things which shall come to pass hereafter."[49]  
  
The universalism of the Apocalypse is from the first apparent.  
  
2. A second characteristic of the epistles addressed to the seven  
churches demands our notice, for these epistles are clearly divisible  
into two portions, the first consisting of the first three, the second  
of the other four. Every inquirer admits the fact, the proof resting  
upon the difference of place assigned in the two portions to the call,  
\_He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the  
churches\_. In the first three this call comes in as a central part of  
the epistle, immediately before the promise to \_him that  
overcometh\_[50]; in the last four it closes the epistle.[51] There is  
a still more interesting difference, though the Authorised English  
Version conceals it from view. According to the best attested  
readings of the original, the second and third epistles--those to  
Smyrna and Pergamum--omit the words, found in all the others, \_I know  
thy works\_. The circumstance is at least remarkable, and it seems to  
admit of only one explanation. In the mind of the writer the first  
three epistles were so closely associated together--more closely  
perhaps than even the seven or the last four--that these words  
occurring in the first epistle were thought by him to extend their  
influence over the second and third, much in the same way as the  
description of the exalted Lord in the same epistle sent its voice  
forward, and that in the last epistle its voice backward, through the  
rest. At all events, it is impossible not to see that the first three  
epistles and likewise the last four, to whatever extent they form  
parts of one whole, constitute in each case a special unity. What, we  
have now to ask, is the ground of the distinction? In what light is  
the Church viewed in each of the two portions spoken of?  
  
There are two aspects of the Church which may be said to pervade the  
whole Apocalypse: first, as she is in herself, in her own true nature;  
and secondly, as she is engaged in, and affected by, a struggle with  
the world. The distinction between the two may be traced in the  
grouping of which we speak. The first three epistles lead us to the  
thought of the Church in the former, the remaining four to the thought  
of her in the latter, aspect. In the first three she is the pure bride  
of Christ; in the last four she has yielded to the influences of the  
world, and the faithful remnant within her is separated from her  
professing but unfaithful members.  
  
The numbers into which the two portions of the seven epistles are  
distributed illustrate this. Three is the number of the Divine; four,  
as appears from many passages of this book, is the number of the world.  
The simple fact that we have a group of three as distinguished from one  
of four epistles is sufficient to lead to the impression that, in one  
way or another the thought of the Divine is more closely associated with  
the former, and the thought of the world with the latter.  
  
This impression is confirmed when we look at the contents of the  
epistles. Let us take the first three, and we shall find that in not  
one of them is a contrast drawn between the whole Church and any  
faithful remnant within her borders, that in not one of them is the  
Church represented as yielding to the influences of the world. No  
doubt she has evil in her midst; and evil always springs from the  
world, not from God. But she is not yet conscious of the sin by which  
she is surrounded. She has not yet begun to traffic with the world, to  
accommodate herself to it, or to lust after what it bestows. The great  
charge against the church in Ephesus is that she has left her first  
love.[52] She has passed out of the bright and joyous feelings which  
marked the time of her espousals to the heavenly Bridegroom. But from  
sin the Church as she actually exists in the world can never be wholly  
free; and, so far in particular as the Nicolaitans are concerned, she  
shares in Ephesus the feelings of her Lord, and views them with the  
hatred which they deserve. No reproach is directed against the church  
in Smyrna. She is rather the object of her Lord's perfect confidence;  
and He is only preparing trial for her in correspondence with the law  
by which He trains His people: "Every branch that beareth fruit, He  
cleanseth it, that it may bear more fruit."[53] Remarks of a similar  
kind apply to the church in Pergamum. There is no charge against the  
church there that she is allowing the world to gain dominion over her.  
She has certainly persons in her midst who hold the teaching of the  
Nicolaitans, but they are few in number; they are no more than  
"some,"[54] and she lends them no countenance. On the contrary, though  
dwelling in the place where Satan has his throne, she has remained  
true to her Lord, and has been purified in the fires of persecution  
then raging even unto death. In none of the three cases is the church  
perfect, but in none is she really faithless to her trust. She is in  
danger; she needs to be perfected by suffering[55]; by suffering she  
is perfected: but she knows that he who will be the friend of the  
world is the enemy of God, and the enemies of God are her enemies.  
  
When we turn to the second group of the seven epistles, we at once  
breathe a different atmosphere; and the contrast is rendered more  
striking by the fact that in the first of the four we have the very  
sins spoken of which have already twice crossed our path in the  
epistles to Ephesus and to Pergamum. According to the best critical  
reading of chap. ii. 20, the charge against Thyatira is, "\_Thou  
sufferest\_" (Thou lettest alone; thou toleratest) "\_thy wife  
Jezebel\_." Jezebel was a heathen princess, the first heathen queen who  
had been married by a king of the northern kingdom of Israel. She was  
therefore peculiarly fitted to represent the influences of the world;  
and the charge against Thyatira is thus that, in the persons not of a  
few only, but of her united membership, she tolerated the world, with  
its heathen thoughts and practices. She knew it to be the world that  
it was; but notwithstanding this she was content to be at peace, or  
even to ally herself, with it. The church in Sardis is not less  
blameable. There are a few names in her that have not defiled their  
garments; but the church \_as a whole\_ has deeply sinned. She has  
reproduced the Pharisaic type with which the Gospels have made us  
acquainted, substituting the outward for the inward in religion, and  
then yielding to the sins of the flesh to which she has thus given the  
supremacy. The church in Philadelphia, like that in Smyrna, is not  
blamed, and it is well that there should be one church even in the  
midst of the world of which this can be said; yet even Philadelphia  
has only \_a little power\_,[56] while the exhortation, \_Hold fast that  
which thou hast\_,[57] appears to indicate that she has been losing  
much. Lastly, no one can mistake the willing identification of herself  
with the world on the part of the church in Laodicea. She says that  
she is \_rich\_, that she has \_gotten riches\_, that she has \_need of  
nothing\_.[58] Her members are well-to-do and in easy circumstances,  
and they have found so much comfort in their worldly goods that they  
have become blind to the fact that man needs something better and  
higher for his portion. In all these four churches

, in short, we have  
an entirely different relation between the Church and the world from  
that set before us in the first three. There is not simply danger of  
decay within, and the need of trial with the benefit resulting from  
it. There is actual conflict with the world; sometimes, it may be, a  
victory over it, at other times a yielding to its influences and an  
adoption of its spirit. In the first three churches all, or all with  
few exceptions, are on the side of Christ; in the last four the  
"remnant" alone is true to Him.  
  
Attention to the promises \_to him that overcometh\_ in the different  
epistles seems to confirm what has been said. There is a marked contrast  
between the tone of these promises as they are given in the two groups  
of epistles; and even where a certain amount of similarity exists, the  
promises in the second group will be found to be fuller and richer than  
in the first. At Ephesus, at Smyrna, and at Pergamum "he that  
overcometh" is rewarded much, as one still in a simple and childlike  
state would be. The first promise made to him is that he shall \_eat of  
the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God\_[59]; the second, that  
he shall \_not be hurt of the second death\_[60]; the third, that he shall  
\_eat of the hidden manna\_, and be like the high-priest in the innermost  
recesses of the sanctuary.[61] All is quiet. The appeal of Him who  
promises is to the gentler susceptibilities of the soul. The privileges  
and enjoyments spoken of are adapted to the condition of those who have  
not yet experienced the struggle of life.  
  
When we turn to the second group of epistles there is a different  
tone. We enter upon rewards conceived in bolder and more manly  
figures. The first promise now is, \_He that overcometh, and he that  
keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the  
nations: and as a shepherd he shall tend them with a sceptre of iron;  
as the vessels of the potter are they broken to shivers\_.[62] This is  
the reward of victory after well-fought fields. The warrior thus  
crowned must have braved the strife and won with difficulty. The  
second promise is not less marked in its character. \_He that  
overcometh\_ shall not simply, as in the case of Smyrna, receive the  
reward of not being "hurt of the second death;" he shall be \_arrayed  
in white garments\_, and Jesus will \_confess his name before His  
Father, and before His angels\_.[63] The third promise is at least a  
large extension of that given to Pergamum, for of \_him that\_ now  
\_overcometh\_ it is said, \_I will make him a pillar in the temple of My  
God, and he shall come no more forth\_--that is, shall come no more  
forth to a struggle with the world similar to that in which he has  
been engaged--\_and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the  
name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out  
of heaven from My God, and Mine own new name\_.[64] Finally, the fourth  
promise is the noblest of all: \_He that overcometh, I will give to him  
to sit down with Me in My throne, as I also overcame, and sat down  
with My Father in His throne.\_[65] All the promises of the second  
group of epistles are clearly distinguished in tone and spirit from  
those of the first group. They presuppose a fiercer struggle, a hotter  
conflict; and they are therefore full of a more glorious reward.  
  
Such seems to be the relation to one another of the two groups into  
which the seven epistles naturally divide themselves. In the first  
group the Church has stood firm against the world. She is full of toil  
and endurance; in her poverty she is rich; and the troubles of the  
future she does not fear. She holds fast the name of Christ, and  
openly confesses Him. Seeds of evil are indeed within her, which will  
too soon develop themselves; but she has the Divine life within her  
in as much perfection as can be expected amidst the infirmities of our  
present state. She walks with God and hears His voice in her earthly  
paradise. In the second group the evil seed sown by the enemy has  
sprung up. The Church tolerates the sins that are around her, makes  
her league with the world, and yields to its influence. She rallies  
indeed at times to her new and higher life, but she finally submits to  
the world and is satisfied with its goods. There are many faithful  
ones, it is true, in her midst. As in the Jewish Church there was a  
"remnant according to the election of grace," so in her there are  
those who listen to the Saviour's voice and follow Him. Yet they are  
the smaller portion of her members, and they shall eventually come  
forth out of her. It is the same sad story which has marked all the  
previous dispensations of the Almighty with His people, and which will  
continue to be repeated until the Second Coming of the Lord. That  
story culminates in this book of the Revelation of St. John, when the  
bride, allying herself with the world, becomes a harlot, and when the  
Seer hears "another voice out of heaven, saying, Come forth, My  
people, out of her, that ye have no fellowship with her sins, and that  
ye receive not of her plagues."[66]  
  
We have considered the epistles contained in these chapters as a unity  
representative of the universal Church in the two main aspects of her  
condition in the world; but before leaving them it will be well to  
look at them individually, and to mark the peculiar condition of each  
Church addressed.  
  
1. The first epistle is that to Ephesus, the central or metropolitan  
city of the district to which all the seven churches belonged, and with  
which the almost unanimous voice of antiquity associates the later years  
of the pastorate of St. John himself. Hence, in part at least, as we  
have already seen, the general nature of the salutation with which the  
glorified Lord presents Himself to that church. He does not merely hold  
its star in His right hand, nor does He merely walk in the midst of it  
alone. \_He holdeth the seven stars in His right hand. He walketh in the  
midst of the seven golden candlesticks.\_ He is present in every part of  
His Church on earth. To every part of it He says, "Lo, I am with you  
alway, even unto the consummation of the age."[67]  
  
The church at Ephesus is faithful as a whole. \_I know\_, is the language  
of her Lord to her, \_thy works, and thy toil and patience, and that thou  
canst not bear evil men, and didst try them which call themselves  
apostles, and they are not, and didst find them false; and thou hast  
patience and didst bear for My name's sake, and hast not grown weary\_.  
The tribute is a noble one. The church is not only working, but toiling,  
in her Master's service; she is firm amidst trial, whether from within  
or from without; she views with abhorrence all workers of iniquity; she  
tries, only in order to reject, those pretended messengers of Christ who  
would have preached another gospel than that the power of which she  
knew. Amidst all the speciousness of their claims, she had "found" them  
false. Then she turned again to her steadfast endurance until it became  
a settled principle in her life, and it could be said to her, with the  
strong force of the word in the writings of St. John, that she "had" it.  
The spirit of all this, too, had been found in the "name" of Jesus, the  
revelation of the love and grace of God given her in Him. Finally, she  
had not grown weary. Seven marks of faithfulness appear to be mentioned;  
and, if so, the fourth--her judgment of false teachers--occupies the  
central position. Nor does it seem fanciful to say this when we notice  
that of all the seven points the fourth is the only one returned to, and  
that in a more specific form, at a later point in the epistle: \_But this  
thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also  
hate.\_ In other words, doctrinal faithfulness was the peculiar  
distinction of the Ephesian church. She knew that the revelation of God  
in Christ must be kept pure, or toil would lose its spring, patience its  
encouragement, shrinking from evil men its intensity, and perseverance  
its support. Therefore she valued the doctrinal truth which had been  
committed to her, and held fast the "form of sound words" which she had  
received, for the sake of the life to which it led.  
  
Amidst all this the church at Ephesus was not wholly what she \_ought\_  
to have been. \_I have this against thee\_, had to be said to her, \_that  
thou didst leave thy first love\_; and she needed words of exhortation  
and warning: \_Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and  
repent, and do the first works; or else I come to thee, and will move  
thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent.\_ The church had  
declined from the bright and joyous feelings of her first condition.  
Might her very zeal for the purity of Christian doctrine have had  
anything to do with this? It is not impossible. Eager defence of truth  
against error, notwithstanding its importance, is apt to shift the  
centre of the soul's inner life. The strifes of theologians and the  
cry "First purity, then peace," translated into "Purity without  
peace," have been in every age the scandal and the weakness of the  
Church. Well might even David speak of it as one of the most signal  
instances of God's goodness to them that fear Him, "Thou shalt keep  
them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues;"[68] and  
never, alas! have tongues been sharper or more contentious than in the  
maintenance of the faith. There is something without which even zeal  
for truth may be but a scorching and devouring flame; and that is the  
"first love," the love ever fresh and tender for Him who first loved  
us, the love which teaches us to win and not to alienate, to raise and  
not to crush, those who may only be mistaken in their views, and are  
not determined enemies of God.  
  
Possessed of this spirit, we shall \_overcome\_; and the first love will  
meet its first reward. \_To him that overcometh\_, says the Lord,  
recalling the blessedness of Eden, \_will I give to eat of the tree of  
life, which is in the Paradise of God\_.  
  
2. The second epistle is that to Smyrna, a rich, prosperous, and  
dissolute city, and largely inhabited by Jews bitterly opposed to  
Christ and Christianity. Here therefore persecution of those leading  
the pure and holy life of the Gospel might be peculiarly expected, as  
indeed it also peculiarly appeared. The church at Smyrna thus becomes  
the type of a suffering church, the representative of that condition  
of things foretold in the words of Christ, and constantly fulfilled in  
the history of His people, "A servant is not greater than his lord. If  
they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you."[69]  
  
It will be observed that at Smyrna the church is still faithful, and  
that against her no word of reproach is uttered. Hence the aspect under  
which the Redeemer presents Himself to that church is purely animating  
and consolatory, the same as that which, in the introductory vision in  
chap. i., followed the action of the Lord when He laid His right hand  
upon the Apostle, who had fallen to the ground as dead, and when He said  
to him, "Fear not."[70] So now: \_These things saith the first and the  
last, which became dead, and lived again.\_ Death and resurrection are  
the two great divisions of the work of Christ on our behalf, and the  
Gospel is summed up in them. Just as St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians  
when he would remind them of the substance of his preaching in their  
midst, "For I declared unto you first of all that which also I received,  
how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that  
He was buried, and that He hath been raised on the third day according  
to the Scriptures,"[71] in like manner here the same two facts include  
all the truth which Smyrna held fast, and with which come the life that  
conquers sin and the joy that triumphs over sorrow.  
  
The state of the church is then described: \_I know thy tribulation,  
and thy poverty (but thou art rich), and the blasphemy of them which  
say they are Jews, and they are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.\_  
Tribulation, persecution, the blasphemy of men calling themselves the  
only people of God and denying to Christians any portion in His  
covenant, are alone alluded to, though the church is at the same time  
cheered with the remark that if she had no share in worldly wealth  
and splendour, she was \_rich\_. "God had chosen them that were poor as  
to the world to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He  
promised to them that love Him."[72]  
  
The church then was in the midst of suffering. Was not that enough; and  
shall she not be told that her sufferings were drawing to an end, that  
the night of weeping was gone by, and that the morning of joy was about  
to dawn? So we might think; but God's thoughts are not as our thoughts,  
nor His ways as our ways, and we are like children bathing on the shore,  
  
 Buried a wave beneath;  
 The second wave succeeds before  
 We have had time to breathe.  
  
How often does it happen in the Christian's experience that one burden  
is laid upon another, and that one wave succeeds another, till he  
seems left desolate and alone upon the earth. Yet even then he has no  
assurance that his sufferings are at a close. The consolation afforded  
to him is, not that there shall be a short campaign, but only that,  
whether long or short, he shall be more than conqueror through Him  
that loved him. Thus our Lord does not now say to His church at  
Smyrna, Fear none of those things that thou art suffering, but \_Fear  
not the things which thou art about to suffer: behold, the devil is  
about to cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye  
shall have tribulation ten days\_. It is hardly necessary to say to any  
intelligent reader of the Apocalypse that the "ten days" here spoken  
of are neither ten literal days, nor ten years, nor ten successive  
persecutions of indefinite length. In conformity with the symbolical  
use of numbers in this book, "ten days" expresses no more than a time  
which, though troubled, shall be definite and short, a time which may  
be otherwise denoted by the language of St. Peter when he says of  
believers that "now for \_a little while\_ they have been put to grief  
in manifold temptations."[73] Encompassed by affliction, therefore,  
those who are thus tried have only to be \_faithful unto death\_, or to  
the last extremity of martyrdom. He who died and lived again will  
bestow upon them \_the crown of life\_, the crown of the kingdom,  
incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading. \_He that overcometh shall not  
be hurt of the second death.\_  
  
3. The third epistle is that to Pergamum, a city at the time devoted  
to the worship of ?culapius, the god of medicine, and in particular  
largely engaged with those parts of medical science which are occupied  
with inquiries into the springs of life. That the wickedness of the  
city was both greater and more widespread than was common even in the  
dark days of heathenism is borne witness to by the fact that the first  
words addressed to it by Him \_that hath the sharp two-edged sword\_  
were these: \_I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's throne  
is.\_ The word "throne" (not, as in the Authorised Version, "seat") is  
intentionally selected by the Seer; and its use affords an  
illustration of one of his principles of style, the remembrance of  
which is not unfrequently of value in interpreting his book.  
Everywhere it is his wont to see over against the good its mocking  
counterpart of evil, over against the light a corresponding darkness.  
Thus because God occupies a throne Satan does the same; and inasmuch  
as in Pergamum sin was marked by a refinement of greater than ordinary  
depth, Satan might be said to have his "throne" there. This  
circumstance, combined with the promise to the Church contained in the  
seventeenth verse, \_To him that overcometh, to him will I give of the  
hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a  
new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it\_, may  
help us to understand the main thought of this epistle as  
distinguished from the others. We have seen reason to believe that  
there was some secret mystery of evil in the city; and, contrasted  
with this, we have now the promise of a secret mystery of life to the  
faithful church. The Church then in the secret of her Divine  
preservation is here before us. She lives a life the springs of which  
no one sees, a life that is hid with Christ in God.  
  
It will be observed, accordingly, that, whatever may be said against the  
condition of the city, nothing is said against the church within it.  
There is no hint that she has yielded to the influences of the world.  
She has certainly evil-doers in her midst; but these, though in her, are  
not of her: and the Christianity of the great majority of her members  
remains sound and sweet. Let us listen to the words of commendation:  
\_And thou holdest fast My name, and didst not deny My faith, even in the  
days of Antipas My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you,  
where Satan dwelleth. But I have a few things against thee, because thou  
hast there some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to  
cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things  
sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also some  
that hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans in like manner. Repent  
therefore; or else I come to thee quickly, and I will make war against  
them with the sword of My mouth.\_ Those who are described in these words  
as "holding the teaching of Balaam" and those who are here called "the  
Nicolaitans" are the same, denoted in the first instance by a  
description taken from the history of Balaam in the Old Testament, and  
in the second by a word formed in Greek after the fashion of Balaam's  
name in Hebrew. That the church in her corporate capacity had not  
yielded to the sinfulness referred to is manifest from this, that they  
who had done so are described as "some," and that in the threatening of  
the sixteenth verse it is not said, I will war against "thee," but I  
will war against "them." The sin therefore found in the bosom of the  
church was not, as we shall find it to have been at Thyatira, with her  
consent. She failed, not because she encouraged it, but because she did  
not take more vigorous steps for its extinction. She did not  
sufficiently realize the fact that she was a part of the Body of Christ,  
and that, if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it.  
Believers in her community were too easily satisfied with working out  
their own salvation, and thought too little of presenting the whole  
church "as a pure virgin to Christ."[74] Therefore it was that, even  
amidst much faithfulness, they needed to repent, to feel more deeply  
than they did that "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump,"[75] and  
that in the Church of the Lord Jesus we are to a large extent  
responsible, not only for our own, but for our neighbours', sins. By  
keeping up the Christian tone of the whole Church the tone of each  
member of the Church is heightened.  
  
We thus reach the close of the first three epistles "to the churches;"  
and we see that, while each is accommodated to the particular  
circumstances of the Christian community to which it is sent, the three  
taken together present to us the three leading considerations upon  
which, when we think of Christ's Church in this world, we naturally  
dwell. First, she is in the main true to her Divine Master, even when  
compelled to confess that she has left her first love. Secondly, she is  
exposed for her further cleansing to many trials. Lastly, she is  
sustained by the unseen influences of Divine love and grace. She eats of  
the hidden manna. She has within her breastplate a white, glistering  
stone, upon which is inscribed the new name which no man knoweth saving  
he that receiveth it. She dwells, like the high-priest of old at the  
moment of his greatest dignity and honour, in the secret place of the  
Most High. She abides under the shadow of the Almighty. As a child she  
has entered into the garden of the Lord; and yet, in all the simplicity  
of her c

hildhood, she is both king and priest.  
  
Such is the Church of Christ in Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamum. Happy  
days of innocence and bliss! We may well linger over them for a  
little. Too soon will they pass away, and too soon will the Church's  
conflict with the world and her yielding to it begin.  
  
4. With the fourth epistle we enter upon the second group of epistles,  
where the Church is brought before us less as she is in herself, than as  
she fails to maintain her true position in the world, and as that  
separation between a faithful remnant and the whole body which meets us  
at every step of her history, throughout both the Old Testament and the  
New, begins to show itself. Now therefore there is a change of tone.  
  
The first of the four, the fourth in the series of seven, is that to  
Thyatira; and to the church there the Lord presents Himself in all the  
penetrating power of those eyes that as a flame of fire search the  
inmost recesses of the heart, and in all the resistless might of those  
feet that are as "pillars of fire:"[76] \_These things saith the Son of  
God, who hath His eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like  
unto burnished brass.\_  
  
The commendation of the church follows, what is good being noted  
before defects are spoken of: \_I know thy works, and thy love and  
faith and ministry and patience, and that thy last works are more than  
the first.\_ The commendation is great. There was not only grace, but  
growth in grace, not only work, but work in Christ's cause abounding  
more and more. Yet there was also failure. To understand this it is  
necessary, as already noticed, to adopt the translation of the Revised  
Version, founded on the more correct reading of the later critical  
editions of the Greek. Even in that version, too, the translation,  
given in the margin, of one important expression has to be substituted  
for that of the text. Keeping this in view, the Saviour thus addresses  
Thyatira: \_But I have this against thee, that thou sufferest\_ (that  
thou toleratest, that thou lettest alone) \_thy wife Jezebel, which  
calleth herself a prophetess; and she teacheth and seduceth My  
servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols.  
And I gave her time that she should repent; and she willeth not to  
repent of her fornication. Behold, I do cast her into a bed, and them  
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 shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and  
hearts: and I will give unto each one of you according to your works.\_  
In these words "Jezebel" is clearly a symbolical name. It is  
impossible to think that the "angel" of the church was the chief  
pastor, and that the woman named Jezebel, spoken of as she is, was his  
wife. We have before us the notorious Jezebel of Old Testament  
history. Her story is so familiar to every one that it is unnecessary  
to dwell on it; and we need only further call attention to the fact  
that the sentence in which her name is mentioned is complete in  
itself. The sin of the church at Thyatira was that she "suffered" her.  
In other words, the church tolerated in her midst the evil of which  
Ahab's wife was so striking a representative. She knew the world to be  
what it was; but, instead of making a determined effort to resist it,  
she yielded to its influences. She repeated the sin of the Corinthian  
Church: "It is actually reported that there is fornication among  
you.... And ye are puffed up, and did not rather mourn, that he that  
had done this deed might be taken away from among you."[77] The world,  
in short, was in the church, and was tolerated there. Of the  
threatened punishment, the "bed" of tribulation and sorrow instead of  
that of guilty pleasure, nothing need be said. It is of more  
consequence to observe the change in the manner of address which meets  
us after that punishment has been described: \_But to you I say, to the  
rest that are in Thyatira, as many as have not this teaching, which  
know not the deep things of Satan, as they say; I cast upon you none  
other burden. Howbeit that which ye have, hold fast till I come.\_ For  
the first time in these epistles we meet with those who are spoken of  
as "the rest," the remnant, who are to be carefully distinguished from  
the great body of the Church's professing members. The world has  
penetrated into the Church; the Church has become conformed to the  
world: and the hour is rapidly approaching when the true disciples of  
Jesus will no longer find within her the shelter which she has  
hitherto afforded them, and when they will have to "come forth out of  
her" in her degenerate condition.[78] It is a striking feature of  
these apocalyptic visions, which has been too much missed by  
commentators. We shall meet it again and again as we proceed. In the  
meantime it is enough to say that the moment of withdrawal has not yet  
come. The faithful "rest," who had rejected the false teaching and  
shunned the sinful life, are to continue where they were; and the Lord  
will \_cast upon them none other burden\_. Well for them that they had  
such a promise! Their burden of suffering was heavy enough already.  
Hard to contend with under any circumstances, suffering rises nearer  
to the height of the sufferings of Christ when the Christian is  
"wounded," not by open foes, but "in the house of his friends." "It  
was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it:  
neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me;  
then I would have hid myself from him: but it was thou, a man mine  
equal, my companion, and my familiar friend. We took sweet counsel  
together; we walked in the house of God with the throng."[79]  
  
The trial was great; so also is the consolation: \_And he that  
overcometh, and he that keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I  
give authority over the nations: and as a shepherd he shall tend them  
with a sceptre of iron, as the vessels of the potter are they broken  
to shivers; as I also have received of My Father: and I will give him  
the morning star.\_ It was a heathen element that clouded the sky of  
the church at Thyatira. That element, nay \_the nations\_ out of which  
it springs, shall be crushed beneath the iron sceptre of the King who  
shall "reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients  
gloriously."[80] The clouds shall disappear; and Jesus, "the bright,  
the morning star,"[81] having given Himself to His people, He and they  
together shall shine with its clear but peaceful light when it appears  
in the heavens, the harbinger of day.  
  
5. The fifth epistle is that to Sardis, and in the superscription He  
who sends it describes Himself as One \_that hath the seven Spirits of  
God, and the seven stars\_. Both expressions have already met us, the  
former in chap. i. 4, the latter in chap. ii. 1. A different word from  
that used in the address to Ephesus is indeed used here to indicate  
the relation of the Lord to these stars or angels of the churches.  
There the glorified Lord "holdeth the seven stars in His right hand;"  
here He "hath" them. Like every other change, even of the slightest  
kind, in this book, the difference is instructive. To "hold" them is  
to hold them fast for their protection; to "have" them is to have them  
for a possession, to have them not only outwardly and in name, but  
inwardly and in reality, as His own. Thus Christ "hath" the Holy  
Spirit, who in all His varied or sevenfold influences is, as He  
proceedeth from the Father and the Son, not only God's, but His. Thus  
also Christ "hath" the seven stars or churches, here spoken of in  
immediate connexion with the Spirit, and therefore viewed chiefly in  
that spirituality of feeling and of life which ought to be the great  
mark distinguishing them from the world. It was the mark in which  
Sardis failed. Let her take heed to Him with whom she has to do.  
  
\_I know\_, are the words addressed to her, \_thy works, that thou hast a  
name that thou livest, and thou art dead. Be thou watchful, and stablish  
the things that remain, which were ready to die: for I have found no  
works of thine fulfilled before My God. Remember therefore how thou hast  
received and didst hear; and keep it, and repent. If therefore thou  
shalt not watch, I will come as a thief, and thou shalt not know what  
hour I will come upon thee.\_ The world had been tolerated in Thyatira,  
the first of the last four churches; in Sardis, the second, it is more  
than tolerated. Sardis has substituted the outward for the inward. She  
has been proud of her external ordinances, and has thought more of them  
than of living in the Spirit and walking in the Spirit. True piety has  
declined; and, as a natural consequence, sins of the flesh, alluded to  
in the immediately following words of the epistle, have asserted their  
supremacy. More even than this, Sardis had a \_name\_ that she lived while  
she was dead. She was renowned among men. The world looked, and beheld  
with admiration what was to it the splendour of her worship; it  
listened, and heard with enthusiasm the music of her praise. And the  
church was pleased that it should be so. Not in humility, lowliness, and  
deeds of self-sacrificing love did she seek her "name," but in what the  
world would have been equally delighted with though the inspiring soul  
of it all had been folly or sin. A stronghold had been established by  
the world in Sardis.  
  
Yet there also the Good Shepherd had His little flock, and there again  
we meet them. \_But thou hast a few names in Sardis which did not  
defile their garments.\_ These were to Sardis what "the rest" were to  
Thyatira. They were the "gleanings left in Israel, as the shaking of  
an olive tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough,  
four or five in the outmost branches of a fruitful tree."[82] They  
were the "new wine found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it  
not; for a blessing is in it."[83] To them therefore great promises  
are given: \_They shall walk with Me in white; for they are worthy. He  
that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments; and I will in  
no wise blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his  
name before My Father, and before His angels.\_ It is the glorified  
Lord who, as the High-priest of His Church, "walketh" in the midst of  
the golden candlesticks; and, as priests, these shall \_walk with\_ Him  
in a similar glory. Upon earth they were despised, but beyond the  
earth they shall be openly acknowledged and vindicated. They shall be  
arrayed in those garments of glistering purity which were with  
difficulty kept white in the world, but which in the world to come  
Divine favour shall keep free from every stain.  
  
6. The sixth epistle is to Philadelphia; and the remarkable circumstance  
connected with this church is that, though spoken of as having but "a  
little power," it is not seriously blamed. In this respect it resembles  
the church at Smyrna in the first group of these seven epistles. What  
has mainly to be noticed, however, is that it is not simply, like that  
at Smyrna, a suffering church. It has been engaged in an earnest and hot  
struggle with the world, as the superscription, the commendation, and  
the promises of the epistle combine to testify.  
  
The superscription is, \_These things saith He that is holy, He that is  
true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and none shall  
shut, and that shutteth, and none openeth\_. The figure is taken from  
the Old Testament; and both there and here the context shows us that  
it is neither the key of knowledge, nor the key of discipline, nor the  
key of the treasures of the kingdom that is spoken of, but the key of  
power to open the Lord's house as a sure refuge from all evil, and to  
preserve safe for ever those who are admitted to it. "I will call My  
servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah," says the Almighty by His prophet,  
"and I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy  
girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall  
be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of  
Judah. And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder;  
and he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none  
shall open."[84] Whoever be our adversaries, we know that in the  
hollow of the Lord's hand we are safe.  
  
The commendation of the epistle tells the same tale: \_I know thy works  
(behold, I have set before thee a door opened, which none can shut),  
that thou hast a little power, and didst keep My word, and didst not  
deny My name.\_ The Church had "a little power," and she had shown this  
in the struggle.  
  
So also with the promises: \_Behold, I give of the synagogue of Satan,  
of them which say they are Jews, and they are not, but do lie; behold,  
I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that  
I have loved thee. Because thou didst keep the word of My patience, I  
also will keep thee from the hour of trial, that hour which is to come  
upon the whole inhabited earth, to try them that dwell upon the earth.  
I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy  
crown. He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of  
My God, and he shall no more come forth: and I will write upon him the  
name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem,  
which cometh down out of heaven from My God, and Mine own new name.\_  
How fierce the struggle of Philadelphia had been with the world we  
learn from these words, in which the enemies of the Church--"Jews"  
they call themselves, the people of God, but "they are not"--are  
brought before us like vanquished nations at her feet, as she sits in  
the heavenly places, paying homage to her against whom they had so  
long, but vainly, struggled. It is impossible not to see the  
difference between this church and that at Smyrna. No doubt there had  
been "blasphemy of them which say they are Jews" in the latter case,  
but worse trials were only spoken of as about to come. Here the trials  
have come, and the church has risen triumphantly above them. Therefore  
will the Lord admit her to His heavenly mansions, and will make her a  
pillar in His Father's house, whence she shall come forth no more. He  
Himself "went forth" from His Father that He might be the Captain of  
our salvation and might die on our behalf. He returned to His Father,  
and never again "comes forth" as He came in the days of His flesh.  
Having died once, He dieth no more; and they who have borne His cross  
shall wear, when victors in His cause, His crown of victory.  
  
7. The seventh epistle is to Laodicea, and here there can be no doubt  
that we have the picture of a church in which the power of the world  
carries almost all before it. The church is addressed by Him who  
describes Himself as \_the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the  
Beginning of the creation of God\_, upon which immediately follows a  
charge as to her condition in which there is no redeeming point. Only  
later do we see that there is hope. \_I know thy works, that thou art  
neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So because thou  
art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of My  
mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and  
have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched one,  
and miserable and poor and blind and naked: I counsel thee to buy of  
Me gold refined by fire, that thou mayest become rich; and white  
garments, that thou mayest clothe thyself, and that the shame of thy  
nakedness be not made manifest; and eyesalve to anoint thine eyes,  
that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I reprove and chasten: be  
zealous therefore, and repent.\_ To interpret the boasting of the  
church given in these words as if it referred to spiritual rather than  
material riches is entirely to mistake the meaning. Worldly wealth is  
in the writer's view. The members of the church generally have aimed  
at riches, and have gotten them. Possession of riches has also been  
followed by its usual effects. The seen and the temporal have usurped  
in their minds the place of the unseen and the eternal. Perhaps they  
have even regarded their worldly prosperity as a token of the Divine  
favour, and are soothing themselves with the reflection that they  
have made the best of both worlds, when they have really sacrificed  
everything to one world, and that the lower of the two. The last  
picture of the Church is the saddest of all.  
  
Yet is Laodicea not altogether without hope. \_Behold\_, says He whose  
every word is truth, \_I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear  
My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with  
him, and he with Me\_. Even in Laodicea there are some who, inasmuch as  
they have fought the hardest battle, shall be welcomed to the highest  
reward. \_He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with Me in  
My throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with My Father in His  
throne.\_ Beyond that neither hope nor imagination can rise.  
  
The epistles to the seven churches are over. They present the Church to  
us as she appears on the field of history. They set before us the  
leading characteristics of her condition partly as she was in "Asia" at  
the moment when the Apostle wrote, partly as she shall be throughout all  
time and on the widest, as well as the narrowest, scale. These  
characteristics may be shortly summed up as--in the first group of  
three, love to the Redeemer, yet love liable, and even beginning, to  
grow cold; persecution and trials of many kinds; preservation by the  
secret grace of God and in the hidden life: in the second group of four,  
yielding on the part of the majority to sins associated with unchristian  
doctrine; formalism in religion; weakness in the midst of trial, even  
though not accompanied by faithlessness; and lukewarmness, springing  
from a preference of the things of time to those of eternity. To these  
characteristics, however, have to be added, as more or less  
accompanying them, many of the active graces of the Christian life:  
labour, and patience, and faith, and charity, and works, whatever makes  
the Christian Church a light in the world and the object of her Lord's  
care and watchfulness. In reading the seven epistles, we behold a lively  
picture of the Church of Christ in her graces and in her failings, in  
her strength and in her weakness, in her joys and in her sorrows, in her  
falls under the influence of temptation and in her returns to the path  
of duty. The characteristics thus spoken of are not peculiar to any  
particular age, but may mark her at one time less, at another more, at  
one time individually, at another in combination. Taken as a whole, they  
present her to us in her Divine ideal marred by human blemishes; we are  
prepared to acknowledge the necessity, the wisdom, and the mercy of the  
trials that await her; and we learn to anticipate with gladness her  
final and glorious deliverance.  
  
One brief concluding remark ought to be made. The epistles now  
considered ought to be sufficient in themselves to show that the  
Apocalypse is not a series of visions intended only to illustrate one  
or two ideas which had taken a strong hold of the Apostle's mind, or  
one or two great principles of the Divine government in general. St.  
John starts from the realities around him as much as any writer of the  
New Testament. It is true that he sees in them \_eternal\_ principles at  
work, and that he rises to the thought of ideal good and of ideal  
evil; but he is not on that account less true to fact, less impressed  
by fact. On the contrary, his very depth of insight into the meaning  
of the facts makes him what he is. He who would write a philosophy of  
history is not less, but more, dependent upon the facts of history  
than he to whom a fact is valuable simply in its individual and  
isolated form. It is \_the present\_ therefore that stirs the writer of  
this book, but stirs him the more because he beholds in it principles  
and issues connected with Him who was, and is, and is to come, the  
covenant-keeping God, the Judge of \_men\_, the unchangea

ble I AM.  
  
Hence also the mistake sometimes made of thinking that the purpose of  
unfolding the principles of the Divine government could not be a  
sufficient motive to St. John to write.[85] Every cruelty to the  
saints of God which he witnessed, every cry of oppression which he  
heard, supplied a motive. We may not feel these things now, but the  
iron of them entered into the soul of the disciple whom Jesus loved.  
We need more prophets like him to make it ring in the ears of selfish  
wealth and of ease indifferent to the ills festering around it, "For  
the spoiling of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I  
arise, saith the Lord."[86]  
  
FOOTNOTES:  
  
[24] Chaps. vii. 2; viii. 2; xiv. 6, 8, 9; xv. 1, 6.  
  
[25] Chap. xiv. 15.  
  
[26] Chaps. i. 1; xx. 1; xxii. 6.  
  
[27] Chap. xvi. 5.  
  
[28] Chap. xiv. 18.  
  
[29] Chap. vii. 1.  
  
[30] Chap. ix. 11.  
  
[31] Chap. i. 4.  
  
[32] Chap. ii. 1.  
  
[33] Chap. ii. 8.  
  
[34] Chap. ii. 12.  
  
[35] Chap. ii. 18.  
  
[36] Chap. iii. 1.  
  
[37] Chap. iii. 7.  
  
[38] Chap. iii. 14.  
  
[39] Chaps. ii. 7; xxii. 2, 14.  
  
[40] Chaps. ii. 11; xx. 14.  
  
[41] Chaps. ii. 17; xiv. 1.  
  
[42] Chaps. ii. 26, 28; xx. 4, 5; xxii. 16.  
  
[43] Chaps. iii. 5; vii. 9, 14.  
  
[44] Chaps. iii. 12; xxi. 2, 10.  
  
[45] Chaps. iii. 21; xx. 4. Comp. Trench, \_The Seven Epistles\_, p. 37.  
  
[46] Chap. ii. 1.  
  
[47] Chap. iii. 14.  
  
[48] Comp. Rom. viii. 21, 22; James i. 18.  
  
[49] Chap. i. 19.  
  
[50] Chap. ii. 7, 11, 17.  
  
[51] Chaps. ii. 29; iii. 6, 13, 22.  
  
[52] Chap. ii. 4.  
  
[53] John xv. 2.  
  
[54] Chap. ii. 14, 15.  
  
[55] Comp. Heb. ii. 10.  
  
[56] Chap. iii. 8.  
  
[57] Chap. iii. 11.  
  
[58] Chap. iii. 17.  
  
[59] Chap. ii. 7.  
  
[60] Chap. ii. 11.  
  
[61] Chap. ii. 17.  
  
[62] Chap. ii. 26, 27.  
  
[63] Chap. iii. 5.  
  
[64] Chap. iii. 12.  
  
[65] Chap. iii. 21.  
  
[66] Chap. xviii. 4.  
  
[67] Matt. xxviii. 20.  
  
[68] Ps. xxxi. 20.  
  
[69] John xv. 20.  
  
[70] Chap. i. 17.  
  
[71] 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4.  
  
[72] James ii. 5.  
  
[73] 1 Pet. i. 6.  
  
[74] 2 Cor. xi. 2.  
  
[75] 1 Cor. v. 6.  
  
[76] Chap. x. 1.  
  
[77] 1 Cor. v. 1, 2.  
  
[78] Comp. chap. xviii. 4.  
  
[79] Ps. lv. 12-14.  
  
[80] Isa. xxiv. 23.  
  
[81] Chap. xxii. 16.  
  
[82] Isa. xvii. 6.  
  
[83] Isa. lxv. 8.  
  
[84] Isa. xxii. 21, 22.  
  
[85] Dods, \_Introduction to New Testament\_, p. 244.  
  
[86] Ps. xii. 5.  
  
  
  
  
 CHAPTER III.  
  
 \_ANTICIPATIONS OF THE CHURCH'S VICTORY.\_  
  
 REV. iv., v.  
  
  
We have seen in considering the first chapter of the Apocalypse that  
the book as a whole is to be occupied with the Church's struggle in  
the world; and in the second and third chapters the Church herself has  
been placed before us as she occupies her position upon the field of  
history. But the struggle has not yet begun, nor will it begin until  
we reach the sixth chapter. Chaps. iv. and v. are therefore still to  
be regarded as in a certain measure introductory. They form a  
separate--the third--section of the book; and the first questions that  
meet us in connexion with them are, What is their relation to the main  
purpose of the author? What is their leading conception? and Why are  
they placed where they are?  
  
In answering these questions, we are aided by the strictly parallel  
structure of the fourth Gospel. The Prologue of that book, contained  
in chap. i. 1-18, suggests the object which the writer has in view.  
The next section--chap. i. 19-ii. 11--places before us the Redeemer  
whose glory he is to describe. The struggle of the Son of God with the  
world does not begin till we come to chap. v. Between chap. ii. 12 and  
chap. iv. 54 there is thus a considerable interval, in which we have  
the cleansing of the Temple and the victory of Jesus over the unbelief  
of the Jew Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, and the king's officer of  
Galilee, who was probably a Gentile. In this intervening space the  
leading thought seems to be that of victory, not indeed of victory  
\_in\_ the struggle, but of victory which prepares us \_for\_ it, and  
fills the mind with hope \_before\_ it begins. In like manner the two  
chapters upon which we are about to enter are occupied with songs of  
victory. Catching their spirit, we shall boldly accompany the Church  
into the struggle which follows, and shall be animated by a joyful  
confidence that, whatever her outward fortunes, He that is with her is  
more than they that be with her enemies.[87]  
  
While such is the general conception of the third and fourth chapters  
viewed as one, we have further to ask whether, subordinate to their  
united purpose, there is not a difference between them. Such a  
difference there appears to be; and words of our Lord in the fourth  
Gospel, spoken upon an occasion which had deeply impressed itself upon  
the mind of the Evangelist, may help us to determine what it is. In  
the fourteenth chapter of that Gospel Jesus encourages His Apostles as  
He sends them forth to fight His battle in the world. "Let not," He  
says, "your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in Me."  
The section of the Apocalypse upon which we are about to enter  
embraces a similar thought in both its parts. Chap. iv. conveys to the  
Church the assurance that He who is the ultimate source of all  
existence is on her side; chap. v. that she may depend upon Christ and  
His redeeming work. The two chapters taken together are a cry to the  
Church from her glorified Head, before she enters into the  
tribulation that awaits her, "Let not your heart be troubled: believe  
in God, believe also in Me."  
  
 After these things I saw and, behold, a door opened in heaven, and  
 the first voice which I heard, a voice as of a trumpet speaking with  
 me, one saying, Come up hither, and I will show thee the things  
 which must come to pass hereafter. Straightway I was in the Spirit:  
 and, behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and One sitting upon  
 the throne; and He that sat was to look upon like a jasper stone and  
 a sardius; and there was a rainbow round about the throne, like an  
 emerald to look upon. And round about the throne were  
 four-and-twenty thrones: and upon the thrones I saw four-and-twenty  
 elders sitting, arrayed in white garments, and on their heads crowns  
 of gold. And out of the throne proceed lightnings and voices and  
 thunders. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the  
 throne, which are the seven Spirits of God (iv. 1-5).  
  
The \_first voice\_ here spoken of is the voice of chap. i. 10: "And I  
heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet;" and it is well to  
remember that that voice introduced the vision of a Son of man who,  
while both King and Priest, was King and Priest in judgment. It is  
impossible to doubt that the sound of the same voice is intended to  
indicate the same thing here, and that the King whom we are about to  
behold is One who has "prepared His throne for judgment."[88]  
  
The Seer is introduced to a scene which we first recognise as the  
glorious audience-chamber of a great King. Everything as yet speaks of  
royalty, and of royal majesty, power, and judgment. The \_jasper stone\_  
as we learn from a later passage of this book, in which it is said to  
be "clear as crystal,"[89] was of a bright, sparkling whiteness; and  
it fitly represents the holiness of Him of whom the seraphim in Isaiah  
cry one to another, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts,"[90] and  
who in this very chapter is celebrated by the unresting cherubim with  
the words, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord, God, the Almighty, which  
was and which is and which is to come." The \_sardius\_, again, was of a  
fiery red colour, and can denote nothing but the terror of the  
Almighty's wrath. \_Out of the throne\_ also--not merely out of the  
atmosphere surrounding it, but out of the throne itself--\_proceed  
lightnings and voices and thunders\_, always throughout the Apocalypse  
emblems of judgment; while the use of the word \_burn\_ in other parts  
of the same book, and the fact that what the Seer beheld was not so  
much lamps as torches, leads to the belief that these torches as they  
burned before the throne sent out a blazing and fierce rather than a  
calm and soft light. It is true that the \_rainbow round about the  
throne\_ points to the Divine covenant of grace and promise, and that  
its \_emerald\_ greenness, absorbing, or at least throwing into the  
shade, its other and varied hues, tells with peculiar force of  
something on which the eye loves, and does not fear, to rest. But the  
mercy of God does not extinguish His righteousness and judgment.  
Different as such qualities may seem to be, they are combined in Him  
with whom the Church and the world have to do. In the New Testament  
not less than in the Old the Almighty reveals Himself in the awakening  
terrors of His wrath as well as in the winning gentleness of His love.  
St. Peter speaks of our Lord as not only the chief corner-stone laid  
in Zion, elect, precious, so that he that believeth on Him shall not  
be put to shame, but as a stone of stumbling and rock of offence;[91]  
and when the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews gives us his  
loftiest description of the privileges of the Christian Church, he  
closes it with the words, "Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot  
be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service  
well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe: for our God is a  
consuming fire."[92] So also here. Would we conceive of God aright,  
even after we have been brought into the full enjoyment of all the  
riches of His grace and love, we must think of Him as represented by  
the jasper and the sardius as well as by the emerald.  
  
The \_four-and-twenty elders\_ occupying \_thrones\_ (not seats) around  
the throne are to be regarded as representatives of the glorified  
Church; and the number, twice twelve, seems to be obtained by  
combining the number of the patriarchs of the Old Testament with that  
of the Apostles of the New.  
  
The description of the heavenly scene is now continued:--  
  
 And before the throne, as it were a glassy sea like unto crystal  
 and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, four  
 living creatures full of eyes before and behind. And the first  
 creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and  
 the third creature had a face as of a man, and the fourth creature  
 was like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, having  
 each one of them six wings, are full of eyes round about and  
 within; and they have no rest day and night, saying, Holy, holy,  
 holy, is the Lord, God, the Almighty, which was and which is and  
 which is to come (iv. 6-8).  
  
Up to this point we have been beholding a royal court; in the words  
now quoted the priestly element comes in. The \_glassy sea\_ naturally  
leads the thoughts to the great brazen laver known as the brazen sea  
which stood in the court of Solomon's temple between the altar and  
the sanctuary, and at which the priests cleansed themselves before  
entering upon the discharge of their duties within the precincts of  
God's holy house. The resemblance is not indeed exact; and were it not  
for what follows, there might be little upon which to rest this  
supposition. We know, however, from many examples, that the Seer uses  
the figures of the Old Testament with great freedom; and as the Temple  
source of the \_living creatures\_ next introduced to us cannot be  
mistaken, it becomes the more probable that the brazen sea of the same  
building, whatever be the actual meaning of the figure--a point that  
will meet us afterwards--suggests the "glassy sea."  
  
When we turn to the "living creatures," there can be no doubt whatever  
that we are in the midst of Temple imagery. These are the cherubim, two  
of which, fashioned in gold, were placed above the mercy-seat in the  
holy of holies, so that, inasmuch as that mercy-seat was regarded as  
peculiarly the throne of God, Israel was invited to think of its King as  
"sitting between the cherubim."[93] These figures, however, were not  
confined to that particular spot, nor were they fashioned only in that  
particular way, for the curtain and the veil which formed the sides of  
the Most Holy Place were wrought with cherubim of cunning work,[94] so  
that one entering that sacred spot was surrounded by them. In the midst  
of the cherubim spoken of in these verses we are thus in the midst of  
Temple figures and of priestly thoughts. It is impossible here to trace  
the history of the cherubim throughout the Bible; and we must be content  
with referring to two points connected with them, of importance for the  
interpretation of this book: the representative nature of the figures  
and the aspect under which we are to see them.[95]  
  
As to the first of these, the human element in the cherubim is at once  
intelligible. It can be nothing but man; while the fact that they occupy  
so large a position in the most sacred division of the Tabernacle is  
sufficient to prove that man, so represented, is thought of as redeemed  
and brought to the highest stage of spiritual perfection. The other  
elements referred to certainly do not indicate either new qualities  
added to humanity, or an intensification of those already possessed by  
it, as if we might cherish the prospect of a time when the physical  
qualities of man shall equal in their strength those of the animals  
around him, when he shall possess the might of the lion, the power of  
the ox, and the swiftness of the eagle. They represent rather the  
different departments of nature as these are distributed into the  
animate and inanimate creation. Taking the "living creatures" together  
in all their parts, they are thus an emblem of man, associated on the  
one hand with the material creation, on the other with the various  
tribes of animals by which it is inhabited, but all redeemed,  
transfigured, perfected, delivered from the bondage of corruption, and  
brought into "the liberty of the glory of the children of God."[96] They  
have a still wider and more comprehensive meaning than the "twenty-four  
elders," the latter setting before us only the Church, but the former  
all creation, glorified.  
  
The second point above mentioned--the aspect worn by the living  
creatures--demands also a few remarks, for the view commonly  
entertained upon it seems to be erroneous. Misled by the mention of  
the \_calf\_, which is supposed to be the ox, and not the bull-calf,  
interpreters have allowed the mode in which they understood this  
particular to rule their interpretation of the others. It has been  
regarded as the emblem of endurance and of patient labour rather than  
of power and rage; while, following the same line of thought, the  
\_eagle\_ has been treated as the king of birds soaring in the blue  
vault of heaven rather than as hastening (like the vulture) to his  
prey.[97] The whole conception of the cherubim has thus been modified  
and shaped in the minds of men under a form altogether different from  
that in which it is really presented to us in Scripture. The cherubim  
of the Old Testament and the "living creatures" of the New are  
supposed to represent "majesty and peerless strength," "patient and  
productive industry," and "soaring energy and nimbleness of action."  
In reality they rather represent qualities that strike terror into the  
hearts of men and suggest the idea of an irresistibly destructive  
force. With this view all that is elsewhere said of them corresponds.  
They are not simply spoken of as partakers of the favour of God. They  
are instruments in the execution of His wrath. When our first parents  
were driven from the garden of Eden, they were placed "at the east of  
the garden," along with "a flaming sword which turned every way, to  
keep the way of the tree of life."[98] When we are introduced to them  
in Ezekiel, it is said that "their appearance was like burning coals  
of fire, like the appearance of torches: it went up and down among the  
living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went  
forth lightning. And the living creatures ran and returned as the  
appearance of a flash of lightning."[99] Similar associations are  
connected with them throughout the Apocalypse. The opening of each of  
the first four seals, the four that deal with judgments upon the  
earth, is immediately followed by a voice, "as it were the noise of  
thunder," from one of the four living creatures, saying, Come.[100]  
One of them gives to the seven angels "seven golden bowls full of the  
wrath of God."[101] And after the destruction of Babylon, when her  
smoke is ascending up for ever and ever, and the voice of much people  
in heaven calls for praise to Him who hath avenged the blood of His  
servants at her hand, they "fall down and worship God that sitteth on  
the throne, saying, Amen; Hallelujah."[102] There can be little doubt,  
then, as to the meaning of these four living creatures. They are  
sharers of the Almighty's holiness, and of that holiness in its more  
awful form, as a holiness that cannot look on sin but with abhorrence.  
They are the vicegerents of His kingdom. They are assessors by His  
side. Their aspect is not that of the sweetness associated with the  
word "cherub," but that of sternness, indignant power, and judgment.  
Thus also it is that in the Tabernacle they looked toward the  
mercy-seat.[103] By what they saw there they were restrained from  
executing wrath upon the guilty. That mercy-seat, sprinkled with the  
blood of atonement, told them of pardon and of a new life for the  
sinner. Their sternness was softened; mercy rejoiced over judgment;  
and the storm-wind upon which God flew swiftly, when "He rode upon a  
cherub, and did fly,"[104] sank into a calm.  
  
The Seer has beheld the audience-chamber of the Godhead in itself. He  
has seen also the Divine Being who is there clothed with majesty, and  
those who wait upon Him. He next passes to another thought:--  
  
 And when the living creatures shall give glory and honour and thanks  
 to Him that sitteth on the throne, to Him that liveth for ever and  
 ever, the four-and-twenty elders shall fall down before Him that  
 sitteth on the throne, and shall worship Him that liveth for ever  
 and ever, and shall cast their crowns before the throne, saying,  
 Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the  
 honour and the power: for Thou didst create all things, and because  
 of Thy will they were, and were created (iv. 9-11).  
  
In his beautiful comments upon the Revelation Isaac Williams says,  
"The four living creatures, or the Church of the redeemed, give  
thanksgiving to God for their redemption; and then the twenty-four  
elders fall down and attribute all glory to God alone, inasmuch as  
prophets, Apostles, and all the ministering priesthood, rejoicing in  
the salvation of the elect, attribute it not to their own  
instrumentality, but to God."[105] In thus interpreting the passage,  
however, that commentator can hardly be regarded as correct. It is  
true that the living creatures are the representatives of redeemed  
creation, and the twenty-four elders representatives of the glorified  
Church. But in the song of praise here put into their mouths they have  
not yet advanced to the thought of salvation. That is reserved for the  
next chapter. Here they think of creation, with all its wonders; of  
the heavens which declare God's glory, and the firmament which shows  
forth His handiwork; of sun, and moon, and stars in their manifold and  
resplendent glories; of the mountains and the valleys; of the rivers  
and the fountains of waters; of the rich exuberance of vegetable life,  
which covers the earth with a gorgeous carpet of every hue; and of all  
those animals upon its surface which "run races in their mirth:" and  
for them they praise. To God all creatures owe their origin. In Him  
they live, and move, and have their being. Because of His will they  
\_were\_--let the reading be considered and remembered: "were," not  
"are"--because of His will they were in His idea from eternity; and  
when the appointed moment came, they \_were created\_. Wherefore let  
them praise. We are reminded of the Psalms of the Old Testament,  
though it is ours to put into their words a still deeper and richer  
meaning than

they possessed when first uttered by the Psalmist:--  
  
 Praise ye the Lord.  
 Praise ye the Lord from the heavens:  
 Praise Him in the heights.  
 Praise ye Him, all His angels:  
 Praise ye Him, all His host.  
 Praise ye Him, sun and moon  
 Praise Him, all ye stars of light.  
 Praise Him, ye heavens of heavens,  
 And ye waters that be above the heavens.  
 Let them praise the name of the Lord:  
 For He commanded, and they were created  
 He hath also established them for ever and ever:  
 He hath made a decree which shall not pass away.  
 Praise the Lord from the earth,  
 Ye dragons, and all deeps:  
 Fire, and hail; snow, and vapour;  
 Stormy wind fulfilling His word:  
 Mountains, and all hills;  
 Fruitful trees, and all cedars:  
 Beasts, and all cattle;  
 Creeping things, and flying fowl:  
 Kings of the earth, and all peoples;  
 Princes, and all judges of the earth:  
 Both young men, and maidens;  
 Old men, and children:  
 Let them praise the name of the Lord:  
 For His name alone is exalted;  
 His glory is above the earth and heaven.[106]  
  
Such then in chap. iv. is the call addressed by the Seer to the Church  
before she enters upon her struggle, a call similar to that of Jesus  
to His disciples, "Believe in God."  
  
The fifth chapter continues the same general subject, but with a  
reference to Christ the Redeemer rather than God the Creator:--  
  
 And I saw in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a roll  
 of a book written within and on the back, close sealed with seven  
 seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a great voice,  
 Who is worthy to open the roll, and to loose the seals thereof?  
 And no one in the heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth, was  
 able to open the roll, or to look thereon. And I wept much,  
 because no one was found worthy to open the roll, or to look  
 thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold,  
 the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath  
 overcome to open the roll, and the seven seals thereof (v. 1-5).  
  
We can easily form to ourselves a correct idea of the outward form of  
the symbol resorted to in these words. The same symbol is used by the  
prophet Ezekiel, and in circumstances in some respects precisely  
analogous to those of the Seer. Ezekiel had just beheld his first  
vision of the cherubim. "And when I looked," he says, "behold, an hand  
was put forth unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein; and He  
spread it before me; and it was written within and without."[107] In  
both cases it is not a "book," but a \_roll\_, like the sacred rolls of  
the synagogue, that is presented to the prophet's eye, the difference  
being that in the Apocalypse we read of the roll being \_close sealed  
with seven seals\_. This addition is due to the higher, more sublime,  
and more momentous nature of the mysteries contained in it. That it is  
\_written within and on the back\_, so that there is no space for  
further writing, shows that it contains the whole counsel of God with  
regard to the subject of which it treats. It is the word of Him who is  
the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last; and the seven seals  
are so fastened to the roll that one of them may be broken at a time,  
and no more of the contents disclosed than belonged to that particular  
seal. What also the contents of the roll are we learn from the  
contents of the seals as they are successively disclosed in the  
following chapters. As yet the Seer does not know them. He knows only  
that they are of the deepest interest and importance; and he looks  
anxiously around to see if any one can be found who may break the  
seals and unfold their mysteries. No such person can be discovered  
either \_in heaven\_, \_or on the earth\_, \_or under the earth\_. No one  
will even dare to look upon the roll; and the sorrow of the Seer was  
so deepened by this circumstance that he \_wept much\_.  
  
At that moment one of the elders, the representatives of the glorified  
Church, advanced to cheer him with the tidings that what he so much  
desired shall be accomplished. One who had had a battle to fight and a  
victory to win had \_overcome\_, not only to look upon the roll, but to  
\_open it and to loose the seven seals thereof\_, so as to make its  
contents known. \_This was the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the  
Root of David\_. The description is taken partly from the law and  
partly from the prophets, for is not this "He of whom Moses in the  
law, and the prophets, did write"?[108]; the former in the blessings  
pronounced by the dying patriarch Jacob upon his son Judah: "Judah is  
a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped  
down, he couched as a lion, and as a lioness; who shall rouse him  
up?"[109]; the latter in such words as those of Isaiah, "And there  
shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a Branch out  
of his roots shall bear fruit;"[110] while, in the language alike of  
the prophet and of the Seer, the words set forth the Messiah, not as  
the root out of which David sprang, but as a shoot which, springing  
from him, was to grow up into a strong and stately tree. In Him the  
conquering might of David, the man of war, and of Judah, "chosen to be  
the ruler,"[111] comes forth with all the freshness of a new youth. He  
is "the mystery which hath been hid from all ages and generations, but  
now hath been manifested to the saints."[112] In Him "the darkness is  
passing away, and the true light already shineth."[113] "After two  
days will He revive us: on the third day He will raise us up, and we  
shall live before Him. And let us know, let us follow on to know, the  
Lord: His going forth is sure as the morning; and He shall come unto  
us as the rain, as the latter rain that watereth the earth."[114] Thus  
then was it now. Like Daniel of old, the Seer had wept in order that  
he might understand the vision; and the elder said to him, \_Weep not\_.  
  
The eagerly desired explanation follows:--  
  
 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  
 though it had been slaughtered, having seven horns and seven  
 eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the  
 earth. And He came, and He hath taken it out of the right hand of  
 Him that sat on the throne (v. 6, 7).  
  
A strange and unlooked-for spectacle is presented to the Seer. He had  
been told of a lion; and he beholds a lamb, nay not only a lamb, the  
emblem of patience and of innocence, but, as we learn from the use of  
the word \_slaughtered\_ (not "slain," as in both the Authorised and  
Revised Versions), a lamb for sacrifice, and that had been sacrificed.  
Nor can we doubt for a moment, when we call to mind the Gospel of St.  
John and its many points of analogy with the Apocalypse, what particular  
lamb it was. It was the Paschal Lamb, the Lamb beheld in our Lord by the  
Baptist when, pointing to Jesus as He walked, he said to his disciples,  
"Behold the Lamb of God,"[115] and again beheld by the writer of the  
fourth Gospel on the Cross, when in the fact that the soldiers broke not  
the legs of Jesus, as they broke those of the malefactors hanging on  
either side of Him, he traced the fulfilment of the Scripture, "A bone  
of Him shall not be broken."[116] This therefore was the true Lamb "that  
taketh away the sin of the world," the Lamb that gives us His flesh to  
eat, so that in Him we may have eternal life.[117]  
  
The Lamb has \_seven horns\_, the emblem of perfected strength, and \_seven  
eyes\_, which are explained to be the Spirit of God, sent forth in all  
His penetrating and searching power, so that none even in the very ends  
of the earth can escape His knowledge. Further the Lamb is \_standing as  
though it had been slaughtered\_, and there never has been a moment's  
hesitation as to the interpretation of the figure. The words "as though"  
do not mean that the slaughtering had been only in appearance. It had  
been real. The Saviour, pierced with cruel wounds, "bowed His head" on  
Calvary, "and gave up His spirit."[118] "The first and the last and the  
Living One became dead,"[119] and had been laid in the tomb in the  
garden. But He had risen from that tomb on the third morning; and,  
"behold, He is alive for evermore."[120] He had ascended to the right  
hand of the Majesty on high; and there He "stands," living and acting in  
all the plenitude of endless and incorruptible life.  
  
One thing more has to be noticed: that this Lamb is the central figure  
of the scene before us, \_in the midst of the throne and of the living  
creatures, and of the elders\_. To Him all the works of God, both in  
creation and redemption, turn. To Him the old covenant led; and the  
prophets who were raised up under it searched "what time or what  
manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto,  
when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories  
that should follow them."[121] From Him the new covenant flowed, and  
those who under it are called to the knowledge of the truth recognise  
in Him their "all and in all."[122] The Lamb slaughtered, raised from  
the grave, ascended, being the impersonation of that Divine love which  
is the essence of the Divine nature, is the visible centre of the  
universe. He is "the image of the invisible God, the First-born of  
all creation: for in Him were all things created, in the heavens and  
upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones,  
or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things have been  
created through Him, and unto Him: and He is before all things, and in  
Him all things consist. And He is the Head of the Body, the Church:  
who is the Beginning, the First-born from the dead; that in all things  
He might have the pre-eminence. For it was the good pleasure of the  
Father that in Him should all the fulness dwell; and through Him to  
reconcile all things unto Himself, having made peace through the blood  
of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things upon the earth, or  
things in the heavens."[123]  
  
Such is the Lamb; and He now comes, \_and hath taken the roll out of  
the right hand of Him that sat on the throne\_. Let us note the words  
"hath taken." It is not "took." St. John sees the Lamb not only take  
the roll, but keep it. It is His,--His as the Son, in whom dwelleth  
all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; His by right of the victory He  
has won; His as the First-born of all creation and the Head of the  
Church. It is His to keep, and to unfold, and to execute, "who is over  
all, God blessed for ever. Amen."[124]  
  
Therefore is He worthy of all praise, and to Him all praise is given:--  
  
 And when He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the  
 four-and-twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one  
 a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of  
 the saints. And they sang a new song, saying, Worthy art Thou to  
 take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain,  
 and didst purchase unto God with Thy blood men of every tribe, and  
 tongue, and people, and nation; and madest them to be unto our God  
 a kingdom and priests: and they reign over the earth (v. 8-10).  
  
It is not necessary to dwell upon the figures that are here employed,  
the \_harp\_, as connected with the Temple service, being the natural  
emblem of praise, and the \_bowls full of incense\_ the emblem of prayer.  
But it is of importance to observe the \_universality\_ of the praises and  
the prayers referred to, for as the language used here of these \_men of  
every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation\_, when they are said to  
have been made \_a kingdom and priests unto our God\_, is the same as that  
of chap. i. 6, we seem entitled to conclude that, even from its very  
earliest verses, the Apocalypse has the universal Church in view.  
  
The song sung by this great multitude, including even the  
representatives of nature, now "delivered from the bondage of  
corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God,"[125]  
is wholly different from that of chap. iv. It is a \_new song\_, for it  
is the song of the "new creation;" and its burden, it will be  
observed, is not creation, but redemption by the blood of the Lamb, a  
redemption through which all partaking of it are raised to a higher  
glory and a fairer beauty than that enjoyed and exhibited before sin  
had as yet entered into the world, and when God saw that all that He  
had made was good.  
  
The song was sung, but no sooner was it sung than it awoke a  
responsive strain from multitudes of which we have not yet heard:--  
  
 And I saw, and I heard a voice of many angels round about the  
 throne and the living creatures and the elders: and the number was  
 ten thousands of ten thousands, and thousands of thousands; saying  
 with a great voice, Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to  
 receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honour,  
 and glory, and blessing (v. 11, 12).  
  
These are the angels, who are not within the throne, but \_round about  
the throne and the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders\_.  
Their place is not so near the throne, so near the Lamb. "For not unto  
angels did He subject the inhabited earth to come, whereof we  
speak."[126] He subjected it to man, to Him first of all who, having  
taken upon Him our human nature, and in that nature conquered, was  
"crowned with glory and honour," but then also to the members of His  
Body, who shall in due time be exalted to a similar dignity and shall  
\_reign over the earth\_. Yet angels rejoice with man and with creation  
redeemed and purified. They "desire to look into"[127] these things:  
"There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner  
that repenteth."[128] He who was God manifested in flesh "appeared"  
after His resurrection "to angels;"[129] and, although they have not  
been purchased with the blood of the slaughtered Lamb, their hearts  
are filled with livelier ecstasy and their voices swell out into  
louder praise while the "manifold wisdom of God is made known" to them  
in their heavenly places.[130]  
  
Even this is not all. There is a third stage in the ascending scale, a  
third circle formed for the widening song:--  
  
 And everything which is in the heaven, and on the earth, and under  
 the earth, and on the sea, and all things that are in them, heard  
 I saying, Unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb,  
 be the blessing, and the honour, and the glory, and the dominion,  
 for ever and ever (v. 13).  
  
What a sublime conception have we here before us! The whole universe,  
from its remotest star to the things around us and beneath our feet,  
is one,--one in feeling, in emotion, in expression; one in heart and  
voice. Nothing is said of evil. Nor is it thought of. It is in the  
hands of God, who will work out His sovereign purposes in His own good  
time and way. We have only to listen to the universal harmony, and to  
see that it move us to corresponding praise.  
  
It did so now:--  
  
 And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the elders fell down  
 and worshipped (v. 14).  
  
The redeemed creation is once more singled out for special mention. At  
chap. iv, 8, 10, they began the song; now we return to them that they  
may close it. All creation, man included, cries, \_Amen\_. The glorified  
Church has her heart too full to speak. She can only fall down and  
worship.  
  
The distinction between chap. iv. and chap. v. must now be obvious, even  
while it is allowed that the same general thought is at the bottom of  
both chapters. In the one the Church when about to enter on her struggle  
has the call addressed to her: "Believe in God." In the other that call  
is followed up by the glorified Redeemer: "Believe also in Me."  
  
Having listened to the call, there is no enemy that she need fear, and  
no trial from which she need shrink. She is already more than  
conqueror through Him that loved her. As we enter into the spirit of  
these chapters we cry,--  
  
 "God is our refuge and strength,  
 A very present help in trouble.  
 Therefore will we not fear, though the earth do change,  
 And though the mountains be moved in the heart of the seas;  
 Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled,  
 Though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.  
 There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of  
 God,  
 The holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High.  
 God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved:  
 God shall help her, and that right early.  
 The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved:  
 He uttered His voice, the earth melted.  
 The Lord of hosts is with us;  
 The God of Jacob is our refuge."[131]  
  
  
FOOTNOTES:  
  
[87] Comp. 2 Chron. xxxii. 7, 8.  
  
[88] Ps. ix. 7.  
  
[89] Chap. xxi. 11.  
  
[90] Isa. vi. 3.  
  
[91] 1 Pet. ii. 6, 8.  
  
[92] Heb. xii. 28, 29.  
  
[93] Ps. xcix. 1.  
  
[94] Exod. xxvi. 1.  
  
[95] Comp. \_Bible Educator\_, vol. iii., p. 290, where the writer has  
discussed this subject at some length.  
  
[96] Rom. viii. 21.  
  
[97] Job ix. 26.  
  
[98] Gen. iii. 24.  
  
[99] Ezek. i. 13, 14.  
  
[100] Chap. vi. 1, 3, 5, 7.  
  
[101] Chap. xv. 7.  
  
[102] Chap. xix. 4.  
  
[103] Exod. xxv. 20.  
  
[104] Ps. xviii. 10.  
  
[105] \_The Apocalypse, with Notes and Reflections\_, p. 69.  
  
[106] Ps. cxlviii. 1-3.  
  
[107] Ezek. ii. 9, 10.  
  
[108] John i. 45.  
  
[109] Gen. xlix. 9.  
  
[110] Isa. xi. 1.  
  
[111] 1 Chron. xxviii. 4.  
  
[112] Col. i. 26.  
  
[113] 1 John ii. 8.  
  
[114] Hos. vi. 2, 3.  
  
[115] John i. 36.  
  
[116] John xix. 36.  
  
[117] The point now spoken of has been doubted. A full discussion of  
it by the present writer will be found in \_The Expositor\_ for July and  
August, 1877.  
  
[118] John xix. 30.  
  
[119] Chap. i. 18.  
  
[120] Chap. i. 18.  
  
[121] 1 Pet. i. 11  
  
[122] Col. iii. 11.  
  
[123] Col. i. 15-20.  
  
[124] Rom. ix. 5.  
  
[125] Rom. viii. 21.  
  
[126] Heb. ii. 5.  
  
[127] 1 Pet. i. 12.  
  
[128] Luke xv. 10.  
  
[129] 1 Tim. iii. 16.  
  
[130] Eph. iii. 10.  
  
[131] Ps. xlvi. 1-7.  
  
  
  
  
 CHAPTER IV.  
  
 \_THE SEALED ROLL OPENED.\_  
  
 REV. vi.  
  
  
With the sixth chapter of the Apocalypse the main action of the book  
may be said properly to begin. Three sections of the seven into which  
it is divided have already passed under our notice. The fourth  
section, extending from chap. vi. 1 to chap. xviii. 24, is intended to  
bring before us the struggle of the Church, the judgment of God upon  
her enemies, and her final victory. No detail of historical events in  
which these things are fulfilled need be looked for. We are to be  
directed rather to the sources whence the trials spring, and to the  
principles by which the victory is gained. At this point in the  
unfolding of the visions it is generally thought that there is a  
pause, an interval of quietness however brief, and a hush of  
expectation on the part both of the Seer himself and of all the  
heavenly witnesses of the wondrous drama. But there seems to be no  
foundation for such an impression in the text; and it is more in  
keeping alike with the language of this particular passage and with  
the general probabilities of the case to imagine that the "lightnings  
and voices and thunders," spoken of in chap. iv. 5 as proceeding out  
of the throne, continue to re-echo over the scene, filling the hearts  
of the spectators with that sense of awe which they are naturally  
fitted to awaken. We have to meet the Lord in judgment. We are to  
behold the Lamb as "the Lion of the tribe of Judah;" and when He so  
appears, "the mountains flow down at His presence."[132]  
  
The Lamb then, who had, in the previous chapter, taken the book out of  
the hand of Him that sat upon the throne, is now to open it, part by  
part, seal by seal:--  
  
 And I saw wh

en the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard  
 one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of  
 thunder, Come (vi. 1).  
  
Particular attention ought to be paid to the fact that the true  
reading of the last clause of this verse is not, as in the Authorised  
Version, "Come and see," but simply, as in the Revised Version,  
\_Come\_. The call is not addressed to the Seer, but to the Lord  
Himself; and it is uttered by one of the four living creatures spoken  
of in chap. iv. 6, who are "in the midst of the throne and round about  
the throne," and who in ver. 8 of the same chapter are the first to  
raise the song from which they never rest, saying, "Holy, holy, holy,  
is the Lord, God, the Almighty, which was and which is and which is to  
come." The word \_Come\_ therefore embodies the longing of redeemed  
creation that the Lord, for the completion of whose work it waits,  
will take to Him His great power and reign. Not so much for the  
perfecting of its own happiness, or for deliverance from the various  
troubles by which it is as yet beset, and not so much for the  
manifestation of its Lord in His abounding mercy to His own, does the  
creation delivered from the bondage of corruption wait, as for the  
moment when Christ shall appear in awful majesty, King of kings and  
Lord of lords, when He shall banish for ever from the earth the sin by  
which it is polluted, and when He shall establish, from the rising of  
the sun to the going down of the same, His glorious kingdom of  
righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.  
  
This prospect is inseparably associated with the Second Coming of Him  
who is now concealed from our view; and therefore the cry of the whole  
waiting creation, whether animate or inanimate, to its Lord is \_Come\_.  
The cry, too, and that not only in the case of the first living  
creature, but (according to a rule of interpretation of which in this  
book we shall often have to make use) in the case of the three that  
follow, is uttered \_with a voice of thunder\_; and thunder is always an  
accompaniment and symbol of the Divine judgments.  
  
No sooner is the cry heard than it is answered:--  
  
 And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat thereon had a  
 bow; and there was given unto him a crown: and he came forth  
 conquering, and to conquer (vi. 2).  
  
Few figures of the Apocalypse have occasioned more trouble to  
interpreters than that contained in these words. On the one hand, the  
particulars seem unmistakeably to point to the Lord Himself; but, on the  
other hand, if the first rider be the glorified Redeemer, it is  
difficult to establish that harmonious parallelism with the following  
riders which appears to be required by the well-ordered arrangement of  
the visions of this book. Yet it is clearly impossible to regard the  
first rider as merely a symbol of war, for the second rider would then  
convey the same lesson as the first; nor is there anything in the text  
to establish a distinction, frequently resorted to, by which the first  
rider is thought to denote foreign, and the second civil, war. Every  
attempt also to separate the white horse of this vision from that of the  
vision at chap. xix. 11 fails, and must fail. Probably it is enough to  
say that not one of the four riders is a person. Each is rather a cause,  
a manifestation of certain truths connected with the kingdom of Christ  
when that kingdom is seen to be, in its own nature, the judgment of the  
world. Even war, famine, and death and Hades, which follow, are not  
literally these things. They are simply used, as scourges of mankind, to  
give general expression to the judgments of God. Thus also under the  
first rider the cause rather than the person of Christ is introduced to  
us, in the earliest stage of its victorious progress, and with the  
promise of its future triumph. The various points of the description  
hardly need to be explained. The colour of the horse is \_white\_, for  
throughout these visions that colour is always the symbol of heavenly  
purity. The rider has a \_crown given\_ him, a crown of royalty. He has in  
his hand a \_bow\_, the instrument of war by which he scatters his enemies  
like stubble.[133] Finally, he \_comes forth conquering and to conquer\_,  
for his victorious march knows no interruption, and at last leaves no  
foe unvanquished. In the first rider we have thus the cause of Christ in  
its essence, as that cause of light which, having already drawn to it  
the sons of light, has become darkness to the sons of darkness. By the  
opening of the first Seal we learn that this cause is in the world, that  
this kingdom is in the midst of us, and that they who oppose it shall be  
overwhelmed with defeat.  
  
The interpretation now given of the first rider as one who rides forth  
to judgment on a sinful world is confirmed by what is said of the three  
that follow him. In them too we have judgment, and judgment only, while  
the three judgments spoken of--war, famine, and death--are precisely  
those with which the prophets in the Old Testament and the Saviour  
Himself in the New have familiarised our thoughts.[134] They are not to  
be literally understood. Like all else in the visions of St. John, they  
are used symbolically; and each of them expresses in a general form the  
calamities and woes, the misfortunes and sorrows, brought by sinful men  
upon themselves through rejection of their rightful King.  
  
The second Seal is now broken, and the second rider follows:--  
  
 And when He opened the second seal, I heard the second living  
 creature saying, Come. And another horse came forth, a red horse:  
 and to him that sat thereon it was given to take peace from the  
 earth, and that they should slaughter one another: and there was  
 given unto him a great sword (vi. 3, 4).  
  
The second horse is \_red\_, the colour of blood, for it is the horse of  
war: and slaughter follows it as its rider passes over \_the earth\_;  
that is, not over the earth in general, but over the ungodly. Two  
things in this vision are particularly worthy of notice. In the first  
place, the war spoken of is not between the righteous and the wicked,  
but among the wicked alone. The wicked \_slaughter one another\_. All  
persons engaged in these internecine conflicts have cast aside the  
offers of the Prince of peace; and, at enmity with Him who is the only  
true foundation of human brotherhood, they are also at enmity among  
themselves. Of the righteous nothing is yet said. We are left to  
infer that they are safe in their dwellings, in peaceable habitations,  
and in quiet resting-places.[135] By-and-by we shall learn that they  
are not only safe, but surrounded with joy and plenty. In the second  
place, the original word translated "slay" both in the Authorised and  
Revised Versions deserves attention. It is a sacrificial term, the  
same as that found in chap. v. 6, where we read of the "slaughtered  
Lamb;" and here therefore, as there, it ought to be rendered, not  
"slay," but "slaughter." The instant we so translate, the whole  
picture rises before our view in a light entirely different from that  
in which we commonly regard it. What judgment, nay what irony of  
judgment, is there in the ways of God when He visits sinners with the  
terrors of His wrath! The very fate which men shrink from accepting in  
the form of a blessing overtakes them in the form of a curse. They  
think to save their life, and they lose it. They seek to avoid that  
sacrifice of themselves which, made in Christ, lies at the root of the  
true accomplishment of human destiny; and they are constrained to  
substitute for it a sacrifice of an altogether different kind: they  
sacrifice, they slaughter, one another.  
  
The third Seal is now broken, and the third rider follows:--  
  
 And when He opened the third seal, I heard the third living  
 creature saying, Come. And I saw, and behold a black horse; and he  
 that sat thereon had a balance in his hand. And I heard as it were  
 a voice in the midst of the four living creatures, saying, A  
 measure of wheat for a penny (or a silver penny), and three  
 measures of barley for a penny; and the oil and the wine hurt thou  
 not (vi. 5, 6).  
  
  
The third living creature cries as the two before it had done; and a  
third horse comes forth, the colour of which is \_black\_, the colour of  
gloom and mourning and lamentation. Nor can there be any doubt that this  
condition of things is produced by scarcity, for the figure of the  
balance and of measuring bread by weight is on different occasions  
employed in the Old Testament to express the idea of famine. Thus among  
the threatenings denounced upon Israel should it prove faithless to  
God's covenant we read, "And when I have broken the staff of your bread,  
ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver you  
your bread again by weight: and ye shall eat, and not be  
satisfied."[136] And so also when Ezekiel would describe the miseries of  
the coming siege of Jerusalem he exclaims, "Moreover He said unto me,  
Son of man, behold, I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem: and  
they shall eat bread by weight, and with care; and they shall drink  
water by measure, and with astonishment: that they may want bread and  
water, and be astonied one with another, and consume away for their  
iniquity."[137] To give out corn by weight instead of measure was thus  
an emblem of scarcity. The particulars of the scarcity here described  
are obscured to the English reader by the unfortunate translation, both  
in this passage and elsewhere, and in the Revised as well as the  
Authorised Version, of the Greek \_denarius\_ by the English \_penny\_. That  
coin was of the value of fully eightpence of our money, and was the  
recognised payment of a labourer's full day's work.[138] In ordinary  
circumstances it was sufficient to purchase eight of the small  
"measures" now referred to, so that when it could buy one "measure"  
only, the quantity needed by a single man for his own daily food, it is  
implied that wheat had risen eight times in price, and that all that  
could be purchased by means of a whole day's toil would suffice for no  
more than one individual's sustenance, leaving nothing for his other  
wants and the wants of his family. No doubt \_three measures of barley\_  
could be purchased for the same sum, but barley was a coarser grain, and  
to be dependent upon it was in itself a proof that there was famine in  
the land. Again, as in the previous judgment, the words of the figure  
are not to be literally understood. What we have before us is not famine  
in its strict sense, but the judgment of God under the form of famine;  
and this second judgment is climactic to the first. Men say to  
themselves that they will live at peace with one another, and sow, and  
reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof. But in doing this  
they are mastered by the power of selfishness; the too eager pursuit of  
earthly interests defeats its end; and, under the influence of deeper  
and more mysterious laws than the mere political economist can discover,  
fields that might have been covered with golden harvests lie desolate  
and bare.  
  
Nothing has yet been said of the last clause of this judgment: \_The  
oil and the wine hurt thou not.\_ The words are generally regarded as a  
limitation of the severity of the famine previously described, and as  
a promise that even in judging God will not execute all His wrath. The  
interpretation can hardly be accepted. Not only does it weaken the  
force of the threatening, but the meaning thus given to the figure is  
entirely out of place. Oil and wine were for the mansions of the rich  
not for the habitations of the poor, for the feast and not for the  
supply of the common wants of life. Nor would a sufferer from famine  
have found in them a substitute for bread. The meaning of the words  
therefore must be looked for in a wholly different direction. "Thou  
preparest a table before me," says the Psalmist, "in the presence of  
mine enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth  
over."[139] This is the table the supply of which is now alluded to.  
It is prepared for the righteous in the midst of the struggles of the  
world, and in the presence of their enemies. Oil is there in abundance  
to anoint the heads of the happy guests, and their cups are so filled  
with plenty that they run over. In the words under consideration,  
accordingly, we have no limitation of the effects of famine. The  
"wine" and the "oil" alluded to express not so much what is simply  
required for life as the plenty and the joy of life; and, thus  
interpreted, they are a figure of the care with which God watches over  
His own people and supplies all their wants. While His judgments are  
abroad in the earth they are protected in the hollow of His hand. He  
has taken them into His banqueting house, and His banner over them is  
love. The world may be hungry, but they are fed. As the children of  
Israel had light in their dwellings while the land of Egypt lay in  
darkness, so while the world famishes the followers of Jesus have all  
and more than all that they require. They have "life, and that  
abundantly."[140] Thus we learn the condition of the children of God  
during the trials spoken of in these visions. Under the second Seal we  
could only infer from the general analogy of this book that they were  
safe. Now we know that they are not only safe, but that they are  
enriched with every blessing. They have oil that makes the face of man  
to shine, and bread that strengtheneth his heart.[141]  
  
The fourth Seal is now broken, and the fourth rider follows:--  
  
 And when He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the  
 fourth living creature saying, Come. And I saw, and behold a pale  
 horse: and he that sat upon him, his name was Death; and Hades  
 followed with him. And there was given unto them authority over  
 the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with famine,  
 and with death, and by the wild beasts of the earth (vi. 7, 8).  
  
The colour of the fourth horse is \_pale\_; it has the livid colour of a  
corpse, corresponding to its rider, whose name, Death, is in this case  
given. \_Hades followed with him\_, not after him, thus showing that a  
gloomy and dark region beyond the grave is his inseparable attendant,  
and that it too is an instrument of God's wrath. In chap. i. 18 these  
two dire companions had also been associated with one another; and it  
is important to notice the combination, as the fact will afterwards  
throw light upon one of the most difficult visions of the book.  
"Death" is not neutral death, that separation between soul and body  
which awaits every individual of the human family until the Saviour  
comes. It is death in the deeper meaning which it so often bears in  
Scripture, and especially in the writings of St. John,--death as  
judgment. In like manner Hades is not the neutral grave where the rich  
and the poor meet together, where the wicked cease from troubling, and  
where the weary are at rest. It is the region occupied by those who  
have not found life in Christ; and, not less than death, it is  
judgment. "Death" and "Hades" then are the culminating judgments of  
God upon \_the earth\_, that is, upon the wicked; and they execute their  
mission in a fourfold manner: by \_the sword, and famine, and death,  
and the wild beasts of the earth\_. The world, the symbolical number of  
which is four, instead of blessing such as submit themselves to its  
sway, turns round upon them with all the powers at its command and  
kills them. The wicked "are sunk down in the pit that they made: in  
the net which they hid is their own foot taken."[142]  
  
It is not easy to say why authority is given death and Hades over no  
more than \_the fourth part\_ of the earth, when we might rather have  
expected that their dominion would be extended over the whole. The  
question may be asked whether it is possible so to understand the Seer  
as to connect a "fourth part" of the earth, not with all the  
instruments together, but with each separate instrument of judgment  
afterwards named--one fourth to be killed with the sword, a second  
with famine, a third with death, and a fourth by wild beasts. Should  
such an idea be regarded as untenable, the probability is that a  
fourth part is mentioned in order to make room for the climactic rise  
to a "third part" afterwards met under the trumpet judgments.  
  
The end of the first four Seals has now been reached, and at this point  
there is an obvious break in the hitherto harmonious progress of the  
visions. No fifth rider appears when the fifth Seal is broken, and we  
pass from the material into the spiritual, from the visible into the  
invisible, world. That the transition is not accidental, but  
deliberately made, appears from this, that the very same principle of  
division marks the series of the trumpets at chap. ix. 1, and of the  
bowls at chap. xvi. 10. We have thus the number seven divided into its  
two parts four and three, while in chaps. ii. and iii. we had it divided  
into three and four. The difference is easily accounted for, three being  
the number of God, or the Divine, and therefore taking precedence when  
we are concerned with the existence of the Church, four being the number  
of the world, and therefore coming first when judgment on the world is  
described. It is of more consequence, however, to note the fact than to  
explain it, for it helps in no small degree to illustrate that  
artificial structure of the Apocalypse which is so completely at  
variance with the supposition that it describes in its successive  
paragraphs the successive historical events of the Christian age.  
  
Passing then into a different region of thought, the fifth Seal is now  
broken:--  
  
 And when He opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the  
 souls of them that had been slaughtered for the word of God, and  
 for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a great  
 voice, saying, How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost Thou  
 not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?  
 And there was given them to each one a white robe; and it was said  
 unto them, that they should rest yet for a little time, until  
 their fellow-servants also and their brethren, which should be  
 killed even as they were, should be fulfilled (vi. 9-11).  
  
The vision contained in these words is unquestionably a crucial one  
for the interpretation of the Apocalypse, and it will be necessary to  
dwell upon it for a little. The minor details may be easily disposed  
of. By the consent of all commentators of note, the \_altar\_ referred  
to is the brazen altar of sacrifice, which stood in the outer court  
both of the Tabernacle and the Temple; the \_souls\_, or lives, seen  
under it are probably seen under the form of blood, for the blood was  
the life: and the law of Moses commanded that when animals were  
sacrificed the blood should be poured out "at the bottom of the altar  
of burnt-offering, which is before the tabernacle of the  
congregation;"[143] while the \_little time\_ mentioned in ver. 11 can  
mean nothing else than the interval between the moment when the souls  
were spoken to and that when the killing of their brethren should be  
brought to a close.  
  
The main question to be answered is, Whom do these "souls" represent?  
Are they Christian martyrs, suffering perhaps at the hands of the Jews  
before the fall of Jerusalem, perhaps at the hands of the world to the  
end of time? Or are they the martyrs of the Old Testament  
dispensation, Jewish martyrs, who had lived and died in faith? Both  
suppositions have been entertained, though the former has been, and  
still is, that almost universally adopted. Yet there can be little  
doubt that the latter is correct, and that several important  
particulars of the passage demand its acceptance.  
  
1. Let us observe how these martyrs are designated. They had been  
slain \_for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held\_.  
But that is not the full expression of \_Christian\_ testimony. As we  
read in many other passages of the book before us, Christians have  
"the testimony \_of Jesus\_

."[144] The addition needed to bring out the  
Christian character of the testimony referred to is wanting here. No  
doubt the saints of old looked forward to the coming of the Christ;  
but the testimony "of Jesus" is the testimony pertaining to Him as a  
Saviour come, in all the glory of His person and in all the  
completeness of His work. It is a testimony embracing a full knowledge  
of the Messiah, and the inference is natural and legitimate that it is  
not ascribed to the souls under the altar, because they neither had  
nor could have possessed it.  
  
2. The cry of these "souls" is worthy of notice, \_How long, O Master,  
the holy and the true\_, where the word "Master," applied also in Acts  
iv. 24 and Jude 4[145] to God as distinguished from Christ, corresponds  
better to the spirit of the Old than of the New Testament dispensation.  
  
3. The time at which the martyrs had been killed belongs not to the  
present or the future, but to the past. Like all the other Seals, the  
fifth is opened at the very beginning of the Christian era; and no  
sooner is it opened than the souls are seen. It is true that the Seer  
might be supposed to transport himself forward into the future, and,  
at some point of Christian history more or less distant, to console  
Christian martyrs who had already fallen with the assurance that they  
had only to wait \_a little time\_, until such as were to be their later  
companions in martyrdom should have shared their fate. But such a  
supposition is inconsistent with the fact that St. John in the  
Apocalypse always thinks of the Christian age as one hardly capable of  
being divided; while, as we shall immediately see more clearly, it  
would make it impossible to explain the consolation afforded by the  
bestowal of the \_white robe\_.  
  
4. The altar under which the blood is seen may help to confirm this  
conclusion, for that blood is not preserved in the inner sanctuary, in  
that "heaven" which is the ideal home of all the disciples of Jesus:  
it lies beneath the altar of the outer court.  
  
5. The main argument, however, in favour of the view now contended  
for, is to be found in the act by which these souls were comforted:  
\_And there was given them to each one a white robe.\_ The white robe,  
then, they had not obtained before; and yet that robe belongs during  
his life on earth to every follower of Christ. Nothing is more  
frequently spoken of in these visions than the "white robe" of the  
redeemed, and it is obviously theirs from the first moment when they  
are united to their Lord. It is the robe of the priesthood, and at  
their very entrance upon true spiritual life they are priests in Him.  
It is the robe with which the faithful remnant in Sardis had been  
arrayed before they are introduced to us, for they had not "defiled"  
it; and the emphasis in the promise there given, "They shall walk with  
Me in white," appears to lie upon its first rather than its second  
clause.[146] Again, the promise to every one in that church that  
"overcometh" is that he "shall be arrayed in white garments;"[147] and  
it is beyond dispute that the promises of the seven epistles belong to  
the victory of faith gained in this world, not less than to the  
perfected reward of victory in the world to come. In like manner the  
Laodicean church is exhorted to buy of her Lord "white garments" that  
she may be clothed, as well as "gold" that she may be enriched, and  
"eyesalve" that she may see[148]; and, as the two latter purchases  
refer to her present state, so also must the former. When, too, the  
Lord is united in marriage to His Church, it is said that "it was  
given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright  
and pure;" and that fine linen is immediately explained to be "the  
righteous acts of the saints."[149]  
  
Putting all these passages together, we are distinctly taught that in  
the language of the Apocalypse the "white robe" denotes that perfect  
righteousness of Christ, both external and internal, which is bestowed  
upon the believer from the moment when he is by faith made one with  
Jesus. It is that more perfect justification of which St. Paul spoke at  
Antioch in Pisidia when he said to the Jews, "By Him every one that  
believeth is justified from all things, from which ye could not be  
justified by the law of Moses."[150] It had been longed for by the  
saints of the Old Testament, but had never been fully bestowed upon them  
until Jesus came. David had prayed for it: "Purge me with hyssop, and I  
shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow;"[151] Isaiah  
had anticipated it when he looked forward to the acceptable year of the  
Lord: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my  
God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath  
covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh  
himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her  
jewels;"[152] and Ezekiel had celebrated it as the chief blessing of  
Gospel times: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall  
be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I  
cleanse you.... And ye shall be My people, and I will be your God. I  
will also save you from all your uncleannesses."[153] But while thus  
prayed for, anticipated, and greeted from afar, the fulness of blessing  
belonging to the New Testament had not been actually received under the  
Old. "He that is but little in the kingdom of heaven is greater than  
John."[154] As we are taught in the Epistle to the Hebrews, even Abel,  
Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and all those heroes of faith  
who had subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises,  
stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the  
edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, waxed mighty in war,  
turned to flight armies of aliens--even "these all, having had witness  
borne to them through their faith, \_received not the promise\_: God  
having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they  
should not be made perfect."[155] At death they were not made perfect.  
They passed rather into a holy rest where they waited until, like  
Abraham, who had "rejoiced that he should see Christ's day," they "saw  
it and were glad."[156] Then the "white robe" was given them. They were  
raised to the level of that Church which, now that Jesus had come,  
rejoiced in Him with "a joy unspeakable and glorified."[157]  
  
These considerations appear sufficient to decide the point. The souls  
under the altar of the fifth Seal are the saints, not of Christianity,  
but of Judaism. It is true that all of them had not been literally  
"slaughtered." But it is a peculiarity of this book, of which further  
proof will be afforded as we proceed, that it regards all true  
followers of Christ as martyrs. Christ was Himself a Martyr; His  
disciples "follow" Him: they are martyrs. Christ's Church is a martyr  
Church. She dies in her Master's service, and for the world's good.  
  
One point more ought to be noticed before we leave this Seal. The  
language of these souls under the altar is apt to offend when they  
apparently cry for vengeance upon their murderers: \_How long dost Thou  
not avenge?\_ Yet it is enough to say that so to interpret their cry is  
to do injustice to the whole spirit of this book Strictly speaking, in  
fact, they do not themselves cry. It is their blood that cries; it is  
the wrong done to them that demands reparation. In so far as they may  
be supposed to cry, they have in view, not their enemies as persons,  
but the evil that is in them, and that manifests itself through them.  
At first it may seem difficult to draw the distinction; but if we  
pause over the matter for a little, the difficulty will disappear.  
Never do we pity the sinner more, or feel for him with a keener  
sympathy, than when we are most indignant at sin and most earnest in  
prayer and effort for its destruction. The more anxious we are for the  
latter, the more must we compassionate the man who is enveloped in  
sin's fatal toils. When we long therefore for the hour at which sin  
shall be overtaken by the just judgment of God, we long only for the  
establishment of that righteous and holy kingdom which is inseparably  
bound up with the glory of God and the happiness of the world.  
  
For this kingdom then the saints of the Old Testament, together with  
all their "brethren" under the New Testament, who like them are  
faithful unto death, now wait; and the opening of the sixth Seal tells  
us that it is at hand:--  
  
 And I saw 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 the heaven fell unto  
 the earth, as a fig tree casteth her unripe figs, when she is  
 shaken of a great wind. And the heaven was removed as a scroll  
 when it is rolled up; and every mountain and island were moved  
 out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the princes,  
 and the chief captains, and the rich, and the strong, and every  
 bondman and free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks  
 of the mountains; and they say to the mountains and to the 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 their  
 wrath is come; and who is able to stand? (vi. 12-17).  
  
The description is marked by almost unparalleled magnificence and  
sublimity, and any attempt to dwell upon details could only injure the  
general effect. The real question to be answered is, To what does it  
apply? Is it a picture of the destruction of Jerusalem or of the final  
Judgment? Or may it even represent every great calamity by which a  
sinful world is overtaken? In each of these senses, and in each of  
them with a certain degree of truth, has the passage been understood.  
Each is a part of the great thought which it embraces. The error of  
interpreters has consisted in confining the whole, or even the  
primary, sense to any one of them. The true reference of the passage  
appears to be to the Christian dispensation, especially on its side of  
judgment. That dispensation had often been spoken of by the prophets  
in a precisely similar way; and the whole description of these verses,  
alive with the rich glow of the Eastern imagination, is taken partly  
from their language, and partly from the language of our Lord in the  
more prophetic and impassioned moments of His life.  
  
Thus it was that Joel had announced the purpose of God: "And I will  
show wonders in the heavens and the earth, blood, and fire, and  
pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon  
into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come,"  
and again, "The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars  
shall withdraw their shining;"[158] while, apart altogether from the  
immediately preceding and following words, which prove the  
interpretation above given to be correct, this announcement of Joel  
was declared by St. Peter on the day of Pentecost to apply to the  
\_introduction\_ of that kingdom of Christ which, in the gift of  
tongues, was at that moment exhibited in power.[159] In like manner we  
read in the prophet Haggai, "For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet  
once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the  
earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all  
nations."[160] While, again, without our needing to dwell on the  
connexion in which the words occur, we find the writer of the Epistle  
to the Hebrews applying the prophecy to the circumstances of those to  
whom he wrote at a time when they had heard the voice that speaketh  
from heaven, and had received the kingdom that cannot be moved.[161]  
The prophet Malachi also, whose words have been interpreted for us by  
our Lord Himself, describes the day of Him whom the Baptist was to  
precede and to introduce as the day that "burneth as a furnace," as  
"the great and terrible day of the Lord."[162] This aspect, too, of  
any great era in the history of a land or of a people had always been  
presented by the voice of prophecy in language from which the words  
before us are obviously taken. Thus it was that when Isaiah described  
the coming of a time at which the mountain of the Lord's house shall  
be established in the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above  
the hills, and all nations shall flow into it, he mentions, among its  
other characteristics, "And they shall go into the holes of the  
rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for  
the glory of His majesty, when He ariseth to shake terribly the  
earth."[163] When the same prophet details the burden of Babylon which  
he saw, he exclaims, "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both  
with wrath and fierce anger to make the land a desolation, and to  
destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the  
constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be  
darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to  
shine;"[164] and again, when he widens his view from Babylon to a  
guilty world, "For the Lord hath indignation against all the nations,  
and fury against all their hosts.... And all the host of heaven shall  
be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll:  
and all their host shall fade away, as the leaf falleth from off the  
vine, and as a fading fig from the fig tree."[165] Many other passages  
of a similar kind might be quoted from the Old Testament; but, without  
quoting further from that source, it may be enough to call to mind  
that when our Lord delivered His discourse upon the last things He  
adopted a precisely similar strain: "\_Immediately\_ after the  
tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon  
shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and  
the powers of the heavens shall be shaken."[166]  
  
Highly coloured, therefore, as the language used under the sixth Seal  
may appear to us, to the Jew, animated by the spirit of the Old  
Testament, it was simply that in which he had been accustomed to express  
his expectation of any new dispensation of the Almighty, of any striking  
crisis in the history of the world. Whenever he thought of the Judge of  
all the earth as manifesting Himself in a greater than ordinary degree,  
and as manifesting Himself in that truth and righteousness which was the  
glorious distinction of His character, he took advantage of such figures  
as we have now before us. To the fall of Jerusalem therefore, to every  
great crisis in human history, and to the close of all, they may be  
fittingly applied. In the eloquent language of Dr. Vaughan, "These words  
are wonderful in all senses, not least in this sense: that they are  
manifold in their accomplishment. Wherever there is a little flock in a  
waste wilderness; wherever there is a Church in a world; wherever there  
is a power of unbelief, ungodliness, and violence, throwing itself upon  
Christ's faith and Christ's people and seeking to overbear, and to  
demolish, and to destroy; whether that power be the power of Jewish  
bigotry and fanaticism, as in the days of the first disciples; or of  
pagan Rome, with its idolatries and its cruelties, as in the days of St.  
John and of the Revelation; or of papal Rome, with its lying wonders and  
its antichristian assumptions, in ages later still; or of open and  
rampant atheism, as in the days of the first French Revolution; or of a  
subtler and more insidious infidelity, like that which is threatening  
now to deceive, if it were possible, the very elect; wherever and  
whatever this power may be--and it has had a thousand forms, and may be  
destined yet to assume a thousand more--then, in each successive  
century, the words of Christ to His first disciples adapt themselves  
afresh to the circumstances of His struggling servants; warn them of  
danger, exhort them to patience, arouse them to hope, assure them of  
victory; tell of a near end for the individual and for the generation;  
tell also of a far end, not for ever to be postponed, for time itself  
and for the world; predict a destruction which shall befall each enemy  
of the truth, and predict a destruction which shall befall the enemy  
himself whom each in turn has represented and served; explain the  
meaning of tribulation, show whence it comes, and point to its  
swallowing up in glory; reveal the moving hand above, and disclose, from  
behind the cloud which conceals it, the clear definite purpose and the  
unchanging loving will. Thus understood, each separate downfall of evil  
becomes a prophecy of the next and of the last; and the partial  
fulfilment of our Lord's words in the destruction of Jerusalem, or of  
St. John's words in the downfall of idolatry and the dismemberment of  
Rome, becomes itself in turn a new warrant for the Church's expectation  
of the Second Advent and of the day of judgment."[167]  
  
While, however, the truth of these words may be allowed, it is still  
necessary to urge that the primary application of the language of the  
sixth Seal is to no one of such events in particular, but to something  
which includes them all. In other words, it applies to the Christian  
dispensation, viewed in its beginning, its progress, and its end,  
viewed in all those issues which it produces in the world, but  
especially on the side of judgment.  
  
Nor ought such dark and terrible figures to startle us, as if they  
could not be suitably applied to a dispensation of mercy, of grace  
that we cannot fathom, of love that passeth knowledge. The Christian  
dispensation is not effeminacy. If it tells of abounding compassion  
for the sinner, it tells also of fire, and hail, and vapour of smoke  
for the sin. If it speaks at one time in a gentle voice, it speaks at  
another in a voice of thunder; and, when the latter is rightly  
listened to, the air is cleared as by the whirlwind.  
  
Although, therefore, the language of the prophets and of this passage  
may at first sight appear to be marked by far too great a measure both  
of strength and of severity to make it applicable to the Gospel age, it  
is in reality neither too strong nor too severe. It is at variance only  
with the verdict of that superficial glance which is satisfied with  
looking at phenomena in their outward and temporary aspect, and which  
declines to penetrate into the heart of things. So long as man is  
content with such a spirit, he is naturally enough unstirred by any  
powerful emotion; and he can only say that words of prophetic fire are  
words of exaggeration and of false enthusiasm. But no sooner does he  
catch that spirit of the Bible which brings him into contact with  
eternal verities than his tone changes. He can no longer rest upon the  
surface. He can no longer dismiss the thought of mighty issues at stake  
around him with the reflection that "all the world's a stage, and all  
the men and women on it only players." When from the shore he looks out  
upon the mass of waters stretching before him, he thinks not merely of  
the light waves rippling at his feet and losing themselves in the sand,  
but of the unfathomed depths of the ocean from which they come, and of  
those mysterious movements of it which they indicate. He sees sights, he  
hears sounds, which the common eye does not see, and the common ear does  
not hear. The slightest motion of the soil speaks to him of earthquakes;  
the handful of snow loosened from the mountain-side, of avalanches; the  
simplest utterance of awe, of a cry that the mountains and the hills  
are falling. The great does not become to him little; but the little  
becomes great. There is thus no exaggeration in the strength or even in  
the severity of prophetic figures. The prophet has passed from the world  
of shadows, flitting past him and disappearing, into the world of  
realities, Divine, unchangeable, and everlasting.  
  
FOOTNOTES:  
  
[132] Isa. lxiv. 1.  
  
[133] Isa. xli. 2.  
  
[134] Ezek. vi. 11; Matt. xxiv. 6-8.  
  
[135] Isa. xxxii. 18.  
  
[136] Lev. xxvi. 26.  
  
[137] Ezek. iv. 16, 17.  
  
[138] Comp. Matt. xx. 2.  
  
[139] Ps. xxiii. 5.  
  
[140]

John x. 10.  
  
[141] Ps. civ. 15.  
  
[142] Ps. ix. 15.  
  
[143] Lev. iv. 7.  
  
[144] Comp. chaps. i. 2, 9; xi. 7; xii. 11, 17; xix. 10.  
  
[145] Margin of Revised Version.  
  
[146] Chap. iii. 4.  
  
[147] Chap. iii. 5.  
  
[148] Chap. iii. 18.  
  
[149] Chap. xix. 8.  
  
[150] Acts xiii. 39.  
  
[151] Ps. li. 7.  
  
[152] Isa. lxi. 10.  
  
[153] Ezek. xxxvi. 25-29.  
  
[154] Matt. xi. 11.  
  
[155] Heb. xi. 39, 40.  
  
[156] John viii. 56.  
  
[157] 1 Pet. i. 8 (R.V., margin).  
  
[158] Joel ii. 30, 31; iii. 15.  
  
[159] Acts ii. 16-21.  
  
[160] Haggai ii. 6, 7.  
  
[161] Heb. xii. 25-29.  
  
[162] Mal. iv. 1, 5; Mark ix. 11-13.  
  
[163] Isa. ii. 19.  
  
[164] Isa. xiii. 9, 10.  
  
[165] Isa. xxxiv. 2, 4.  
  
[166] Matt. xxiv. 29.  
  
[167] \_Lectures on the Revelation\_, p. 170.  
  
  
  
  
 CHAPTER V.  
  
 \_CONSOLATORY VISIONS.\_  
  
 REV. vii.  
  
  
Six of the seven Seals have been opened by the "Lamb," who is likewise  
the "Lion of the tribe of Judah." They have dealt, in brief but  
pregnant sentences, with the whole history of the Church and of the  
world throughout the Christian age. No details of history have indeed  
been spoken of, no particular wars, or famines, or pestilences, or  
slaughters, or preservations of the saints. Everything has been  
described in the most general terms. We have been invited to think  
only of the principles of the Divine government, but of these as the  
most sublime and, according to our own state of mind, the most  
alarming or the most consolatory principles that can engage the  
attention of men. God, has been the burden of the six Seals, is King  
over all the earth. Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a  
vain thing? Why do they exalt themselves against the sovereign Ruler  
of the universe, who said to the Son of His love, when He made Him  
Head over all things for His Church, "Thou art My Son; this day have I  
begotten Thee;" "Rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies"?[168]  
Listening to the voice of these Seals, we know that the world, with  
all its might, shall prevail neither against the Head nor against the  
members of the Body. Even when apparently successful it shall fight a  
losing battle. Even when apparently defeated Christ and they who are  
one with Him shall march to victory.  
  
We are not to imagine that the Seals of chap. vi. follow one another in  
chronological succession, or that each of them belongs to a definite  
date. The Seer does not look forward to age succeeding age or century  
century. To him the whole period between the first and the second coming  
of Christ is but "a little time," and whatever is to happen in it "must  
shortly come to pass." In truth he can hardly be said to deal with the  
lapse of time at all. He deals with the essential characteristics of the  
Divine government in time, whether it be long or short. Shall the  
revolving years be in our sense short, these characteristics will  
nevertheless come forth with a clearness that shall leave man without  
excuse. Shall they be in our sense long, the unfolding of God's eternal  
plan will only be again and again made manifest. He with whom we have to  
do is without beginning of days or end of years, the \_I am\_,  
unchangeable both in the attributes of His own nature, and in the  
execution of His purposes for the world's redemption. Let us cast our  
eyes along the centuries that have passed away since Jesus died and rose  
again. They are full of one great lesson. At every point at which we  
pause we see the Son of God going forth conquering and to conquer. We  
see the world struggling against His righteousness, refusing to submit  
to it, and dooming itself in consequence to every form of woe. We see  
the children of God following a crucified Redeemer, but preserved,  
sustained, animated, their cross, like His, their crown. Finally, as we  
realize more and more deeply what is going on around us, we feel that  
we are in the midst of a great earthquake, that the sun and the moon  
have become black, and that the stars of heaven are falling to the  
earth; yet by the eye of faith we pierce the darkness, and where are all  
our adversaries? Where are the kings and the potentates, the rich and  
the powerful \_of the earth\_, of an ungodly and persecuting world? They  
have hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains; and  
we hear them say to the mountains and to the 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 their wrath is come; and who is  
able to stand?"  
  
With the beginning of chap. vii. we might expect the seventh Seal to  
be opened; but it is the manner of the apocalyptic writer, before any  
final or particularly critical manifestation of the wrath of God, to  
present us with visions of consolation, so that we may enter into the  
thickest darkness, even into the valley of the shadow of death,  
without alarm. We have already met with this in chaps. iv. and v. We  
shall meet with it again. Meanwhile it is here illustrated:--  
  
 After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the  
 earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that no wind should blow  
 on the earth, or on the sea, or upon any tree. And I saw another  
 angel ascend from the sun-rising, having the seal of the living God:  
 and he cried with a great 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 shall have sealed the  
 servants of our God on their foreheads. And I heard the number of  
 them which were sealed, a hundred and forty and four thousand,  
 sealed out of every tribe of the children of Israel. Of the tribe of  
 Judah were sealed twelve thousand; of the tribe of Reuben, twelve  
 thousand; of the tribe of Gad, twelve thousand; of the tribe of  
 Asher, twelve thousand; of the tribe of Naphtali, twelve thousand;  
 of the tribe of Manasseh, twelve thousand; of the tribe of Simeon,  
 twelve thousand; of the tribe of Levi, twelve thousand; of the  
 tribe of Issachar, twelve thousand; of the tribe of Zebulun, twelve  
 thousand; of the tribe of Joseph, twelve thousand; of the tribe of  
 Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand (vii. 1-8).  
  
Although various important questions, which we shall have to notice,  
arise in connexion with this vision, there never has been, as there  
scarcely can be, any doubt as to its general meaning. In its main  
features it is taken from the language of Ezekiel, when that prophet  
foretold the approaching destruction of Jerusalem: "He cried also with a  
loud voice in mine ears, saying, Cause them that have charge over the  
city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his  
hand. And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which  
lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand;  
and one man among them was clothed with fine linen, with a writer's  
inkhorn by his side.... And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst  
of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the  
foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations  
that be done in the midst thereof.... And, behold, the man clothed with  
linen, which had the inkhorn by his side, reported the matter, saying, I  
have done as Thou hast commanded me."[169] Preservation of the faithful  
in the midst of judgment on the wicked is the theme of the Old Testament  
vision, and in like manner it is the theme of this vision of St. John.  
The \_winds\_ are the symbols of judgment; and, being in number \_four\_ and  
held by \_four angels standing at the four corners of the earth\_, they  
indicate that the judgment when inflicted will be universal. There is no  
place to which the ungodly can escape, none where they shall not be  
overtaken by the wrath of God. "He that fleeth of them," says the  
Almighty by His prophet, "shall not flee away, and he that escapeth of  
them shall not be delivered. Though they dig into hell, thence shall  
Mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring  
them down: and though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will  
search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from My sight in  
the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall  
bite them."[170]  
  
In the midst of all this the safety of the righteous is secured, and  
that in a way, as compared with the way of the Old Testament,  
proportionate to the superior greatness of their privileges. They are  
marked as God's, not by a man out of the city, but by an \_angel  
ascending from the sun-rising\_, the quarter whence proceeds that light  
of day which gilds the loftiest mountain-tops and penetrates into the  
darkest recesses of the valleys. This angel, with his \_great voice\_,  
is probably the Lord Himself appearing by His angel. The mark  
impressed upon the righteous is more than a mere mark: it is a  
\_seal\_--a seal similar to that with which Christ was "sealed;"[171]  
the seal which in the Song of Songs the bride desires as the token of  
the Bridegroom's love to her alone: "Set me as a seal upon Thine  
heart, as a seal upon Thine arm;"[172] the seal which expresses the  
thought, "The Lord knoweth them that are His."[173] Finally, this seal  
is impressed \_on the forehead\_, on that part of the body on which the  
high-priest of Israel wore the golden plate, with its inscription,  
"Holiness to the Lord." Such a seal, manifest to the eyes of all, was  
a witness to all that they who bore it were acknowledged by the  
Redeemer before all, even before His Father and the holy angels.[174]  
  
When we turn to the numbers sealed, every reader who reflects for a  
moment will allow that they must be symbolically, and not literally,  
understood. Twelve thousand out of each of twelve tribes, in all \_a  
hundred and forty and four thousand\_, bears upon its face the stamp of  
symbolism. It is more difficult to answer the question, Who are they?  
Are they Jewish Christians, or are they the whole multitude of God's  
faithful people belonging to the Church universal, but indicated by a  
figure taken from Judaism?  
  
The question now asked is of greater than ordinary importance, for  
upon the answer given to it largely depends the solution of the  
problem whether the author of the fourth Gospel and the author of the  
Apocalypse are the same. If the first vision of the chapter relating  
to those sealed out of the tribes of Israel speak only of Jewish  
Christians, and the second vision, beginning at ver. 9, of "the great  
multitude which no man could number," speak of Gentile Christians, it  
will follow that the writer exhibits a particularistic tendency  
altogether at variance with the universalism of the author of the  
fourth Gospel. Gentile Christians will be, as they have been called,  
an "appendix" to the Jewish-Christian Church; and the followers of  
Jesus will fail to constitute one flock all the members of which are  
equal in the sight of God, occupy the same position, and enjoy the  
same privileges. The first impression produced by the vision of the  
sealed is undoubtedly that it refers to Jewish Christians, and to them  
alone. Many considerations, however, lead to the wider conclusion  
that, under a Jewish figure, they include all the followers of Christ,  
or the universal Church. Some of these at least ought to be noticed.  
  
1. We have not yet found, and we shall not find in any later part of  
the Apocalypse, a distinction drawn between Jewish and Gentile  
Christians. To the eye of the Seer, the Church of the Lord Jesus  
Christ is one. There is in it neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian,  
Scythian, bond, nor free. He recognises in it in its collective  
capacity the Body of Christ, all the members of which occupy the same  
relation to their Lord, and stand equally in grace. He knows indeed of  
a distinction between the Jewish Church, which waited for the coming  
of the Lord, and the Christian Church, which rejoiced in Him as come;  
but he knows also that when Jesus did come the privileges of the  
latter were bestowed upon those in the former who had looked onward to  
Christ's day, and that they were arrayed in the same "white robe."  
Under all the six Seals, accordingly, embracing the whole period of  
the Gospel dispensation, there is not a single word to suggest the  
thought that the Christian Church is divided into two parts. The  
struggle, the preservation, and the victory belong equally to all. A  
similar remark may be made on the epistles to the seven churches,  
which unquestionably contain a representation of that Church the  
fortunes of which are to be afterwards described. In these epistles  
Christ walks equally in the midst of every part of it; and promises  
are made, not in one form to one member and in another to another, but  
always in precisely the same terms to "him that overcometh." It would  
be out of keeping with this were we now, when a similar topic of  
preservation is on hand, to be introduced to a Jewish-Christian as  
distinguished from a Gentile-Christian Church.  
  
2. It is the custom of the Seer to heighten and spiritualize all  
Jewish names. The Temple, the Tabernacle, the Altar, Mount Zion, and  
Jerusalem are to him the embodiments of ideas deeper than those  
literally conveyed by them. Analogy therefore might suggest that this  
also would be the case with the word "Israel." Nay, it would even be  
the more natural so to use that word, because it is so often used in  
the same spiritual sense in other parts of the New Testament: "But  
they are not all Israel which are of Israel;" "And as many as shall  
walk by this rule, peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel  
of God."[175] Nor need we be startled by that employment of the word  
\_tribes\_, which may seem to give more precision to the idea that  
Jewish Christians are designated by the term, for St. John, in his  
peculiar way of looking at men, beheld "tribes" not only among the  
Jews, but among all nations: "And all the tribes of the earth shall  
mourn over Him."[176] In chap. xxi. 12, too, the "twelve tribes"  
plainly include all believers.  
  
3. The enumeration of the tribes of Israel given in these verses is  
different from any other enumeration of the kind contained in  
Scripture. Thus the tribe of Dan is omitted; and, contrary to the  
practice of at least the later books of the Old Testament, that of  
Levi is inserted; while Joseph also is substituted for Ephraim: and  
the order in which the twelve are given has elsewhere no parallel.  
Points such as these may appear trifling, but they are not without  
importance. No student of the Apocalypse will imagine that they are  
accidental or undesigned. He may not be able to satisfy either himself  
or others as to the grounds upon which St. John proceeded, but that  
there were grounds sufficient to the Apostle himself for what he did  
he will not for a moment doubt. One thing may, however, be said. If  
the changes can be explained at all, it must be by considerations  
springing out of the heart of the Christian community, and not out of  
any suggested by the relations of the tribes of Judaism to one  
another. Levi may thus be inserted, instead of standing apart as  
formerly, because in Christ Jesus there was no priestly tribe: all  
Christians were priests; Dan may be omitted because that tribe had  
chosen the serpent as its emblem, and St. John not only felt with  
peculiar power the direct antagonism to Christ of "the old serpent the  
devil,"[177] but had been accustomed to see in the traitor Judas, who  
had been expelled from the apostolic band, and for whom another  
apostle had been substituted, the very impersonation or incarnation of  
Satan[178]; Ephraim also may have been replaced by Joseph because of  
its enmity to Judah, the tribe out of which Jesus sprang; while Judah,  
the fourth son of Jacob, may head the list because it was the tribe in  
which Christ was born.  
  
4. Some of the expressions of the passage are inconsistent with the  
limitation of the sealed to any special class of Christians. Why, for  
example, should the holding back of the winds be universal? Would it  
not have been enough to restrain the winds that blew on Jewish  
Christians, and not the winds of the whole earth? And again, why do we  
meet with language of so general a character as that of ver. 3:  
"\_till we shall have sealed the servants of our God\_"? This  
designation "servants" seems to include the whole number, and not some  
only, of God's children.  
  
5. If God's servants from among the Gentiles are not now sealed, the  
Apocalypse mentions no other occasion when they were so. It is true  
that, according to the ordinary interpretation of the next vision, they  
are admitted to the happiness of heaven; but we may well ask whether, if  
the sealing be the emblem of preservation amidst worldly troubles, they  
ought not also, at one time or another, to have been sealed on earth.  
  
6. The sealed are marked upon their \_foreheads\_, and in chap. xxii. 4  
all believers are marked in a similar way.  
  
7. We shall meet again this number of a hundred and forty-four  
thousand in chap. xiv.; and, while it can hardly be doubted that the  
same persons are on both occasions included in it, it will be seen  
that there at least the whole number of the redeemed is meant.  
  
8. It is worthy of notice that the contrasts of the Apocalypse lead  
directly to a similar conclusion. St. John always sees light and  
darkness standing over against each other, and exhibiting themselves  
in a correspondence which, extending even to minute details, aids the  
task of the interpreter. Now in many passages of this book we find  
Satan not only marking his followers, but, precisely as here, marking  
them upon the "forehead;"[179] and it is impossible to resist the  
conclusion that the one marking is the antithesis of the other. But  
this mark is imprinted by Satan upon \_all\_ his followers, and the  
inference is legitimate that the seal of the living God is in like  
manner imprinted upon \_all\_ the followers of Jesus.  
  
9. One more reason may be assigned for this conclusion. If ver. 4,  
with its "hundred and forty and four thousand out of every tribe of  
the children of Israel," is to be understood of Jewish Christians  
alone, the contrast between it and ver. 9, with its "great multitude,  
which no man can number, out of every nation, and of all tribes, and  
peoples, and tongues," makes it necessary to understand the latter of  
Gentile Christians alone. It will not do to say that the comprehensive  
enumeration of this verse may include Jewish as well as Gentile  
Christians. Placed over against the very definite statement of ver. 4,  
it can only, according to the style of the Apocalypse, be referred to  
persons who have come out of the heathen world in the fourfold  
conception of its parts. Now, whatever may be the precise  
interpretation of the second vision of the chapter, it is undeniable  
that it unfolds a higher stage of privilege and glory than the first.  
It will thus follow on the supposition now combated that at the very  
instant when the Apostle is said to be placing Gentile Christians in a  
position of inferiority to Jewish Christians, and when he is treating  
the one as simply an "appendix" to the other, he speaks of them as the  
inheritors of a far greater "weight of glory." St. John could not be  
thus inconsistent with himself.  
  
The conclusion from all that has been said, is plain. The vision of  
the sealing does not apply to Jewish Christians only, but to the  
universal Church. When the judgments of God are abroad in the world,  
all the disciples of Christ are sealed for preservation against them.  
  
Notwithstanding what has been said, the reader may still find it  
difficult to conceive that two pictures of the same multitude should  
be presented to us drawn on such entirely different lines. What is the  
meaning of it? he may exclaim. What is the Seer's motive in doing so?  
The explanation is not difficult. An attentive examination of the  
structural principles marking the writings of St. John will show that  
they are distinguished by a tendency to set forth the same object in  
two different lights, the l

atter of which is climactic to the former,  
as well as, for the most part at least, taken from a different sphere.  
The writer is not satisfied with a single utterance of what he desires  
to impress upon his readers. After he has uttered it for the first  
time, he brings it again before him, works upon it, enlarges it,  
deepens it, sets it forth with stronger and more vivid colouring. The  
fundamental idea is the same on both occasions; but on the second it  
is the centre of a circle of wider circumference, and it is uttered in  
a more impressive manner. Want of space will not permit the  
illustration of this by an appeal either to the nature of Hebrew  
thought in general, or to the other writings of the New Testament  
which owe their authorship to St. John. It must be enough to say that  
the fourth Gospel bears deep and important traces of this  
characteristic, and that difficult passages in it not otherwise  
explicable seem to be solved by its application.[180] The main point  
to be kept in view is that the principle in question may be traced on  
many different occasions both in the fourth Gospel and in the  
Apocalypse. One of these has indeed already come under our notice in  
the case of the "golden candlesticks" and of the "stars" in Chapter I.  
of this book. The two figures relate to the same object, but the  
second is climactic to the first, and it is taken from a larger field.  
The same principle meets us here. The second vision of chap. vii. is  
climactic to the first, and the field from which it is drawn is  
larger. The analogy, however, not of the golden candlesticks and of  
the stars only, but of many other passages of a similar kind, warrants  
the inference that both the visions relate to the same thing, although  
the aspect in which it is looked at is in each case different. Any  
difficulty therefore at first presented by the double picture  
disappears; while the peculiarity of structure exhibited not only  
helps to lead us to a Johannine authorship, but tends powerfully to  
establish the correctness of the interpretation now adopted.  
  
We are thus entitled to conclude that the hundred and forty-four  
thousand of this first consolatory vision represent not Jewish  
Christians only, but the whole Church of God, and that the number used  
is intended to represent completeness: not one member of the true  
Church is lost.[181] Twelve, a sacred number, the number of the  
patriarchs, of the tribes of Israel, and of the Apostles of Jesus, is  
first multiplied by itself, and then by a thousand, the sign of the  
heavenly in contrast with the earthly. A hundred and forty and four  
thousand is the result.  
  
It need only further be observed--and the observation will help to  
confirm what has been said--that St. John did not himself count the  
number of the sealed. He \_heard the number of them\_ (ver. 4). Already  
they were "a multitude which no \_man\_ could number" (ver. 9). But He  
who telleth the innumerable stars that sparkle in the midnight sky,  
and who "bringeth out their host by number,"[182] could number them.  
He it was who communicated the number to the Seer.  
  
The second vision of the chapter follows:--  
  
 After these things I saw, and, behold, a great multitude, which no  
 man could number, out of every nation, and of all tribes, and  
 peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the  
 Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands; and they  
 cry with a great voice, saying, Salvation unto our God which  
 sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels were  
 standing round about the throne, and about the elders and the four  
 living creatures; and they fell before the throne on their faces,  
 and worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom,  
 and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our  
 God for ever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered,  
 saying unto me, These which are arrayed in the white robes, who  
 are they, and whence came they? And I said unto him, My lord, thou  
 knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of the  
 great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them  
 white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the  
 throne of God, and they serve Him day and night in His temple: and  
 He that sitteth on the throne shall spread His tabernacle over  
 them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither  
 shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat: for the Lamb which  
 is in the midst of the throne shall be their Shepherd, and shall  
 guide them unto fountains of waters of life: and God shall wipe  
 away every tear from their eyes (vii. 9-17).  
  
Upon the magnificence and beauty of this description it is not only  
unnecessary, it would be a mistake, to dwell. Words of man would only  
mar the sublimity and pathos of the spectacle. Neither is it desirable  
to look at each expression of the passage in itself. These expressions  
are better considered as a whole. One point indeed ought to be  
carefully kept in view: that the \_palms\_ spoken of in ver. 9 as in the  
\_hands\_ of the happy multitude are not the palms of victory in any  
earthly contest, but the palms of the Feast of Tabernacles, and that  
upon the thought of that feast the scene is moulded.  
  
The Feast of Tabernacles, it will be remembered, was at once the last,  
the highest, and the most joyful of the festivals of the Jewish year. It  
fell in the month of October, when the harvest not only of grain, but of  
wine and oil, had been gathered in, and when, therefore, all the labours  
of the year were past. It was preceded, too, by the great Day of  
Atonement, the ceremonial of which gathered together all the sacrificial  
acts of the previous months, beheld the sins of the people, from their  
highest to their lowest, carried away into the wilderness, and brought  
with it the blessing of God from that innermost recess of the sanctuary  
which was lightened by the special glory of His presence, and into which  
the high-priest even was permitted to enter upon that day alone. The  
feelings awakened in Israel at the time were of the most triumphant  
kind. They returned in thought to the independent life which their  
fathers, delivered from the bondage of Egypt, led in the wilderness;  
and, the better to realize this, they left their ordinary dwellings and  
took up their abode for the days of the feast in booths, which they  
erected in the streets or on the flat roofs of their houses. These  
booths were made of branches of their most prized, most fruit-bearing,  
and most umbrageous trees; and beneath them they raised their psalms of  
thanksgiving to Him who had delivered them as a bird out of the snare of  
the fowler. Even this was not all, for we know that in the later period  
of their history the Jews connected the Feast of Tabernacles with the  
brightest anticipations of the future as well as with the most joyful  
memories of the past. They beheld in it the promise of the Spirit, the  
great gift of the approaching Messianic age; and, that they might give  
full expression to this, they sent on the eighth, or great, day of the  
feast, a priest to the pool of Siloam with a golden urn, that he might  
fill it from the pool, and, bringing it up to the Temple, might pour it  
on the altar. This is the part of the ceremonial alluded to in John vii.  
37-39, and during it the joy of the people reached its highest point.  
They surrounded the priest in crowds as he brought up the water from the  
pool, waved their \_lulabs\_--small branches of palm trees, the "palms" of  
ver. 9--and made the courts of the Temple re-echo with their song, "With  
joy shall ye draw water out of wells of salvation."[183] At night the  
great illumination of the Temple followed, that to which our Lord most  
probably alludes when, immediately after the Feast of Tabernacles spoken  
of in chap. viii. of the fourth Gospel, He exclaims, "I am the Light of  
the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in the darkness, but  
shall have the light of life."[184]  
  
Such was the scene the main particulars of which are here made use of  
by the apocalyptic Seer to set before us the triumphant and glorious  
condition of the Church when, after all her members have been sealed,  
they are admitted to the full enjoyment of the blessings of God's  
covenant, and when, washed in the blood of the Lamb and clothed with  
His righteousness, they keep their Feast of Tabernacles.  
  
A most important and interesting question connected with this vision  
has still to be answered. It may be first asked in the words of Isaac  
Williams. "It is whether all this description is of the Church in  
heaven or on earth." The same writer has answered his question by  
saying, "The fact is that, like the expression 'the kingdom of  
heaven,' and many others of the same kind, it applies to both, and it  
is doubtless intended to do so--in fulness hereafter, but even here in  
part."[185] The answer thus given is no doubt correct when the  
question is asked in the particular form to which it is a reply. Yet  
we have still to ask whether, granting it to be so, the \_primary\_  
reference of the vision is to the Church of Christ during her present  
pilgrimage or after that pilgrimage has been completed, and she has  
entered on her eternal rest. To the question so put, the reply usually  
given is that the Seer has the latter aspect of the Church in view.  
The redeemed are sealed on \_earth\_; they bear their "palms," and  
rejoice with the joy afterwards spoken of, in \_heaven\_. Much in the  
passage may seem to justify this conclusion. But a recent writer on  
the subject has adduced such powerful considerations in favour of the  
former view, that it will be proper to examine them.[186]  
  
Appeal is first made to Matt. xxiv. 13, a passage throwing no light upon  
the point. It is otherwise with many prophecies of the Old Testament  
next referred to, which describe the coming dispensation of the Gospel:  
"They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite  
them: for He that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the  
springs of water shall He guide them;" "He will swallow up death in  
victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces;" "And  
it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations  
which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to  
worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of  
Tabernacles."[187] To passages such as these have to be added the  
promises of our Lord as to fountains of living waters even now opened to  
the believer, that he may drink and never thirst again: "Jesus answered  
and said unto her, Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst  
again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall  
never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a  
springing fountain of water, unto eternal life;" "Now on the last day,  
the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man  
thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the  
Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living  
water."[188] St. John, too, it is urged, teaches us to look for a  
Tabernacle Feast on earth[189]; while at the same time throughout all  
his writings eternal life is set before us as a present possession. Nor  
is this the case only in the writings of St. John. In the Epistle to the  
Hebrews we meet the same line of thought: "Ye are come" (not Ye shall  
come) "unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the  
heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general  
assembly and Church of the first-born, who are enrolled in heaven."[190]  
Influenced by these considerations, the writer to whom we have referred  
is led, "though not without some hesitation," to conclude that the  
vision of the palm-bearing multitude is to be understood of the Church  
on earth, and not of the Church in heaven.  
  
The conclusion may be accepted without the "hesitation." The colours  
on the canvas may indeed at first appear too bright for any condition  
of things on this side the grave. But they are not more bright than  
those employed in the description of the new Jerusalem in chap. xxi.;  
and, when we come to the exposition of that chapter, we shall find  
positive proof in the language of the Seer that he looks upon that  
city as one already come down from heaven and established among men.  
Not a few of its most glowing traits are even precisely the same as  
those that we meet in the corresponding vision of this chapter: "And I  
heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle  
of God is with men, and He shall tabernacle with them, and they shall  
be His peoples, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God;  
and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be  
no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any  
more: the first things are passed away."[191] If words like these may  
be justly applied, as we have yet to see that they may and must be, to  
one aspect of the Church on earth, there is certainly nothing to  
hinder their application to the same Church now. The truth is that in  
both cases the description is ideal, and that not less so than the  
description of the terrors of the worldly at the opening of the sixth  
Seal. Nor indeed shall we understand any part of the Apocalypse unless  
we recognise the fact that everything with which it is concerned is  
raised to an ideal standard. Reward and punishment, righteousness and  
sin, the martyrdoms of the Church and the fate of her oppressors, are  
all set before us in an ideal light. The Seer moves in the midst of  
conceptions which are fundamental, ultimate, and eternal. The "broken  
lights" which partially illuminate our progress in this world are to  
him absorbed in "the true Light." The clouds and darkness which  
obscure our path gather themselves together to his eyes in "the  
darkness" with which the light has to contend. Descriptions,  
accordingly, applicable in their fulness to the Church only after the  
glory of her Lord is manifested, apply also to her now, when she is  
thought of as living the life that is hid with Christ in God, the life  
of her exalted and glorified Redeemer. For this conception the colours  
of the picture before us are not too bright.[192]  
  
The relation in which the two visions of this chapter stand to one  
another may now be obvious. Although the persons referred to are in both  
the same, they do not in both occupy the same position. In the first  
they are only sealed, and through that sealing they are safe. Their Lord  
has taken them under His protection; and, whatever troubles or perils  
may beset them, no one shall pluck them out of His hand. In the second  
they are more than safe. They have peace, and joy, and triumph, their  
every want supplied, their every sorrow healed. Death itself is  
swallowed up in victory, and every tear is wiped from every eye.  
  
Thus also may we determine the period to which both the sealing of  
believers and their subsequent enjoyment of heavenly blessing belong.  
In neither vision are we introduced to any special era of Christian  
history. St. John has in view neither the Christians of his own day  
alone, nor those of any later time. As we found that each of the first  
six Seals embraced the whole Gospel age, so also is it with these  
consolatory visions. We are to dwell upon the \_thought\_ rather than  
the \_time\_ of preservation and of bliss. The Church of Christ never  
ceases to follow in the footsteps of her Lord. Like Him, when faithful  
to her high commission, she never ceases to bear the cross. The  
unredeemed world must always be her enemy; and in it she must always  
have tribulation. But not less continuous is her joy. We judge wrongly  
when we think that the Man of sorrows was never joyful. He spoke of  
"My peace," "My joy."[193] In one of His moments of deepest feeling we  
are told that He "rejoiced in spirit."[194] Outwardly the world  
troubled Him; and huge billows, raised by its tempestuous winds, swept  
across the surface of His soul. Beneath, the unfathomed depths were  
calm. In communion with His Father in heaven, in the thought of the  
great work which He was carrying to its completion, and in the  
prospect of the glory that awaited Him, He could rejoice in the midst  
of sorrow. So also with the members of His Body. They bear about with  
them a secret joy which, like their new name, no man knoweth saving he  
that receiveth it. As the friend of the bridegroom who standeth and  
heareth him rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice, so  
their joy is fulfilled.[195] Nor does it ever cease to be theirs while  
their Lord is with them; and unless they grieve Him "lo, He is always  
with them, even unto the consummation of the age."[196] The two  
visions, therefore, of the sealing and of the palm-bearing multitude  
embrace the whole Christian dispensation within their scope, and  
express ideas which belong to the condition of the believer in all  
places and at all times.  
  
FOOTNOTES:  
  
[168] Ps. ii. 7; cx. 7.  
  
[169] Ezek. ix.  
  
[170] Amos ix. 1-3.  
  
[171] John vi. 27.  
  
[172] Cant. viii. 3.  
  
[173] 2 Tim. ii. 19.  
  
[174] Comp. Luke xii. 8.  
  
[175] Rom. ix. 6; Gal. vi. 16.  
  
[176] Chap. i. 7.  
  
[177] Comp. chap. xii. 9.  
  
[178] John xiii. 2.  
  
[179] Chaps. xiii. 16, 17; xiv. 9; xvi. 2; xix. 20; xx. 4.  
  
[180] The writer has treated this subject at considerable length in  
\_The Expositor\_ (2nd series, vol. iv.).  
  
[181] Comp. John xvii. 12.  
  
[182] Isa. xl. 26.  
  
[183] Isa. xii. 3.  
  
[184] John viii. 12.  
  
[185] \_The Apocalypse\_, p. 126.  
  
[186] Professor Gibson, in \_The Monthly Interpreter\_, vol. ii., p. 9.  
  
[187] Isa. xlix. 10; xxv. 8; Zech. xiv. 16.  
  
[188] John iv. 13, 14; vii. 37, 38.  
  
[189] John i. 14.  
  
[190] Heb. xii. 22, 23.  
  
[191] Chap. xxi. 3, 4.  
  
[192] Comp. on the general thought Brown, \_The Second Advent\_, chap. vi.  
  
[193] John xiv. 27; xvii. 13.  
  
[194] Luke x. 21.  
  
[195] John iii. 29.  
  
[196] Matt. xxviii. 20.  
  
  
  
  
 CHAPTER VI.  
  
 \_THE FIRST SIX TRUMPETS.\_  
  
 REV. viii., ix.  
  
  
The two consolatory visions of chap. vii. have closed, and the Seer  
returns to that opening of the seven Seals which had been interrupted  
in order that these two visions might be interposed.  
  
Six Seals had been opened in chap. vi.; the opening of the seventh  
follows:--  
  
 And when He opened the seventh seal, there followed silence in  
 heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels  
 which stand before God; and there were given unto them seven  
 trumpets. And another angel came and stood over the altar, having  
 a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that  
 he should give it unto the prayers of all the saints upon the  
 golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the  
 incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of  
 the angel's hand. And the angel taketh the censer; and he filled  
 it with the fire of the altar, and cast it upon the earth: and  
 there followed thunders, and voices, and lightnings, and an  
 earthquake. And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets  
 prepared themselves to sound (viii. 1-6).  
  
Before looking at the particulars of this Seal, we have to determine the  
relation in which it stands to the Seals of chap. vi. as well as to the  
visions following it. Is it as isolated, as independent, as those that  
have come before it; and are its contents exhausted by the first six  
verses of the chapter? or does it occupy such a position of its own  
that we are to regard the following visions as developed out of it? And  
if the latter be the case, how far does the development extend?  
  
In answering these questions, it can hardly be denied that if we are  
to look upon the seventh Seal as standing independent and alone, its  
contents have not the significance which we seem entitled to expect.  
It is the last Seal of its own series; and when we turn to the last  
member of the Trumpet se

ries at chap. xi. 15, or of the Bowl series at  
chap. xvi. 17, we find them marked, not by less, but by much greater,  
force than had belonged in either case to the six preceding members.  
The seventh Trumpet and the seventh Bowl sum up and concentrate the  
contents of their predecessors. In the one the judgments of God  
represented by the Trumpets, in the other those represented by the  
Bowls, culminate in their sharpest expression and their most  
tremendous potency. There is nothing of that kind in the seventh Seal  
if it terminates with the preparation of the Trumpet angels to sound;  
and the analogy of the Apocalypse therefore, an analogy supplying in a  
book so symmetrically constructed an argument of greater than ordinary  
weight, is against that supposition.  
  
Again, the larger portion of the first six verses of this chapter does  
not suggest the contents of the Seal. Rather would it seem as if these  
contents were confined to the "silence" spoken of in ver. 1, and as if  
what follows from ver. 2 to ver. 6 were to be regarded as no part of  
the Seal itself, but simply as introductory to the Trumpet visions.  
Everything said bears upon it the marks of preparation for what is to  
come, and we are not permitted to rest in what is passing as if it  
were a final and conclusive scene in the great spectacle presented to  
the Seer.  
  
For these reasons the view often entertained that the visions to which  
we proceed are developed out of the seventh Seal may be regarded as  
correct.  
  
If so, how far does the development extend? The answer invariably  
given to this question is, To the end of the Trumpets. But the answer  
is not satisfactory. The general symmetry of the Apocalypse militates  
against it. There is then no correspondence between the \_last\_ Trumpet  
and the \_last\_ Seal, nothing to suggest the thought of a development  
of the Bowls out of the seventh Trumpet in a manner corresponding to  
the development of the Trumpets out of the seventh Seal. In these  
circumstances the only probable conclusion is that \_both\_ the Bowls  
and the Trumpets are developed out of the seventh Seal, and that that  
development does not close until we reach the end of chap. xvi.  
  
If what has now been said be correct, it will throw important light  
upon the relation of the Seals to the two series of the Trumpets and  
the Bowls taken together; while, at the same time, it will lend us  
valuable aid in the interpretation of all the three series.  
  
Returning to the words before us, it is said that, at the opening of  
the seventh Seal, \_there followed silence in heaven about the space of  
half an hour\_. This silence may perhaps include a cessation even of  
the songs which rise before the throne of God from that redeemed  
creation the voice of whose praise rests not either day or night.[197]  
Yet it is not necessary to think so. The probability rather is that it  
arises from a cessation only of the "lightnings and voices and  
thunders" which at chap. iv. 5 proceed out of the throne, and which  
are resumed at ver. 5 of the present chapter, when the fire of the  
altar is cast from the angel's censer upon the earth. A brief  
suspension of judgment is thereby indicated, a pause by and during  
which the Almighty would call attention to the manifestations of His  
wrath about to follow. The exact duration of this silence, "about the  
space of half an hour," has never been satisfactorily explained; and  
the general analogy of St. John's language condemns the idea of a  
literal interpretation. We shall perhaps be more in accordance with  
the spirit in which the Revelation is written if we consider--(1) that  
in that book the half of anything suggests, not so much an actual  
half, as a broken and interrupted whole,---five a broken ten, six a  
broken twelve, three and a half a broken seven; (2) that in the Gospel  
of St. John we find on more than one occasion mention made of an  
"hour" by which at one time the actions, at another the sufferings, of  
Jesus are determined: "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour  
is not yet come;" "Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause  
came I unto this hour."[198] The "hour" of Jesus is thus to St. John  
the moment at which action, having been first resolved on by the  
Father, is taken by the Son; and a "half-hour" may simply denote that  
the course of events has been interrupted, and that the instant for  
renewed judgment has been delayed. Such an interpretation will also be  
in close correspondence with the verses following, as well as with  
what we have seen to be the probable meaning of the "silence" of ver.  
1. Preparation for action, rather than action, marks as yet the  
opening of the seventh Seal.  
  
That preparation is next described.  
  
St. John saw \_seven trumpets\_ given to \_the seven angels which stand  
before God\_. In whatever other respects these seven angels are to be  
distinguished from the hosts of angels which surround the throne, the  
commission now given shows that they are angels of a more exalted order  
and a more irresistible power. They are in fact the expression of the  
Divine Judge of men, or rather of the mode in which He chooses by  
judgment to express Himself. We are not even required to think of them  
as numerically seven, for seven in its sacred meaning is the number of  
unity, though of unity in the variety as well as the combination of its  
agencies. The "seven Spirits of God" are His one Spirit; the "seven  
churches," His one Church; the "seven horns" and "seven eyes" of the  
Lamb, His one powerful might and His one penetrating glance. In like  
manner the seven Seals, the seven Trumpets, and the seven Bowls embody  
the thought of many judgments which are yet in reality one. Thus also  
the angels here are seven, not because literally so, but because that  
number brings out the varied forms as well as the essential oneness of  
the action of Him to whom the Father has given "authority to execute  
judgment, because He is a Son of man."[199]  
  
As yet the seven trumpets have only been given to the seven angels.  
More has to pass before they put them to their lips and sound. Another  
angel is seen who \_came and stood over the altar, having a golden  
censer\_ in his hand. At the opening of the fifth Seal we read of an  
"altar" which it was impossible not to identify with the great brazen  
altar, the altar of burnt-offering, in the outer court of the  
sanctuary. Such identification is not so obvious here; and perhaps a  
majority of commentators agree in thinking that the altar now spoken  
of is rather the golden or incense altar which had its place within  
the Tabernacle, immediately in front of the second veil. To this altar  
the priest on ordinary occasions, and more particularly the  
high-priest on the great Day of Atonement, brought a censer with  
burning frankincense, that the smoke of the incense, as it rose into  
the air, might be a symbol to the congregation of Israel that its  
prayers, offered according to the Divine will, ascended as a sweet  
savour to God. It is possible that this may be the altar meant; yet  
the probabilities of the case rather lead to the supposition that  
allusion is made to the altar of sacrifice in the Tabernacle court;  
for (1) when the Seer speaks here and again in ver. 5 of "the altar,"  
and in ver. 3 of "the golden altar," he seems to distinguish between  
the two. (2) The words \_fire of the altar\_ are in favour of the same  
conclusion. According to the ritual of the Law, it was from the brazen  
altar that fire was taken in order to kindle the incense,[200] while  
at the same time fire continually burned upon that altar, but not upon  
the altar within the Tabernacle. (3) The thought represented by the  
symbolism seems to be that the sufferings of the saints gave efficacy  
to their prayers, and drew down the answer of Him who says, "Call upon  
Me in the day of trouble, and I will answer thee, and thou shalt  
glorify Me."[201] (4) The words of ver. 3, \_the prayers of all the  
saints\_, and the similar expression in ver. 4, remind us of the  
prayers of the fifth Seal, now swelled by the prayers of those New  
Testament saints who have been added to "the blessed fellowship" of  
the Old Testament martyrs. These prayers, it will be remembered, rose  
from beneath the altar of burnt-offering; and it is natural to think  
that the same altar is again alluded to in order to bring out the idea  
of a similar martyrdom. What we see, therefore, is an angel taking the  
prayers and adding to them much incense, so that we may behold them as  
they ascend up before God and receive His answer.  
  
Further, it ought to be observed that the prayers referred to are for  
judgment upon sin. There is nothing to justify the supposition that  
they are partly for judgment upon, partly for mercy to, a sinful  
world. They are simply another form of the cry, "How long, O Master,  
the holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them  
that dwell on the earth?"[202] They are a cry that God will vindicate  
the cause of righteousness.[203]  
  
The cry is heard, for the angel takes of the fire of the altar on  
which the saints had been sacrificed as an offering to God, and casts  
it into the earth, that it may consume the sin by which it had been  
kindled. The \_lex talionis\_ again starts to view; not merely  
punishment, but retribution, the heaviest of all retribution, because  
it is accompanied by a convicted conscience, retribution in kind.  
  
Everything is now ready for judgment, and \_the seven angels which had  
the seven trumpets prepare themselves to sound\_:--  
  
 And the first sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled  
 with blood, and they were cast into the earth: and the third part  
 of the earth was burnt up, and the third part of the trees was  
 burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up (viii. 7).  
  
To think, in interpreting these words, of a literal burning up of a  
third part of the "earth," of the "trees," and of the "green grass,"  
would lead us astray. Comparing the first Trumpet with those that  
follow, we have simply a general description of judgment as it affects  
the \_land\_ in contradistinction to the sea, the rivers and fountains  
of water, and the heavenly bodies by which the earth is lighted. The  
punishment is drawn down by a guilty world upon itself when it rises  
in opposition to Him who at first prepared the land for the abode of  
men, planted it with trees pleasant to the eye, cast over it its  
mantle of green, and pronounced it to be very good. Of every tree of  
the garden, except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, might  
our first parents eat; while grass covered the earth for their cattle,  
and herb for their service. All nature was to minister to the wants of  
man, and in cultivating the garden and the field he was to find light  
and happy labour. But sin came in. Thorns and thistles sprang up on  
every side. Labour became a burden, and the fruitful field was changed  
into a wilderness which could only be subdued by constant, patient,  
and often-disappointed toil. This is the thought--a thought often  
dwelt upon by the prophets of the Old Testament--that is present to  
the Seer's mind.  
  
One of the plagues of Egypt, however, may also be in his eye. When the  
Almighty would deliver His people from that land of their captivity, "He  
sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the  
Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt. So there was hail, and fire  
mingled with the hail, very grievous.... And the hail smote throughout  
all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast;  
and the hail smote every herb of the field, and broke every tree of the  
field."[204] That plague the Seer has in his mind; but he is not content  
to use its traits alone, terrible as they were. The sin of a guilty  
world in refusing to listen to Him who speaks from heaven is greater  
than was the sin of those who refused Him that spake on earth, and their  
punishment must be in proportion to their sin. Hence the plague of Egypt  
is magnified. We read, not of hail and fire only, but of \_hail and fire  
mingled with\_ (or rather \_in\_) \_blood\_, so that the blood is the outward  
and visible covering of the hail and of the fire. In addition to this,  
we have the herbs and trees of the field, not merely smitten and broken,  
but utterly consumed by fire. What is meant by the "third part" of the  
earth and its products being attacked it is difficult to say. The  
probability is that, as a whole consists of three parts, partial  
destruction only is intended, yet not destruction of a third part of the  
earth, leaving two-thirds untouched; but a third part of the earth and  
of its produce is everywhere consumed.  
  
The second Trumpet is now blown:--  
  
 And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain  
 burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the  
 sea became blood; and there died the third part of the creatures  
 which were in the sea, even they that had life; and the third part  
 of the ships was destroyed (viii. 8, 9).  
  
As the first Trumpet affected the land, so the second affects \_the  
sea\_; and the remarks already made upon the one destruction are for  
the most part applicable to the other. The figure of removing a  
mountain from its place and casting it into the sea was used by our  
Lord to express what beyond all else it was impossible to accomplish  
by mere human power: "Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and  
doubt not, ye shall not only do what is done to the fig tree, but even  
if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou taken up and cast into the  
sea, it shall be done."[205] In so speaking, our Lord had followed the  
language of the prophets, who were accustomed to illustrate by the  
thought of the removal of mountains the greatest acts of Divine power:  
"What art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become  
a plain;" "Therefore will we not fear, though the mountains be carried  
into the midst of the seas."[206]  
  
Even the figure of a "burnt mountain" is not strange to the Old  
Testament, for the prophet Jeremiah thus denounces woe on Babylon:  
"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 make thee a burnt mountain."[207]  
  
The plagues of Egypt, too, are again taken advantage of by the Seer,  
for in the first of these Moses "lifted up the rod, and smote the  
waters that were in the river; ... and all the waters that were in the  
river were turned to blood. And the fish that was in the river died;  
and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of  
the river; and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt."[208]  
Here, however, the plague is extended, embracing as it does not only  
the river of Egypt, but the sea, with all the ships that sail upon it,  
and all its fish. Again also, as before, the "third part" is not to be  
thought of as confined to one region of the ocean, while the  
remaining two-thirds are left untouched. It is to be sought everywhere  
over the whole compass of the deep.  
  
The third Trumpet is now blown:--  
  
 And the third angel sounded, and there fell from heaven a great  
 star, burning as a torch, and it fell upon the third part of the  
 rivers, and upon the fountains of the waters; and the name of the  
 star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became  
 wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made  
 bitter (viii. 10, 11).  
  
The third Trumpet is to be understood upon the same principles and in  
the same general sense as the two preceding Trumpets. The figures are  
again such as meet us in the Old Testament, though they are used by  
the Seer in his own free and independent way. Thus the prophet Isaiah,  
addressing Babylon in his magnificent description of her fall,  
exclaims, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the  
morning!"[209] and thus also the prophet Jeremiah denounces judgment  
upon rebellious Israel: "Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the  
God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with  
wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink."[210] The bitter  
waters of Marah also lived in the recollections of Israel as the  
first, and not the least terrible, punishment of the murmuring of  
their fathers against Him who had brought them out into what seemed  
but a barren wilderness, instead of leaving them to quench their  
thirst by the sweet waters of the Nile.[211] Thus the waters which the  
world offers to its votaries are made bitter, so bitter that they  
become wormwood itself, the very essence of bitterness. Again the  
"third part" of them is thus visited, but this time with a feature  
not previously mentioned: the destruction of human life,--\_many men  
died of the waters\_. Under the first Trumpet only inanimate nature was  
affected; under the second we rose to creatures that had life; under  
the third we rise to "many men." The climax ought to be noticed, as  
illustrating the style of the Apostle's thought and aiding us in the  
interpretation of his words. A similar climax may perhaps also be  
intended by the agents successively employed under these Trumpets:  
hail and fire, a great mountain burning, and a falling star.  
  
The fourth Trumpet is now blown:--  
  
 And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was  
 smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the  
 stars; that the third part of them should be darkened, and the day  
 should not shine for the third part of it, and the night in like  
 manner (viii. 12).  
  
This Trumpet offers no contradiction to what was previously  
said,--that the first four members of the three series of Seals, of  
Trumpets, and of Bowls deal with the material rather than the  
spiritual side of man, with man as a denizen of this world rather than  
of the next.[212] The heavenly bodies are here viewed solely in their  
relation to earth and its inhabitants. As to the judgment, it rests,  
like those of the first and second Trumpets, upon the thought of the  
Egyptian plague of darkness: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch  
out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land  
of Egypt, even darkness that may be felt. And Moses stretched forth  
his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land  
of Egypt three days: they saw not one another, neither rose any from  
his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had lights in  
their dwellings."[213] The trait of the Egyptian plague alluded to in  
this last sentence is not mentioned here; and we have probably,  
therefore, no right to say that it was in the Seer's thoughts. Yet it  
is in a high degree probable that it was; and at all events his  
obvious reference to that plague may help to illustrate an important  
particular to be afterwards noticed,--that all the Trumpet judgments  
fall directly upon the world, and not the Church. As under the first  
three Trumpets, the third part of the light of sun, and moon, and  
stars is alone darkened.  
  
The first four Trumpets have now been blown, and we reach the line of  
demarcation by which each series of judgments is divided into its  
groups of four and three. That line is drawn in the present instance  
with peculiar solemnity and force:--  
  
 And I saw, and I heard an eagle flying in mid-heaven, saying with  
 a great voice, Woe, woe, woe, for them that dwell on the earth by  
 reason of the other voices of the three angels who are yet to  
 sound (viii. 13).  
  
Attention ought to be paid to the fact that the cry uttered in  
\_mid-heaven\_, and thus penetrating to the most distant corners of the  
earth, proceeds from an \_eagle\_, and not, as in the Authorised Version,  
from an "angel;" and the eagle is certainly referred to for the purpose  
of adding fresh terror to the scene. If we would enter into the Seer's  
mind, we must think of it as the symbol of rapine and plunder. To him  
the prominent characteristic of that bird is not its majesty, but its  
swiftness, its strength, and its hasting to the prey.[214]  
  
Thus ominously announced, t

he fifth Trumpet is now blown:--  
  
 And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star out of heaven fallen  
 unto the earth: and there was given to him the key of the well of  
 the abyss. And he opened the well of the abyss; and there went up  
 a smoke out of the well, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the  
 sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the well.  
 And out of the smoke came forth locusts upon the earth: and power  
 was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power. And it  
 was said unto them that they should not hurt the grass of the  
 earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only such  
 men as have not the seal of God on their foreheads. And it was  
 given them that they should not kill them, but that they should be  
 tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a  
 scorpion, when it striketh a man. And in those days men shall seek  
 death, and shall in no wise find it; and they shall desire to die,  
 and death fleeth from them. And the shapes of the locusts were  
 like unto horses prepared for war, and upon their heads as it were  
 crowns like unto gold, and their faces were as 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 breastplates  
 of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots  
 of many horses rushing to war. And they have tails like unto  
 scorpions, and stings: and in their tails is their power to hurt  
 men five months. They have over them as king the angel of the  
 abyss: his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek tongue he  
 hath the name Apollyon (ix. 1-11).  
  
Such is the strange but dire picture of the judgment of the fifth  
Trumpet; and we have, as usual, in the first place, to look at the  
particulars contained in it. As in several previous instances, these  
are founded upon the plagues of Egypt and the language of the  
prophets. In both these sources how terrible does a locust plague  
appear! In Egypt--"And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine  
hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come up  
upon the land of Egypt, and eat every herb of the land, even all that  
the hail hath left. And Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of  
Egypt, and the Lord brought an east wind upon the land all that day,  
and all that night; and when it was morning, the east wind brought the  
locusts. And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt, and  
rested in all the coasts of Egypt: very grievous were they; before  
them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be  
such. For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land  
was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the  
fruit of the trees which the hail had left: and there remained not any  
green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all  
the land of Egypt."[215] Darker even than this is the language of the  
prophet Joel. When he sees locusts sweeping across a land, he  
exclaims, "The land was as the garden of Eden before them, and behind  
them a desolate wilderness;"[216] and from their irresistible and  
destructive ravages he draws not a few traits of the dread events by  
which the coming of the day of the Lord shall be accompanied: "The  
appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so  
shall they run. Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains  
shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the  
stubble, as a strong people set in battle array.... They shall run  
like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they  
shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their  
ranks.... They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon  
the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at  
the windows like a thief. The earth shall quake before them; the  
heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the  
stars shall withdraw their shining."[217]  
  
It is no doubt true that in the description before us the qualities  
of its locusts are preternaturally magnified, but that is only what we  
might expect, and it is in keeping with the mode in which other  
figures taken from the Old Testament are treated in this book. There  
is a probability, too, that each trait of the description had a  
distinct meaning to St. John, and that it represents some particular  
phase of the calamities he intended to depict. But it is hardly  
possible now to discover such meanings; and that the Seer had in view  
general evil as much at least as evil in certain special \_forms\_ is  
shown by the artificiality of structure marking the passage as a  
whole. For the description of the locusts is divided into three parts,  
the first general, the second special, the third the locust-king. The  
special characteristics of the insects, again, are seven in number:  
(1) \_upon their heads as it were crowns like unto gold\_; (2) \_and  
their faces were as faces of men\_; (3) \_and they had hair as the hair  
of women\_; (4) \_and their teeth were as the teeth of lions\_; (5) \_and  
they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron\_; (6) \_and the  
sound of their wings was as the sound of many chariots\_; (7) \_and they  
have tails like unto scorpions, and stings\_.  
  
Whether the period of \_five months\_, during which these locusts are said  
to commit their ravages, is fixed on because the destruction caused by  
the natural insect lasts for that length of time, or for some other  
reason unknown to us, it is difficult to determine. There is a want of  
proof that a locust-plague generally continues for the number of months  
thus specified, and it is otherwise more in accordance with the style of  
the Apocalypse to regard that particular period of time as simply  
denoting that the judgment has definite limits.  
  
One additional particular connected with the fifth Trumpet ought to be  
adverted to. It will be noticed that the \_well of the abyss\_ whence  
the plague proceeds is opened by a \_star fallen\_ (not "falling") \_out  
of heaven\_, to which \_the key of the well was given\_. We have here one  
of those contrasts of St. John a due attention to which is of such  
importance to the interpreter. This "fallen star" is the contrast and  
counterpart of Him who is "the bright, the morning star," and who "has  
the keys of death and of Hades."[218]  
  
At this point the sixth angel ought to sound; but we are now in the  
midst of the three last woes, and each is of so terrible an import  
that it deserves to be specially marked. Hence the words of the next  
verse:--  
  
 The first Woe is past; behold, there come yet two Woes hereafter  
 (ix. 12).  
  
This warning given, the sixth Trumpet is now blown:--  
  
 And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the horns of  
 the golden altar which is before God, one saying to the sixth  
 angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound  
 at the great river Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed,  
 which had been prepared for the hour, and day, and month, and  
 year, that they should kill the third part of men. And the number  
 of the armies of the horsemen was twice ten thousand times ten  
 thousand; I heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in  
 the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates as of  
 fire, and of hyacinth, and of brimstone. By these three plagues  
 was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and the smoke, and  
 the brimstone, which proceeded out of their mouths. For the power  
 of the horses is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their  
 tails are like unto serpents, and with them they do hurt. And the  
 rest of mankind which were not killed with these plagues repented  
 not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship  
 demons, and the idols of gold, and of silver, and of brass, and of  
 stone, and of wood: which can neither see, nor hear nor walk: and  
 they repented not of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of  
 their fornication, nor of their thefts (ix. 13-21).  
  
There is much in this Trumpet that is remarkable even while we confine  
ourselves to the more outward particulars contained in it. Thus we are  
brought back by it to the thought of those prayers of the saints to  
which all the Trumpets are a reply, but which have not been mentioned  
since the blowing of the Trumpets began.[219] Once more we read of  
\_the golden altar which was before God\_, in His immediate presence. On  
that altar the prayers of all the saints had been laid, that they  
might rise to heaven with the much incense added by the angel, and  
might be answered in God's own time and way. The voice heard from \_the  
four horns\_ of this altar--that is, from the four projecting points at  
its four corners, representing the altar in its greatest  
potency--shows us, what we might have been in danger of forgetting,  
that the judgment before us continues to be an answer of the Almighty  
to His people's prayers. Again it may be noticed that in the judgment  
here spoken of we deal once more with a \_third part\_ of the class upon  
which it falls. Nothing of the kind had been said under the fifth  
Trumpet. The inference to be drawn from these particulars is  
important. We learn that, however distinct the successive members of  
any of the three series of the Seals, the Trumpets, or the Bowls may  
seem to be, they are yet closely connected with one another. Though  
seven in number, there is a sense in which they are also one; and any  
characteristic thought which appears in a single member of the series  
ought to be carried through all its members.[220]  
  
The judgment itself is founded, as in the others already considered,  
upon thoughts and incidents connected with Old Testament history.  
  
The first of these is the river Euphrates. That great river was the  
boundary of Palestine upon the northeast. "In the same day the Lord made  
a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land,  
from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates;"[221]  
and in the days of Solomon this part of the covenant appears to have  
been fulfilled, for we are told that "Solomon reigned over all kingdoms  
from the river" (that is, the Euphrates) "unto the land of the  
Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt."[222] The Euphrates, however,  
was not only the boundary between Israel and the Assyrians. It was also  
Israel's line of defence against its powerful and ambitious neighbour,  
who had to cross its broad stream before he could seize any part of the  
Promised Land. By a natural transition of thought, the Euphrates next  
became a symbol of the Assyrians themselves, for its waters, when they  
rose in flood, overflowed Israel's territory and swept all before them.  
Then the prophets saw in the rush of the swollen river a figure of the  
scourge of God upon those who would not acknowledge Him: "The Lord spake  
also unto me again, saying, Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters  
of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son; now  
therefore behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the  
river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory: and  
he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks: and  
he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall  
reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill  
the breadth of Thy land, O Immanuel."[223] When accordingly the  
Euphrates is here spoken of, it is clear that with the river as such we  
have nothing to do. It is simply a symbol of judgment; and \_the four  
angels which had been bound at it\_, but were now \_loosed\_, are a  
token--four being the number of the world--that the judgment referred  
to, though it affects but a third part of men, reaches men over the  
whole surface of the globe. When \_the hour, and the day, and the month,  
and the year\_--that is, when the moment fixed in the counsels of the  
Almighty--come, the chains by which destruction has been kept back shall  
be broken, and the world shall be overwhelmed by the raging stream.  
  
The second Old Testament thought to be noted in this vision is that of  
\_horses\_. To the Israelite the horse presented an object of terror  
rather than admiration, and an army of horsemen awakened in him the  
deepest feelings of alarm. Thus it is that the prophet Habakkuk,  
describing the coming judgments of God, is commissioned to exclaim,  
"Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for  
I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it  
be told you. For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty  
nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess  
the dwelling-places that are not theirs. They are terrible and  
dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of  
themselves. Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are  
more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread  
themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as  
the eagle that hasteth to eat. They shall come all for violence: their  
faces shall sup up as the east wind, and they shall gather the  
captivity as the sand. And they shall scoff at the kings, and the  
princes shall be a scorn unto them: they shall deride every  
stronghold; for they shall heap dust, and take it."[224] Like the  
locusts of the previous vision, the "horses" now spoken of are indeed  
clothed with preternatural attributes; but the explanation is the  
same. Ordinary horses could not convey images of sufficient terror.  
  
The last two verses of chap. ix., which follow the sixth Trumpet,  
deserve our particular attention. They describe the effect produced  
upon the men who did not perish by the previous plagues, and they help  
to throw light upon a question most intimately connected with a just  
interpretation of the Apocalypse. The question is, Does the Seer, in  
any of his visions, anticipate the conversion of the ungodly? or does  
he deal, from the beginning to the end of his descriptions, with  
righteousness and sin in themselves rather than with righteous persons  
who may decline from the truth or sinful persons who may own and  
welcome it? The question will meet us again in the following chapters  
of this book, and will demand a fuller discussion than it can receive  
at present. In the meantime it is enough to say that, in the two  
verses now under consideration, no hint as to the conversion of any  
ungodly persons by the Trumpet plagues is given. On the contrary, the  
"men"--that is, the two-thirds of the inhabitants of the earth or of  
the ungodly world--who were not killed by these plagues repented  
neither of their irreligious principles nor of their immoral lives.  
They went on as they had done in the grossness of their idolatries and  
in the licentiousness of their conduct. They were neither awakened nor  
softened by the fate of others. They had deliberately chosen their own  
course; and, although they knew that they were rushing against the  
thick bosses of the Almighty's buckler, they had resolved to persevere  
in it to the end.  
  
Two brief remarks on these six Trumpet visions, looked at as a whole,  
appear still to be required.  
  
1. No attempt has been made to interpret either the individual objects  
of the judgments or the instruments by which judgment is inflicted. To  
the one class belong the "earth," the "trees," the "green grass," the  
"sea," the "ships," the "rivers and fountains of the waters," the  
"sun," the "moon," and the "stars;" to the other belong the details  
given in the description first of the "locusts" of the fifth Trumpet  
and then of the "horses" of the sixth. Each of these particulars may  
have a definite meaning, and interpreters may yet be successful in  
discovering it. The object kept in view throughout this commentary  
makes any effort to ascertain that meaning, when it is doubtful if it  
even exists, comparatively unimportant. We are endeavouring to catch  
the broader interpretation and spirit of the book; and it may be a  
question whether our impressions would in that respect be deepened  
though we saw reason to believe that all the objects above mentioned  
had individual force. One line of demarcation certainly seems to  
exist, traced by the Seer himself, between the first four and the two  
following judgments, the former referring to physical disasters  
flowing from moral evil, the latter to the more dreadful  
intensification of intellectual darkness and moral corruption visited  
upon men when they deliberately choose evil rather than good. Further  
than this it is for our present purpose unnecessary to go.  
  
2. The judgments of these Trumpets are judgments on \_the world\_ rather  
than the Church. Occasion has been already taken to observe that the  
structure of this part of the Apocalypse leads to the belief that both  
the Trumpets and the Bowls are developed out of the Seals. Yet there  
is a difference between the two, and various indications in the  
Trumpet visions appear to confine them to judgments on the world.  
  
There is the manner in which they are introduced, as an answer to the  
prayers of "all the saints."[225] It is true, as we shall yet see, that  
the degenerate Church is the chief persecutor of the people of God. But  
against her the saints cannot pray. To them she is still the Church.  
They remember the principle laid down by their Lord when He spoke of His  
kingdom in the parable of the tares: "Let both grow together until the  
harvest."[226] God alone can separate the false from the true within her  
pale. There is a sense in which the Church can never be overthrown, and  
there is not less a sense in which the world shall be subdued. Only for  
the subjugation of the world, therefore, can "all the saints" pray; and  
the Trumpets are an answer to their prayers.  
  
Again, the three Woe-Trumpets are directed against "them that dwell on  
the earth."[227] But, as has been already said, it is a principle of  
interpretation applicable to all the three series of the Seals, the  
Trumpets, and the Bowls, that traits filling up the picture in one  
member belong also to the other members of the group, and that the  
judgments, while under one aspect seven, are under another one. The  
three Woes therefore fall upon the same field of judgment as that  
visited by the plagues preceding them. In other words, all the six  
plagues of this series of visions are inflicted upon "them that dwell  
on the earth;" and that is simply another form of expression for the  
ungodly world.  
  
Again, under the fifth Trumpet the children of God are separated from  
the ungodly, so that the particulars of that judgment do not touch  
them. The locusts are instructed that \_they should not hurt the grass  
of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only such  
men as have not the seal of God in their foreheads\_.[228]  
  
Again, the seventh Trumpet, in which the series culminates, and which  
embodies its character as a whole, will be found to deal with judgment  
on the world alone: "The nations were roused to wrath, and Thy wrath  
came, and the time of the dead to be judged," ... and "the time to  
destroy them that destroy the earth."[229]  
  
Finally, the description given at the end of the sixth Trumpet of those  
who were hardened rather than softened by the preceding judgments leads  
directly to the same conclusion: \_And the rest of mankind which were not  
killed by these plagues repented not of the works of their hands, that  
they should not worship devils, and the idols of gold, and of silver,  
and of brass, and of stone, and of wood.\_[230]  
  
These considerations leave no doubt that the judgments of the Trumpets  
are judgments on the world. The Church, it is true, may also suffer  
from them, but not in judgment. They may be part of her trial as she  
mixes with the world during her earthly pilgrimage. Trial, however, is  
not judgment. To the children of God it is the discipline of a  
Father's hand. In the midst of it the

Church is safe, and it helps to  
ripen her for the fulness of the glory of her heavenly inheritance.  
  
FOOTNOTES:  
  
[197] Chap. iv. 8.  
  
[198] John ii. 4; xii. 27.  
  
[199] John v. 27.  
  
[200] Smith's \_Dictionary of the Bible\_, INCENSE.  
  
[201] Ps. l. 15.  
  
[202] Chap. vi. 10.  
  
[203] Comp. p. 103.  
  
[204] Exod. ix. 23-25.  
  
[205] Matt. xxi. 21.  
  
[206] Zech. iv. 7; Ps. xlvi. 2.  
  
[207] Jer. li. 25.  
  
[208] Exod. vii. 20, 21.  
  
[209] Isa. xiv. 12.  
  
[210] Jer. ix. 15.  
  
[211] Exod. xv. 23.  
  
[212] Comp. p. 97.  
  
[213] Exod. x. 21-23.  
  
[214] Comp. Job ix. 26.  
  
[215] Exod. x. 12-15.  
  
[216] Joel ii. 3.  
  
[217] Joel ii. 4-10.  
  
[218] Chaps. xxii. 16; i. 18.  
  
[219] Vers. 3-5.  
  
[220] Comp. p. 268.  
  
[221] Gen. xv. 18.  
  
[222] 1 Kings iv. 21.  
  
[223] Isa. viii. 5-8.  
  
[224] Hab. i. 5-10.  
  
[225] Chap. viii. 3.  
  
[226] Matt. xiii. 30.  
  
[227] Chap. viii. 13.  
  
[228] Chap. ix. 4.  
  
[229] Chap. xi. 18.  
  
[230] Chap. ix. 20.  
  
  
  
  
 CHAPTER VII.  
  
 \_FIRST CONSOLATORY VISION.\_  
  
 REV. x.  
  
  
At the point now reached by us the regular progress of the Trumpet  
judgments is interrupted, in precisely the same manner as between the  
sixth and seventh Seals, by two consolatory visions. The first is  
contained in chap. x., the second in chap. xi. 1-13. At chap. xi. 14  
the series of the Trumpets is resumed, reaching from that point to the  
end of the chapter.  
  
 And I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, arrayed  
 with a cloud: and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was  
 as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: and he had in his  
 hand a little book-roll open: and he set his right foot upon the  
 sea, and his left upon the earth: and he cried with a great voice,  
 as a lion roareth: and when he cried, the seven thunders uttered  
 their voices. And when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I  
 was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying, Seal  
 up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them  
 not. And the angel which I saw standing upon the sea and upon the  
 earth lifted up his right hand to heaven, and sware by Him that  
 liveth for ever and ever, who created the heaven, and the things  
 that are therein, and the earth, and the things that are therein,  
 and the sea, and the things that are therein, that there shall be  
 time no longer: but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel,  
 when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God,  
 according to the good tidings which He declared to His servants  
 the prophets. And the voice which I heard from heaven, I heard it  
 again speaking with me, and saying, Go, take the book-roll which  
 is open in the hand of the angel that standeth upon the sea and  
 upon the earth. And I went unto the angel, saying unto him that  
 he should give me the little book-roll. And he saith unto me, Take  
 it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but in thy  
 mouth it shall be sweet as honey. And I took the little book-roll  
 out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth  
 sweet as honey: and when I had eaten it, my belly was made bitter.  
 And they say unto me, Thou must prophesy again over many peoples,  
 and nations, and tongues, and kings (x. 1-11).  
  
Many questions of deep interest, and upon which the most divergent  
opinions have been entertained, meet us in connexion with this passage.  
To attempt to discuss these various opinions would only confuse the  
reader. It will be enough to allude to them when it seems necessary to  
do so. In the meantime, before endeavouring to discover the meaning of  
the vision, three observations may be made; one of a general kind, the  
other two bearing upon the interpretation of particular clauses.  
  
1. Like almost all else in the Revelation of St. John, the vision is  
founded upon a passage of the Old Testament. "And when I looked," says  
the prophet Ezekiel, "behold, an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll  
of a book was therein.... Moreover He said unto me, Son of man, eat what  
thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel. So I  
opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat that roll. And He said unto me,  
Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll  
that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for  
sweetness. And He said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house  
of Israel, and speak with My words unto them."[231]  
  
2. In one expression of ver. 6 it is doubtful whether the translation of  
the Authorised and Revised Versions, or the marginal translation of the  
latter, ought to be adopted, whether we ought to read, "There shall be  
time" or "There shall be delay" no longer. But the former is not only  
the natural meaning of the original; it would almost seem, from the use  
of the same word in other passages of the Apocalypse,[232] that it is  
employed by St. John to designate the whole Christian age. That age is  
now at its very close. The last hour is about to strike. The drama of  
the world's history is about to be wound up. "For the Lord will execute  
His word upon the earth, finishing it and cutting it short."[233]  
  
3. The last verse of the chapter deserves our attention for a moment:  
\_And they say unto me, Thou must prophesy again over many peoples, and  
nations, and tongues, and kings.\_ Although prophecy itself is spoken of  
in several passages of this book,[234] we read only once again of  
prophesying: when it is said in chap. xi. 3 of the two witnesses that  
they shall prophesy. A comparison of these passages will show that both  
words are to be understood in the sense of proclaiming the righteous  
acts and judgments of the Almighty. The prophet of the Apocalypse is not  
the messenger of mercy only, but of the just government of God.  
  
From these subordinate points we hasten to questions more immediately  
concerning us in our effort to understand the chapter. Several such  
questions have to be asked.  
  
1. Who is the angel introduced to us in the first verse of the vision?  
He is described as \_another strong angel\_; and, as the epithet "strong"  
has been so used only once before--in chap. v. 2, in connexion with the  
opening of the book-roll sealed with seven seals--we are entitled to  
conclude that this angel is said to be "another" in comparison with the  
angel there spoken of rather than with the many angels that surround the  
throne of God. But the "strong angel" in chap. v. is distinguished both  
from God Himself, and from the Lamb. In some sense, therefore, a similar  
distinction must be drawn here. On the other hand, the particulars  
mentioned of this angel lead directly to the conclusion not only that he  
has Divine attributes, but that he represents no other than that Son of  
man beheld by St. John in the first vision of his book. He is \_arrayed  
with a cloud\_; and in every passage of the Apocalypse where mention is  
made of such investiture, or in which a cloud or clouds are associated  
with a person, it is with the Saviour of the world as He comes to  
judgment.[235] Similar language marks also the other books of the New  
Testament.[236] \_The rainbow was upon his head\_; and the definite  
article employed takes us back, not to the rainbow spoken of in the book  
of Genesis, or to the rainbow which from time to time appears, a  
well-known object, in the sky, but to that of chap. iv. 3, where we have  
been told, in the description of the Divine throne, that "there was a  
rainbow round about the throne, like an emerald to look upon." The words  
\_his face was as the sun\_ do not of themselves prove that the reference  
is to chap. i. 16, where it is said of the One like unto a son of man  
that "His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength;" but the  
propriety of this reference is made almost indubitable by the mention of  
\_his feet as pillars of fire\_, for this last circumstance can only be an  
allusion to the trait spoken of in chap. i. 15, "And His feet like unto  
fine brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace." The combination of  
these particulars shows how close is the connexion between the "strong  
angel" of this vision and the Divine Redeemer; and the explanation of  
both the difference and the correspondence between the two is to be  
found in the remark previously made that in the Apocalypse the "angel"  
of any person or thing expresses that person or thing in action.[237]  
Here, therefore, we have the action of Him who is the Head, and King,  
and Lord of His Church.  
  
2. In what character does the Lord appear? As to the answer to this  
question there can be no dubiety. He appears in judgment. The rainbow  
upon His head is indeed the symbol of mercy, but it is sufficiently  
accounted for by the fact that He is Saviour as well as Judge. So far  
is the Apocalypse from representing the ideas of judgment and mercy as  
incompatible with each other that throughout the whole book the most  
terrible characteristic of the former is its proceeding from One  
distinguished by the latter. If even in itself the Divine wrath is to  
be dreaded by the sinner, the dread which it ought to inspire reaches  
its highest point when we think of it as "the wrath of the Lamb." The  
other features of the description speak directly of judgment: the  
"cloud," the "sun," the "pillars of fire."  
  
3. What notion are we to form of the contents of the \_little  
book-roll\_? They are certainly not the same as those of the book-roll  
of chap. v., although the word here used for the roll, a diminutive  
from the other, may suggest the idea that there is an intimate  
connexion between the two books, and that the second, like the first,  
is full of judgment. Other circumstances mentioned lead to the same  
conclusion. Thus the \_great voice, as a lion roareth\_, cannot fail to  
remind us of the voice of "the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah" in  
chap. v. The thought of \_the seven thunders\_ which \_uttered their  
voices\_ deepens the impression, for in that number we have the general  
conception of thunder in all the varied terrors that belong to it;  
and, whatever the particulars uttered by the thunders were--a point  
into which it is vain to inquire, as the writing of them was  
forbidden--their general tone must have been that of judgment. But  
these thunders are a response to the strong angel as he was about to  
take action with the little book,--"\_when he cried\_, the seven  
thunders uttered their voices,"--and the response must have been  
related to the action. It is clear, therefore, that the contents of  
the little book cannot have been tidings of mercy to a sinful world;  
and that that book cannot have been intended to tell the Seer that,  
notwithstanding the opposition of the powers of darkness, the Church  
of Christ was to make her way among the nations, growing up from the  
small seed into the stately tree, and at last covering the earth with  
the shadow of her branches. Even on the supposition that a conception  
of this kind could be traced in other parts of the Apocalypse, it  
would be out of keeping with the particulars accompanying it here. We  
may without hesitation conclude that the little book-roll has thus the  
general character of judgment, although, like the larger roll of chap.  
v., it may also include in it the preservation of the saints.  
  
We are thus in a position to inquire what the special contents of the  
little book-roll were. Before doing so one consideration may be kept  
in view.  
  
Calling to mind the symmetrical structure of the Apocalypse, it seems  
natural to expect that the relation to one another of the two  
consolatory visions falling between the Trumpets and the Bowls will  
correspond to that of the two between the Seals and the Trumpets. The  
two companies, however, spoken of in these two latter visions, are the  
same, the hundred and forty and four thousand "out of every tribe of the  
children of Israel" being identical with the great multitude "out of  
every nation;" while the contents of the second vision are substantially  
the same as those of the first, though repeated on a fuller and more  
perfect scale. Now we shall shortly see that the second of our present  
consolatory visions--that in chap. xi.--brings out the victory and  
triumph of \_a faithful remnant\_ of believers within a degenerate, though  
professing, Church. How probable does it become that the first  
consolatory vision--that in chap. x.--will relate to the same remnant,  
though on a lower plane alike of battle and of conquest!  
  
Thus looked at, we have good ground for the supposition that the  
little book-roll contained indications of judgment about to descend on  
a Church which had fallen from her high position and practically  
disowned her Divine Master; while at the same time it assured the  
faithful remnant within her that they would be preserved, and in due  
season glorified. The little book thus spoke of the hardest of all the  
struggles through which believers have to pass: that with foes of  
their own household; but, so speaking, it told also of judgment upon  
these foes, and of a glorious issue for the true members of Christ's  
Body out of toil and suffering.  
  
With this view of the contents of the little book-roll everything that  
is said of it appears to be in harmony.  
  
1. We thus at once understand why it is named by a diminutive form of  
the word used for the book-roll in chap. v. The latter contained the  
whole counsel of God for the execution of His plans both in the world  
and in the Church. The former has reference to the Church alone. A  
smaller roll therefore would naturally be sufficient for its tidings.  
  
2. The action which the Seer is commanded to take with the roll  
receives adequate explanation. He was to \_take it\_ out of the hand of  
the strong angel and to \_eat it up\_. The meaning is obvious, and is  
admitted by all interpreters. The Seer is in his own actual experience  
to assimilate the contents of the roll in order that he may know their  
value. The injunction is in beautiful accord with what we otherwise  
know of the character and feelings of St. John. The power of Christian  
experience to throw light upon Christian truth and upon the fortunes  
of Christ's people is one of the most remarkable characteristics of  
the fourth Gospel. It penetrates and pervades the whole. We listen to  
the expression of the Evangelist's own feelings as he is about to  
present to the world the image of his beloved Master, and he cries,  
"\_We\_ beheld His glory, glory as of the only-begotten from the  
Father;" "Of His fulness \_we\_ all received, and grace for grace."[238]  
We notice his comment upon words of Jesus dark to his fellow-Apostles  
and himself at the time when they were spoken, and he says, "When  
therefore He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that  
He spake this; and they believed the word which Jesus had said."[239]  
Finally, we hear him as he remembers the promise of the Spirit of  
truth, who was to instruct the disciples, not by new revelations of  
the Divine will, but by unfolding more largely the fulness that was to  
be found in Christ: "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He  
shall guide you into all the truth: for He shall not speak from  
Himself; but what things soever He shall hear, these shall He speak:  
and He shall declare unto you the things that are to come. He shall  
glorify Me: for He shall take of Mine, and shall declare it unto  
you."[240] Everywhere and always Christian experience is the key that  
unlocks what would otherwise be closed, and sheds light upon what  
would otherwise be dark. To such experience, accordingly, the contents  
of the little roll, if they were such as we have understood them to  
be, must have appealed with peculiar power. In beholding judgment  
executed on the world, the believer might need only to stand by and  
wonder, as Moses and Israel stood upon the shore of the Red Sea when  
the sea, returning to its bed, overwhelmed their enemies. They were  
safe. They had neither part nor lot with those who were sinking as  
lead in the mighty waters. It would be otherwise when judgment came  
upon the Church. Of that Church believers were a part. How could they  
explain the change that had come over her, the purification that she  
needed, the separation that must take place within what had hitherto  
been to all appearance the one Zion which God loved? In the former  
case all was outward; in the latter all is inward, personal,  
experimental, leading to inquiry and earnest searchings of heart and  
prayer. A book containing these things was thus an appeal to  
Christian experience, and St. John might well be told to "eat it up."  
  
3. The effect produced upon the Seer by eating the little roll is also  
in accord with what has been said. \_It shall make thy belly bitter\_,  
it was said to him, \_but in thy mouth it shall be sweet as honey\_; and  
the effect followed. \_It was in my mouth\_, he says, \_sweet as honey:  
and when I had eaten it, my belly was made bitter\_. Such an effect  
could hardly follow the mere proclamation of judgment on the world.  
When we look at that judgment in the light in which it ought to be  
regarded, and in which we have hitherto regarded it--as the  
vindication of righteousness and of a Divine and righteous order--the  
thought of it can impart nothing but joy. But to think that the Church  
of the living God, the bride of Christ, shall be visited with  
judgment, and to be compelled to acknowledge that the judgment is  
deserved; to think that those to whom so much has been given should  
have given so little in return; to think of the selfishness which has  
prevailed where love ought to have reigned, of worldliness where there  
ought to have been heavenliness of mind, and of discord where there  
ought to have been unity--these are the things that make the  
Christian's reflections "bitter;" they, and they most of all, are his  
perplexity, his burden, his sorrow, and his cross. The world may  
disappoint him, but from it he expected little. When the Church  
disappoints him, the "foundations are overturned," and the honey of  
life is changed into gall and wormwood.  
  
Combining the particulars which have now been noticed, we seem  
entitled to conclude that the little book-roll of this chapter is a  
roll of judgment, but of judgment relating less to the world than to  
the Church. It tells us that that sad experience of hers which is to  
meet us in the following chapters ought neither to perplex nor  
overwhelm us. The experience may be strange, very different from what  
we might have expected and hoped for; but the thread by which the  
Church is guided has not passed out of the hands of Him who leads His  
people by ways that they know not into the hands of an unsympathizing  
and hostile power. As His counsels in reference to the world, and to  
the Church in her general relation to it, contained in the great  
book-roll of chap. v., shall stand, so the internal relations of the  
two parts of His Church to each other, together with the issues  
depending upon them, are equally under His control. If judgment falls  
upon the Church, it is not because God has forgotten to be gracious,  
or has in anger shut up His tender mercies, but because the Church has  
sinned, because she is in need of chastisement, and because she must  
be taught that only in direct dependence upon the voice of the Good  
Shepherd, and not in the closest "fold" that can be built for her, is  
she safe. Let her "know" Him, and she shall be known of Him even as He  
is known of the Father.[241]  
  
FOOTNOTES:  
  
[231] Ezek. ii. 9; iii. 4.  
  
[232] Comp. chaps. vi. 11; xx. 3.  
  
[233] Rom. ix. 28.  
  
[234] Comp. chaps. i. 3; xxii. 7, 10, 18, 19.  
  
[235] Chaps. i. 7; xiv. 14-16. In chap. xi. 12 "the cloud" is the  
well-known cloud in which Christ ascended, and in which He comes to  
judgment.  
  
[236] Matt. xxiv. 30; Mark xiii. 26; Luke xxi. 27; 1 Thess. iv. 17.  
  
[237] Comp. p. 25.  
  
[238] John i. 14, 16.  
  
[239] John ii. 22.  
  
[240] John xvi. 13, 14.  
  
[241] Comp. John x. 1-15.  
  
  
  
  
 CHAPTER VIII.  
  
 \_SECOND CONSOLATORY VISION AND THE SEVENTH

TRUMPET.\_  
  
 REV. xi.  
  
  
From the first consolatory vision we proceed to the second:--  
  
 And there was given unto me a reed like unto a rod: and one said,  
 Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that  
 worship therein. And the court which is without the temple cast  
 without, and measure it not; for it hath been given unto the  
 nations: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and  
 two months (xi. 1, 2).  
  
Various points connected with these verses demand examination before any  
attempt can be made to gather the meaning of the vision as a whole.  
  
1. What is meant by the \_measuring\_ of the Temple? As in so many other  
instances, the figure is taken from the Old Testament. In the prophet  
Zechariah we read, "I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold  
a man with a measuring line in his hand. Then said I, Whither goest  
thou? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the  
breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof."[242] To the same  
effect, but still more particularly, the prophet Ezekiel speaks: "In the  
visions of God brought He me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a  
very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city on the south.  
And He brought me thither, and, behold, there was a man, whose  
appearance was like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his  
hand, and a measuring reed; and he stood in the gate.... And behold a  
wall on the outside of the house round about, and in the man's hand a  
measuring reed of six cubits long by the cubit and an handbreadth, so he  
measured,"[243] whereupon follows a minute and lengthened description of  
the measuring of all the parts of that Temple which was to be the glory  
of God's people in the latter days. From these passages we not only  
learn whence the idea of the "measuring" was taken, but what the meaning  
of it was. The account given by Ezekiel distinctly shows that thus to  
measure expresses the thought of preservation, not of destruction. That  
the same thought is intended by Zechariah is clear from the words  
immediately following the instruction given him to measure: "For I,  
saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be  
the glory in the midst of her;"[244] while, if further proof upon this  
point were needed, it is found in the fact that the measuring of this  
passage does not stand alone in the Apocalypse. The new Jerusalem is  
also measured: "And he that spake with me had for a measure a golden  
reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.  
And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits,  
according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel."[245] When God  
therefore measures, He measures, not in indignation, but that the object  
measured may be in a deeper than ordinary sense the habitation of His  
glory.  
  
2. What is meant by \_the temple, the altar\_, and the \_casting without  
of the court which is without the temple\_? In other words, are we to  
interpret these objects and the action taken with the latter literally  
or figuratively? Are we to think of the things themselves, or of certain  
spiritual ideas which they are used to represent? The first view is not  
only that of many eminent commentators; it even forms one of the chief  
grounds upon which they urge that the Herodian temple upon Mount Moriah  
was still in existence when the Apocalyptist wrote. He could not, it is  
alleged, have been instructed to "measure" the Temple if that building  
had been already thrown down, and not one stone left upon another. Yet,  
when we attend to the words, it would seem as if this view must be set  
aside in favour of a figurative interpretation. For--  
  
(1) The word "temple" misleads. The term employed in the original does  
not mean the Temple-buildings as a whole, but only their innermost  
shrine or sanctuary, that part known as the "Holy of holies," which  
was separated from every other part of the sacred structure by the  
second veil. No doubt, so far as the simple act of measuring was  
concerned, a part might have been as easily measured as the whole. But  
closer attention to what was in the Seer's mind will show that when he  
thus speaks of the \_naos\_ or shrine he is not thinking of the Temple  
at Jerusalem at all, but of the Tabernacle in the wilderness upon  
which the Temple was moulded. The nineteenth verse of the chapter  
makes this clear. In that verse we find him saying, "And there was  
opened the temple" (the \_naos\_) "of God that is in heaven, and there  
was seen in His temple" (His \_naos\_) "the ark of His covenant." We  
know, however, that the ark of the covenant \_never had\_ a place in  
the Temple which existed in the days of Christ. It had disappeared at  
the destruction of the first Temple, long before that date. The Temple  
spoken of in the nineteenth verse is indeed said to be "in heaven;"  
and it may be thought that the ark, though not on earth, might have  
been seen there. But no reader of the Revelation of St. John can doubt  
that to him the sanctuary of God on earth was an exact representation  
of the heavenly sanctuary, that what God had given in material form to  
men was a faithful copy of the ideas of His spiritual and eternal  
kingdom. He could not therefore have placed in the original what, if  
he had before his mind the Temple at Jerusalem, he knew had no  
existence within its precincts; and the conclusion is irresistible  
that when he speaks of a \_naos\_ that was to be measured he had turned  
his thoughts, not to the stone building upon Mount Moriah, but to its  
ancient prototype. On this ground alone then, even could no other be  
adduced, we seem entitled to maintain that a literal interpretation of  
the word "temple" is here impossible.  
  
(2) Even should it be allowed that the sanctuary and the altar might  
be measured, the injunction is altogether inapplicable to the next  
following clause: \_them that worship therein\_. And it is peculiarly so  
if we adopt the natural construction, by which the word "therein" is  
connected with the word "altar." We cannot literally speak of persons  
worshipping "in" an altar. Nay, even though we connect "therein" with  
"the temple," the idea of measuring \_persons\_ with a rod is at  
variance with the realities of life and the ordinary use of human  
language. A figurative element is thus introduced into the very heart  
of the clause the meaning of which is in dispute.  
  
(3) A similar observation may be made with regard to the words \_cast  
without\_ in ver. 2. The injunction has reference to the outer court of  
the Temple, and the thought of "casting out" such an extensive space  
is clearly inadmissible. So much have translators felt this that both  
in the Authorised and Revised Versions they have replaced the words  
"cast without" by the words "leave without." The outer court of the  
Temple could not be "cast out;" therefore it must be "left out." The  
interpretation thus given, however, fails to do justice to the  
original, for, though the word employed does not always include actual  
violence, it certainly implies action of a more positive kind than  
mere letting alone or passing by. More than this. We are under a  
special obligation in the present instance not to strip the word used  
by the Apostle of its proper force, for we shall immediately see that,  
rightly interpreted, it is one of the most interesting expressions of  
his book, and of the greatest value in helping us to determine the  
precise nature of his thought. In the meanwhile it is enough to say  
that the employment of the term in the connexion in which it here  
occurs is at variance with a simply literal interpretation.  
  
(4) It cannot be denied that almost every other expression in the  
subsequent verses of the vision is figurative or metaphorical. If we  
are to interpret this part literally, it will be impossible to apply  
the same rule to other parts; and we shall have such a mixture of the  
literal and metaphorical as will completely baffle our efforts to  
comprehend the meaning of the Seer.  
  
(5) We have the statement from the writer's own lips that, at least in  
speaking of Jerusalem, he is not to be literally understood. In ver. 8  
he refers to "the great city, which \_spiritually\_ is called Sodom and  
Egypt." The hint thus given as to one point of his description may be  
accepted as applicable to it all.  
  
We conclude, therefore, that the "measuring," the "temple" or \_naos\_,  
the "altar," the "court which is without," and the "casting without"  
of the latter are to be regarded as figurative.  
  
3. Our third point of inquiry is, What is the meaning of the figure?  
There need be no hesitation as to the things first spoken of: "the  
temple, the altar, and them that worship therein." These, the most  
sacred parts of the Temple-buildings, can only denote the most sacred  
portion of the true Israel of God. They are those disciples of Christ  
who constitute His shrine, His golden altar of incense whence their  
prayers rise up continually before Him, His worshippers in spirit and  
in truth. These, as we have already often had occasion to see, shall  
be preserved safe amidst the troubles of the Church and of the world.  
In one passage we have been told that they are numbered[246]; now we  
are further informed that they are measured.  
  
It is more difficult to explain who are meant by "the court which is  
without the temple." But three things are clear. First, they are a  
part of the Temple-buildings, although not of its inner shrine.  
Secondly, they belong to Jerusalem; and Jerusalem, notwithstanding its  
degenerate condition, was still the city of God, standing to Him in a  
relation different from that of the "nations," even when it had sunk  
beneath them and had done more to merit His displeasure. Thirdly, they  
cannot be the Gentiles, for from them they are manifestly  
distinguished when it is said that the outer court "hath been given  
unto \_the nations\_: and the holy city shall they tread under foot  
forty and two months."[247] One conclusion alone remains. The "court  
that is without" must symbolize the faithless portion of the Christian  
Church, such as tread the courts of the house of God, but to whom He  
speaks as He spoke to Jerusalem of old: "Bring no more vain oblations;  
incense is an abomination unto Me; the new moons and sabbaths, the  
calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the  
solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul  
hateth: they are a trouble unto Me; I am weary to bear them."[248]  
  
The correctness of the sense thus assigned to this part of the vision is  
powerfully confirmed by what appears to be the true foundation of the  
singular expression already so far spoken of, "cast without." Something  
must lie at the bottom of the figure; and nothing seems so probable as  
this: that it is the "casting out" which took place in the case of the  
man blind from his birth, and the opening of whose eyes by Jesus is  
related in the fourth Gospel. Of that man we are told that when the Jews  
could no longer answer him "they cast him out."[249] The word is the  
same as that now employed, and the thought is most probably the same  
also. Excommunication from the synagogue is in the Seer's mind, not a  
temporal punishment, not a mere worldly doom, but a spiritual sentence  
depriving of spiritual privileges misunderstood and abused. Such a  
casting out, however, can apply only to those who had been once within  
the courts of the Lord's house or to the faithless members of the  
Christian Church. They, like the Jews of old, would "cast out" the  
humble disciples whom Jesus "found";[250] and He cast them out.  
  
If the explanation now given of the opening verses of this chapter be  
correct, we have reached a very remarkable stage in these apocalyptic  
visions. For the first time, except in the letters to the  
churches,[251] we have a clear line of distinction drawn between the  
professing and the true portions of the Church of Christ, or, as it  
may be otherwise expressed, between the "called" and the  
"chosen."[252] How far the same distinction will meet us in later  
visions of this book we have yet to see. For the present it may be  
enough to say that the drawing of such a distinction corresponds  
exactly with what we might have been prepared to expect. Nothing can  
be more certain than that in the things actually around him St. John  
beheld the mould and type of the things that were to come. Now  
Jerusalem, the Church of God in Israel, contained two classes within  
its walls: those who were accomplishing their high destiny and those  
by whom that destiny was misunderstood, despised, and cast away. Has  
it not always been the same in the Christian Church? If the world  
entered into the one, has it not entered as disastrously into the  
other? That field which is "the kingdom of heaven" upon earth has  
never wanted tares as well as wheat. They grow together, and no man  
may separate them. When the appropriate moment comes, God Himself will  
give the word; angels will carry off the tares, and the great  
Husbandman will gather the wheat into His garner.  
  
4. One question still remains: What is the meaning of the \_forty and  
two months\_ during which the holy city is to be trodden under foot of  
the nations? The same expression meets us in chap. xiii. 5, where it  
is said that "there was given to the beast authority to continue forty  
and two months." But forty and two months is also three and a half  
years, the Jewish year having consisted of twelve months, except when  
an intercalary month was inserted among the twelve in order to  
preserve harmony between the seasons and the rotation of time. The  
same period is therefore again alluded to in chap. xii. 14, when it is  
said of the woman who fled into the wilderness that she is there  
nourished for "a time, and times, and half a time." Once more, we read  
in chap. xi. 3 and in chap. xii. 6 of a period denoted by "a thousand  
two hundred and threescore days;" and a comparison of this last  
passage with ver. 14 of the same chapter distinctly shows that it is  
equivalent to the three and a half times or years. Three and a half  
multiplied by three hundred and sixty, the number of days in the  
Jewish year, gives us exactly the twelve hundred and sixty days. These  
three periods, therefore, are the same. Why the different designations  
should be adopted is another question, to which, so far as we are  
aware, no satisfactory reply has yet been given, although it may be  
that, for some occult reason, the Seer beholds in "months" a suitable  
expression for the dominion of evil, in "days" one appropriate to the  
sufferings of the good.  
  
The ground of this method of looking at the Church's history is found in  
the book of Daniel, where we read of the fourth beast, or the fourth  
kingdom, "And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and  
shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times  
and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times  
and the dividing of time."[253] The same book helps us also to answer  
the question as to the particular period of the Church's history denoted  
by the days, or months, or years referred to, for in another passage the  
prophet says, "And He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week:  
and in the midst of the week He shall cause the sacrifice and the  
oblation to cease."[254] The three and a half years therefore, or the  
half of seven years, denote the whole period extending from the  
cessation of the sacrifice and oblation. In other words, they denote the  
Christian era from its beginning to its close, and that more especially  
on the side of its disturbed and broken character, of the power  
exercised in it by what is evil, of the troubles and sufferings of the  
good. During it the disciples of the Saviour do not reach the  
completeness of their rest; their victory is not won. Ideally it is so;  
it always has been so since Jesus overcame: but it is not yet won in the  
actual realities of the case; and, though in one sense every heavenly  
privilege is theirs, their difficulties are so great, and their  
opponents so numerous and powerful, that the true expression for their  
state is a broken seven years, or three years and a half. During this  
time, accordingly, the holy city is represented as trodden under foot by  
the nations. They who are at ease in Zion may not feel it; but to the  
true disciples of Jesus their Master's prophecy is fulfilled, "In the  
world ye shall have tribulation."[255]  
  
The vision now proceeds:--  
  
 And I will give power unto My two witnesses, and they shall prophesy  
 a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.  
 These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing  
 before the Lord of the earth. And if any man desireth to hurt them,  
 fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and  
 if any man shall desire to hurt them, in this manner must he be  
 killed. These have the power to shut the heaven, that it rain not  
 during the days of their prophecy: and they have power over the  
 waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every  
 plague, as often as they shall desire. And when they shall have  
 finished their testimony, the beast that cometh up out of the abyss  
 shall make war with them, and overcome them, and kill them. And  
 their dead body lies in the street of the great city, which  
 spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was  
 crucified. And from among the peoples and tribes and tongues and  
 nations do men look upon their dead body three days and an half, and  
 suffer not their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. And they that  
 dwell on the earth rejoice over them, and make merry: and they shall  
 send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them  
 that dwell on the earth. And after the three days and an half the  
 breath of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their  
 feet; and great fear fell upon them which beheld them. And they  
 heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither.  
 And they went up into heaven in the cloud; and their enemies beheld  
 them. And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and the tenth  
 part of the city fell; and there were killed in the earthquake seven  
 thousand persons: and the rest were affrighted, and gave glory to  
 the God of heaven (xi. 3-13).  
  
The figures of this part of the vision, like those of the first part,  
are drawn from the Old Testament. That the language is not to be  
literally understood hardly admits of dispute, for, whatever might  
have been thought of the "two witnesses" had we read only of them, the  
description given of their persons, or of their person (for in ver. 8,  
where mention is made of their \_dead body\_--not "bodies"--they are  
treated as one), of their work, of their death, and of their  
resurrection and ascension, is so obviously figurative as to render it  
necessary to view the whole passage in that light. The main elements  
of the figure are supplied by the prophet Zechariah. "And the angel  
that talked with me," says the prophet, "came again, and waked me, as  
a man that is wakened out of sleep, and said unto me, What seest thou?  
And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with  
a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven  
pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof: and two  
olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other  
upon the left side thereof. So I answered and spake to the angel that  
talked with me, saying, What are these, my lord?... Then he answered  
and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the Lord unto  
Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit,  
saith the Lord of hosts Who art thou, O great mountain? before  
Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the  
headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it....  
Then answered I, and said unto him, What are the

se two olive trees  
upon the right side of the candlestick and upon the left side thereof?  
And I answered again, and said unto him, What be these two olive  
branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out  
of themselves? And he answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what  
these be? And I said, No, my lord. Then said he, These are the two  
anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth."[256] In  
these words indeed we read only of one golden candlestick, while now  
we read of two. But we have already found that the Seer of the  
Apocalypse, in using the figures to which he had been accustomed, does  
not bind himself to all their details; and the only inference to be  
drawn from this difference, as well as from the circumstance already  
noted in ver. 8, is that the number "two" is to be regarded less in  
itself than as a strengthening of the idea of the number one. This  
circumstance further shows that the two witnesses cannot be divided  
between the two olive trees and the two candlesticks, as if the one  
witness were the former and the other the latter. Both taken together  
express the idea of witnessing, and to the full elucidation of that  
idea belong also the olive tree and the candlestick. The witnessing is  
fed by perpetual streams of that heavenly oil, of that unction of the  
Spirit, which is represented by the olive tree; and it sheds light  
around like the candlestick. The two witnesses, therefore, are not two  
individuals to be raised up during the course of the Church's history,  
that they may bear testimony to the facts and principles of the  
Christian faith. The Seer indeed may have remembered that it had been  
God's plan in the past to commission His servants, not singly, but in  
pairs. He may have called to mind Moses and Aaron, Joshua and Caleb,  
Elijah and Elisha, Zerubbabel and Joshua, or he may have thought of  
the fact that our Lord sent forth His disciples two by two. The  
probability, however, is that, as he speaks of "witnessing," he  
thought mainly of that precept of the law which required the testimony  
of two witnesses to confirm a statement. Yet he does not confine  
himself to the thought of two individual witnesses, however eminent,  
who shall in faithful work fill up their own short span of human life  
and die. The witness he has in view is that to be borne by all  
Christ's people, everywhere, and throughout the whole Christian age.  
From the first to the last moment of the Church's history in this  
world there shall be those raised up who shall never fail to  
\_prophesy\_, or, in other words, to testify to the truth of God as it  
is in Jesus. The task will be hard, but they will not shrink from it.  
They shall be \_clothed in sackcloth\_, but they shall count their robes  
of shame to be robes of honour. They shall occupy the position of Him  
who, in the days of His humiliation, was the "faithful and true  
Witness." Nourished by the Spirit that was in Him, they shall, like  
Him, be the light of the world,[257] so that God shall never be left  
without some at least to witness for Him.  
  
Having spoken of the persons of the two witnesses, St. John next  
proceeds to describe the power with which, amidst their seeming  
weakness, their testimony is borne; and once more he finds in the most  
striking histories of the Old Testament the materials with which his  
glowing imagination builds.  
  
In the first place, \_fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth  
their enemies\_, so that these enemies are \_killed\_ by the manifest  
judgment of God, and even, in His righteous retribution, by the very  
instrument of destruction they would have themselves employed. Elijah  
and the three companions of Daniel are before us, when at the word of  
Elijah fire descended out of heaven, and consumed the two captains and  
their fifties,[258] and when the companions of Daniel were not only left  
unharmed amidst the flames, but when the fire leaped out upon and slew  
the men by whom they had been cast into the furnace.[259] This fire  
proceeding out of the mouth of the two witnesses is like the sharp  
two-edged sword proceeding out of the mouth of the Son of man in the  
first vision of the book.[260] In the second place, the witnesses \_have  
the power to shut the heaven, that it rain not during the days of their  
prophecy\_. Elijah is again before us when he exclaimed in the presence  
of Ahab, "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there  
shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word," and  
when "it rained not on the earth for three years and six months."[261]  
Finally, when we are told that the witnesses \_have power over the waters  
to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as  
often as they shall desire\_, we are reminded of Moses and of the plagues  
inflicted through him upon the oppressors of Israel in Egypt.  
  
The three figures teach the same lesson. No deliverance has been  
effected by the Almighty for His people in the past which He is not  
ready to repeat. The God of Moses, and Elijah, and Daniel is the  
unchangeable Jehovah. He has made with His Church an everlasting  
covenant; and the most striking manifestations of His power in bygone  
times "happened by way of example, and were written for our  
admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come."[262]  
  
Hence, accordingly, the Church \_finishes her testimony\_.[263] So was  
it with our Lord in His high-priestly prayer and on the Cross: "I  
glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou  
hast given Me to do;" "It is finished."[264] But this "finishing" of  
their testimony on the part of the two witnesses points to more than  
the end of the three and a half years viewed simply as a period of  
time. Not the thought of time alone, but of the completion of  
testimony, is present to the Seer's mind. At every moment in the  
history of Christ's true disciples that completion is reached by some  
or others of their number. Through all the three and a half years  
their testimony is borne with power, and is finished with triumph, so  
that the world is always without excuse.  
  
Having spoken of the power of the witnesses, St. John next turns to the  
thought of their evil fate. \_The beast that cometh up out of the abyss  
shall make war with them, and overcome them, and kill them.\_ This  
"beast" has not yet been described; but it is a characteristic of the  
Apostle, both in the fourth Gospel and in the Apocalypse, to anticipate  
at times what is to come, and to introduce persons to our notice whom we  
shall only learn to know fully at a later point in his narrative. That  
is the case here. This beast will again meet us in chap. xiii. and chap.  
xvii., where we shall see that it is the concentrated power of a world  
material and visible in its opposition to a world spiritual and  
invisible. It may be well to remark, too, that the representation given  
of the beast presents us with one of the most striking contrasts of St.  
John, and one that must be carefully remembered if we would understand  
his visions. Why speak of its "coming up out of the abyss"? Because the  
beast is the contrast of the \_risen\_ Saviour. Only after His  
resurrection did our Lord enter upon His dominion as King, Head, and  
Guardian of His people. In like manner only after a resurrection  
mockingly attributed to it does this beast attain its full range of  
influence. Then, in the height of its rage and at the summit of its  
power, it sets itself in opposition to Christ's witnesses. It cannot  
indeed prevent them from accomplishing their work; they shall finish  
their testimony in spite of it: but, when that is done, it shall gain an  
apparent triumph. As the Son of God was nailed to the Cross, and in that  
hour of His weakness seemed to be conquered by the world, so shall it  
be with them. They shall be overcome and killed.  
  
Nor is that all, for their \_dead body\_ (not \_dead bodies\_[265]) is  
treated with the utmost contumely. It lies in the broad open street of  
\_the great city\_, which the words \_where also their Lord was  
crucified\_ show plainly to be Jerusalem. But Jerusalem! In what aspect  
is she here beheld? Not as "the holy city," "the beloved city," the  
Zion which God had desired for His habitation, and of which He had  
said, "This is My rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired  
it,"[266] but degenerate Jerusalem, Jerusalem become as Sodom for its  
wickedness, and as Egypt for its oppression of the Israel of God. The  
language is strong, so strong that many interpreters have deemed it  
impossible to apply it to Jerusalem in any sense, and have imagined  
that they had no alternative but to think of Rome. Yet it is not  
stronger than the language used many a time by the prophets of old:  
"Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law  
of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. How is the faithful city become an  
harlot! ... righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers."[267]  
  
If, however, this city be Jerusalem, what does it represent? Surely, for  
reasons already stated, neither the true disciples of Jesus, nor the  
heathen nations of the world. We have the degenerate Church before us,  
the Church that has conformed to the world. That Church beholds the  
faithful witnesses for Christ the Crucified lie in the open way. Their  
wounds make no impression upon her heart, and draw no tear from her  
eyes. She even invites the world to the spectacle; and the world,  
always eager to hear the voice of a degenerate Church, responds to the  
invitation. It "looks," and obviously without commiseration, upon the  
prostrate, mangled form that has fallen in the strife. This it does for  
three days and a half, the half of seven, a broken period of trouble;  
and it will not suffer the dead body to be laid in a tomb. Nay, the  
world is not content even with its victory. After victory it must have  
its triumph; and that triumph is presented to us in one of the most  
wonderful pictures of the Apocalypse, when \_they that dwell on the  
earth\_--that is, the men of the world--\_from among the peoples and  
tribes and tongues and nations\_, having listened to the degenerate  
Church's call, make high holiday at the thought of what they have done.  
They \_rejoice over the dead bodies, and make merry: and they send gifts  
one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwell on  
the earth\_. We are reminded of Herod and Pilate, who, when the Jewish  
governor sent Jesus to his heathen brother, "became friends that very  
day."[268] But we are reminded of more. In the book of Nehemiah we find  
mention of that great feast of Tabernacles which was observed by the  
people when they heard again, after long silence, the book of the law,  
and when "there was very great gladness." In immediate connexion with  
this feast, Nehemiah said to the people, "Go your way, eat the fat, and  
drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is  
prepared: for this day is holy unto the Lord: neither be ye sorry; for  
the joy of the Lord is your strength"[269]; while it constituted a part  
also of the joyful ceremonial of the feast of the dedication of the  
Temple that the Jews made the days of the feast "days of feasting and  
joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the  
poor."[270] Taking these passages into account, and remembering the  
general style and manner of St. John, we can have no hesitation in  
recognising in the festival of these verses the world's Feast of  
Tabernacles, the contrast and the counterpart of the Church's feast  
already spoken of in the second consolatory vision of chap. vii.  
  
If so, what a picture does it present!--the degenerate Church inviting  
the world to celebrate a feast over the dead bodies of the witnesses  
for Christ, and the world accepting the invitation; the former  
accommodating herself to the ways of the latter, and the latter  
welcoming the accommodation; the one proclaiming no unpleasant  
doctrines and demanding no painful sacrifices, the other hailing with  
satisfaction the prospect of an easy yoke and of a cheap purchase of  
eternity as well as time. The picture may seem too terrible to be  
true. But let us first remember that, like all the pictures of the  
Apocalypse, it is ideal, showing us the operation of principles in  
their last, not their first, effect; and then let us ask whether we  
have never read of, or ourselves seen, such a state of things actually  
realized. Has the Church never become the world, on the plea that she  
would gain the world? Has she never uttered smooth things or  
prophesied deceits in order that she might attract those who will not  
endure the thought of hardness in religious service, and would rather  
embrace what in their inward hearts they know to be a lie than bitter  
truth? Such a spectacle has been often witnessed, and is yet witnessed  
every day, when those who ought to be witnesses for a living and  
present Lord gloze over the peculiar doctrines of the Christian faith,  
draw as close as possible the bonds of their fellowship with  
unchristian men, and treat with scorn the thought of a heavenly life  
to be led even amidst the things of time. One can understand the  
world's own ways, and, even when lamenting that its motives are not  
higher, can love its citizens and respect their virtues. But a far  
lower step in declension is reached when the Church's silver becomes  
dross, when her wine is mixed with water, and when her voice no longer  
convicts, no longer "torments them that dwell on the earth."  
  
In the midst of all their tribulation, however, the faithful portion  
of the Church have a glorious reward. They have suffered with Christ,  
but they shall also reign with Him. After all their trials in life,  
after their death, and after the limited time during which even when  
dead they have been dishonoured, they live again. \_The breath of life  
from God entered into them.\_ Following Him who is the first-fruits of  
them that sleep, they \_stood upon their feet\_.[271] They \_heard a  
great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither\_. They \_went  
up into heaven in the cloud\_; and there they sit down with the  
conquering Redeemer in His throne, even as He overcame and sat down  
with His Father in His throne.[272] All this, too, takes place in the  
very presence of their enemies, upon whom \_great fear fell\_. Even  
nature sympathizes with them. Having waited for the revealing of the  
sons of God, and in hope that she also shall be delivered from the  
bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of  
God,[273] she hails their final triumph. \_There was a great  
earthquake, the tenth part of the city\_ (that is, of Jerusalem) \_fell;  
and there were killed in the earthquake seven thousand persons.\_ It is  
unnecessary to say that the words are figurative and symbolical,  
denoting in all probability simply judgment, but judgment restrained.  
  
The last words of the vision alone demand more particular attention:  
\_The rest were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.\_ The  
thought is the same as that which met us when we were told at the  
close of the sixth Trumpet that "the rest of mankind which were not  
killed with these plagues repented not."[274] There is no repentance,  
no conversion. There is terror; there is alarm; there is a tribute of  
awe to the God of heaven who has so signally vindicated His own cause;  
but there is nothing more. Nor are we told what may or may not follow  
in some future scene. For the Seer the final triumph of good and the  
final overthrow of evil are enough. He can be patient, and, so far as  
persons are concerned, can leave the issue in the hands of God.  
  
The two consolatory visions interposed between the sixth and seventh  
Trumpets are now over, and we cannot fail to see how great an advance  
they are upon the two visions of a similar kind interposed between the  
sixth and seventh Seals. The whole action has made progress. At the  
earlier stage the Church may be said to have been hidden in the hollow  
of the Almighty's hand. In the thought of the "great tribulation"  
awaiting her she has been sealed, while the peace and joy of her new  
condition have been set before us, as she neither hungers nor thirsts,  
but is guided by her Divine Shepherd to green pastures and to  
fountains of the waters of life. At this later stage she is in the  
midst of her conflict and her sufferings. She is in the heat of her  
warfare, in the extremity of her persecuted state. From the height on  
which we stand we do not look over a quiet and peaceful plain, with  
flocks of sheep resting in its meadows; we look over a field where  
armed men have met in the shock of battle. There is the stir, the  
excitement, the tumult of deadly strife for higher than earthly  
freedom, for dearer than earthly homes. There may be temporary repulse  
and momentary yielding even on the side of the good, but they still  
press on. The Captain of their salvation is at their head; and foot by  
foot fresh ground is won, until at last the victory is sounded, and we  
are ready for the seventh Trumpet.  
  
Before it sounds there is a warning similar to that which preceded the  
sounding of the fifth and sixth[275]:--  
  
 The second Woe is past; behold, the third Woe cometh quickly (xi.  
 14).  
  
These words are to be connected with the close of chap. ix., all that is  
contained in chaps. x. and xi. 1-13 being, as we have seen, episodical.  
  
The seventh Trumpet is now sounded:--  
  
 And the seventh angel sounded; and there followed great voices in  
 heaven, and they said, The kingdom of the world is become the  
 kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for  
 ever and ever. And the four-and-twenty elders, which sit before  
 God on their thrones, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,  
 saying, We give Thee thanks, O Lord, God, the Almighty, which art  
 and which wast; because Thou hast taken Thy great power, and didst  
 reign. And the nations were roused to wrath, and Thy wrath came,  
 and the time of the dead to be judged, and the time to give their  
 reward to Thy servants the prophets, both the saints and them  
 that fear Thy name, the small and the great, and to destroy them  
 that destroy the earth. And there was opened the temple of God  
 that is in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His  
 covenant: and there followed lightnings, and voices, and thunders,  
 and an earthquake, and great hail (xi. 15-19).  
  
1. By \_the kingdom of the world\_ here spoken of is meant, that dominion  
over the world as a whole has become the possession of our Lord and of  
His Christ; and it is to be His for ever and ever. There is no  
contradiction between this statement of St. John and that of St. Paul  
when, speaking of the Son, the latter Apostle says, "And when all things  
have been subjected unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be  
subjected to Him that did subject all things unto Him, that God may be  
all in all."[276] The "kingdom" thus spoken of by St. Paul is that  
exercised by our Lord in subduing His enemies, and it must necessarily  
come to an end when there are no more enemies to subdue. The kingdom  
here referred to is Christ's dominion as Head and King of His Church,  
and of that dominion there is no end. Of more consequence perhaps is it  
to observe that when it is said in the words before us, \_The kingdom of  
the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ\_, there  
is nothing to lead to the supposition that this "kingdom" becomes  
Christ's by the conversion of the world. The meaning simply is that evil  
has been finally and for ever put down, that good is finally and for  
ever triumphant. No inference can be drawn as to the fate of wicked  
persons further than this: that they shall not be found in "the new  
heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness."[277] Were  
additional proof needed upon this point, it would be supplied by the  
fact that in almost the next following words we read of \_the nations  
being roused to wrath\_. These are the wicked upon whom judgment falls;  
and, instead of being converted, they are roused to the last and highest  
outburst of t

he wickedness which springs from despair.  
  
2. The song of the four-and-twenty elders. We have already had occasion  
to notice that song of the representatives of redeemed creation in which  
the four living creatures celebrated "the Lord, God, the Almighty, which  
was and which is and which is to come."[278] The song now before us,  
sung by the representatives of the glorified Church, is cast in  
precisely the same mould of three ascriptions of praise to \_the Lord\_.  
But in the third member there is an important difference, the words "and  
which is to come" being omitted. The explanation is that the Lord is  
come. The present dispensation is at its close.  
  
3. The events of the close are next described. It is \_the time of the  
dead to be judged\_, and the time \_to give reward\_ to God's faithful  
servants, to whatever part of mankind they have belonged, and whatever  
the position they have filled in life. The whole family of man is  
divided into two great classes, and for the one there is judgment, for  
the other reward.  
  
4. Before passing on it may be well to call attention to one or two  
particulars in these verses which, though not specially connected with  
that general meaning of the passage which it is the main object of  
this commentary to elicit, may help to throw light upon the style of  
the Apostle and the structure of his work.  
  
(1) Thus it is important to observe his use of the word \_prophets\_.  
The persons spoken of are obviously in contrast with "the nations" and  
"the dead to be judged," and they must include all who are faithful  
unto death. Already we have seen that every true follower of Christ is  
in St. John's eyes a martyr, and that when he thinks of the martyrs of  
the Church he has a far wider circle in view than that of those who  
meet death by the sword or at the stake.[279] To his ideal conceptions  
of things the martyr spirit makes the martyr, and the martyr spirit  
must rule in every disciple of the Crucified. In like manner the  
prophetic spirit makes the prophet, and of that spirit no true  
follower of Him in whom prophecy culminated can be devoid. In this  
very chapter we have read of "prophesying" as the work of the two  
witnesses who are a symbol of the whole Christian Church, and who  
prophesy through the thousand two hundred and threescore days of her  
pilgrimage. We are not therefore to suppose that those here called  
"prophets" are either prophets in the stricter sense of the word, or  
commissioned ministers of Christ. All Christ's people are His  
"servants the prophets," and the idealism of St. John distinctly  
appears in the designation given them.  
  
(2) The next following clause, which we have translated in a manner  
slightly different from that of both the Authorised and the Revised  
Versions, is not less important: \_both the saints and them that fear  
Thy name\_, instead of "and to the saints, and to them that fear Thy  
name." It is the manner of St. John to dwell in the first instance  
upon one characteristic of the object of which he speaks, and then to  
add other characteristics belonging to it, equally important, it may  
be, in themselves, but not occupying so prominent a place in the line  
of thought which he happens to be pursuing at the moment. An  
illustration of this is afforded in John xiv. 6, where the words of  
Jesus are given in the form, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the  
Life." The context shows that the emphasis rests wholly on Jesus as  
"the Way," and that the addition of the words "the Truth, and the  
Life," is only made to enhance and complete the thought. Here in like  
manner the contents of what is involved in the term "the prophets" are  
completed by a further statement of what the prophets are. They are  
"the saints and they that fear God's name." The twofold structure of  
this statement, however, again illustrates the manner of St. John.  
"The saints" is, properly speaking, a Jewish epithet, while every  
reader of the Acts of the Apostles is familiar with the fact that  
"they that fear God" was a term applied to Gentile proselytes to  
Judaism. We have thus an instance of St. John's method of regarding  
the topic with which he deals from a double point of view, the first  
Jewish, the second Gentile. He is not thinking of two divisions of the  
Church. The Church is one; all her members constitute one Body in  
Christ. But looked at from the Jewish standpoint, they are "the  
saints;" from the Gentile, they are those that "fear Thy name."  
  
(3) The verses under consideration afford a marked illustration of St.  
John's love of presenting judgment under the form of the \_lex  
talionis\_. The nations were "roused to wrath," and upon them God's  
"wrath came." They had "destroyed the earth," and God would "destroy"  
them. In studying the Apocalypse, all peculiarities of style or  
structure ought to be present to the mind. They are not unfrequently  
valuable guides to interpretation.  
  
The seventh Trumpet has sounded, and the end has come. A glorious  
moment has been reached in the development of the Almighty's plan; and  
the mind of the Seer is exalted and ravished by the prospect. Yet he  
beholds no passing away of the present earth and heavens, no  
translation of the reign of good to an unseen spiritual and hitherto  
unvisited region of the universe. It would be out of keeping with the  
usual phraseology of his book to understand by \_heaven\_, in which he  
sees the ark of God's covenant, a locality, a place "beyond the clouds  
and beyond the tomb." His employment of the contrasted words "earth"  
and "heaven" throughout his whole series of visions rather leads to  
the supposition that by the latter we are to understand that region,  
wherever it may be, in which spiritual principles alone bear sway. It  
may be here; it may be elsewhere; it seems hardly possible to say: but  
the more the reader enters into the spirit of this book, the more  
difficult will he find it to resist the impression that St. John  
thinks of this present world as not only the scene of the great  
struggle between good and evil, but also, when it has been cleansed  
and purified, as the seat of everlasting righteousness. These in the  
present instance are striking words: "to destroy them that destroy the  
earth." Why not destroy the earth itself if it is only to be burned  
up? Why speak of it in such terms as lead almost directly to the  
supposition that it shall be preserved though its destroyers perish?  
While, on the other hand, if God at first pronounced it to be "very  
good;" if it may be a home of truth, and purity, and holiness; and if  
it shall be the scene of Christ's future and glorious reign,--then  
may we justly say, Woe to them that destroy the habitation, the  
palace, now preparing for the Prince of peace.  
  
However this may be, it was a fitting close to the judgments of the  
seven Trumpets that the "temple" of God--that is, the innermost shrine  
or sanctuary of His temple--should be opened. There was no need now  
that God should be "a God that hideth Himself."[280] When earth had in  
it none but the pure in heart, why should they not see Him?[281] He  
would dwell in them and walk in them.[282] The Tabernacle of the Lord  
would be again with men.[283]  
  
When too the shrine was opened, what more appropriate spectacle could  
be seen than "the ark of His covenant," the symbol of His  
faithfulness, the pledge of that love of His which remains unchanged  
when the mountains depart and the hills are removed? The  
covenant-keeping God! No promise of the past had failed, and the past  
was the earnest of the future.  
  
Nor need we wonder at the \_lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and  
the earthquake, and the great hail\_ that followed. For God had  
"promised, saying, Yet once more will I make to tremble not the earth  
only, but also the heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth  
the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are  
made, that those things which are not shaken may remain."[284]  
  
FOOTNOTES:  
  
[242] Zech. ii. 1, 2.  
  
[243] Ezek. xl. 2-5.  
  
[244] Zech. ii. 5.  
  
[245] Chap. xxi. 15, 17.  
  
[246] John vii. 4.  
  
[247] Ver. 2.  
  
[248] Isa. i. 13, 14.  
  
[249] John ix. 34.  
  
[250] John ix. 35.  
  
[251] Chaps. ii. 24; iii. 1, 4.  
  
[252] Comp. Matt. xxii. 14.  
  
[253] Dan. vii. 25.  
  
[254] Dan. ix. 27.  
  
[255] John xvi. 33.  
  
[256] Zech. iv.  
  
[257] John viii. 12. Comp. Matt. v. 14.  
  
[258] 2 Kings i. 10, 12.  
  
[259] Dan. iii. 22.  
  
[260] Chap. i. 16.  
  
[261] 1 Kings xvii. 1; James v. 17.  
  
[262] 1 Cor. x. 11.  
  
[263] Ver. 7.  
  
[264] John xvii. 4; xix. 30.  
  
[265] See margin of R.V.  
  
[266] Ps. cxxxii. 13, 14.  
  
[267] Isa. i. 10, 21.  
  
[268] Luke xxiii. 12.  
  
[269] Neh. viii. 10.  
  
[270] Esther ix. 22.  
  
[271] Comp. chap. v. 6.  
  
[272] Chap. iii. 21.  
  
[273] Rom. viii. 19, 21.  
  
[274] Chap. ix. 20.  
  
[275] Chaps. viii. 13; ix. 12.  
  
[276] 1 Cor. xv. 28.  
  
[277] 2 Pet. iii. 13.  
  
[278] Chap. iv. 8.  
  
[279] Comp. p. 102.  
  
[280] Isa. xlv. 15.  
  
[281] Matt. v. 8.  
  
[282] 2 Cor. vi. 16.  
  
[283] Chap. xxi. 3.  
  
[284] Heb. xii. 26, 27.  
  
  
  
  
 CHAPTER IX.  
  
 \_THE FIRST GREAT ENEMY OF THE CHURCH.\_  
  
 REV. xii.  
  
  
The twelfth chapter of the Revelation of St. John has been felt by  
every commentator to be one more than usually difficult to interpret,  
and that whether we look at it in relation to its special purpose, or  
to its position in the structure of the book. If we can satisfy  
ourselves as to the first of these two points, we shall be better able  
to form correct notions as to the second.  
  
Turning then for a moment to chap. xiii., we find it occupied with a  
description of two of the great enemies with which the Church has to  
contend. These are spoken of as "a beast" (ver. 1) and "another beast"  
(ver. 11), the latter being obviously the same as that described in  
chap. xix. 20 as "the false prophet that wrought the signs" in the  
sight of the former. At the same time, it is evident that these two  
beasts are regarded as enemies of the Church in a sense peculiar to  
themselves, for the victorious Conqueror of chap. xix. makes war with  
them, and "they twain are cast into the lake of fire that burneth with  
brimstone."[285] This fate next overtakes, in chap. xx. 10, "the  
dragon, the old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan," so that no  
doubt can rest upon the fact that to St. John's view the great enemies  
of the Church are three in number. When, accordingly, we find two of  
them described in chap. xiii., and chap. xii. occupied with the  
description of another, we are warranted in concluding that the main  
purpose of the chapter is to set before us a picture of this last.  
  
Thus also we are led to understand the place of the chapter in the  
structure of the book. We have already seen that the seven Trumpets  
are occupied with judgments on the world. The seven Bowls, forming the  
next and highest series of judgments, are to be occupied with  
judgments on the degenerate members of the Church. It is a fitting  
thing, therefore, that we should be able to form a clear idea of the  
enemies by which these faithless disciples are subdued, and in  
resisting whom the steadfastness of the faithful remnant shall be  
proved. To describe them sooner was unnecessary. They are the friends,  
not the enemies, of the world. They are the enemies only of the  
Church. Hence the sudden transition made at the beginning of chap.  
xii. There is no chronological relation between it and the chapters  
which precede. The thoughts embodied in it refer only to what follows.  
The chapter is obviously divided into three parts, and the bearing of  
these parts upon one another will appear as we proceed.  
  
 And a great sign was seen in heaven; a woman arrayed with the sun,  
 and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve  
 stars: and she was with child; and she crieth out, travailing in  
 birth, and in pain to be delivered. And there was seen another  
 sign in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads  
 and ten horns, and upon his heads seven diadems. And his tail  
 draweth the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them  
 into the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman that was  
 about to be delivered, that when she was delivered he might  
 devour her child. And she was delivered of a son, a man-child, who  
 as a shepherd shall tend all the nations with a sceptre of iron:  
 and her child was caught up unto God, and unto His throne. And the  
 woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of  
 God, that there they may nourish her a thousand two hundred and  
 threescore days (xii. 1-6).  
  
In the first chapter of the book of Genesis we read, "And God made two  
great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light  
to rule the night: He made the stars also."[286] Sun, and moon, and  
stars exhaust the Biblical notion of the heavenly bodies which give  
light upon the earth. They therefore, taken together, clothe this  
woman; and there is no need to search for any recondite meaning in the  
place which they severally occupy in her investiture. She is simply  
arrayed in light from head to foot. In other words, she is the perfect  
emblem of light in its brightness and purity. The use of the number  
\_twelve\_ indeed suggests the thought of a bond of connexion between  
this light and the Christian Church. The tribes of Israel, the type of  
God's spiritual Israel, were in number twelve; our Lord chose to  
Himself twelve Apostles; the new Jerusalem has "twelve gates, and at  
the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the  
names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel."[287]  
  
But though the light is thus early connected with the thought of the  
Christian Church, and though the subsequent portion of the chapter  
confirms the connexion, the woman is not yet to be regarded as, in the  
strictest sense, representative of that community or Body historically  
viewed. By-and-by she will be so. In the meantime a comparison of  
ver. 6 with ver. 14, where her fleeing into the wilderness and her  
nourishment in it for precisely the same period of time as in ver. 6  
are again mentioned, together with what we have already seen to be a  
peculiarity of St. John's mode of thought, forbids the supposition.  
The Apostle would not thus repeat himself. We are entitled therefore  
to infer that at the opening of the chapter he deals less with actual  
history than with the "pattern" of that history which had existed from  
all eternity in the mount. Hence also it would seem that the birth of  
the child, though undoubtedly referring to the birth of Jesus, is not  
the actual birth. It, too, is rather the eternal "pattern" of that  
event. Similar remarks apply to the \_dragon\_, who is not yet the  
historical Satan, and will only be so in the second paragraph, at ver.  
9. The whole picture, in short, of these verses is one of the \_ideal\_  
which precedes the actual, and of which the actual is the counterpart  
and realization.  
  
The resemblance, accordingly, borne by the first paragraph of this  
chapter (vers. 1-6) to the first paragraph of the fourth Gospel (vers.  
1-5), is of the most striking kind. In neither is there any account of  
the actual birth of our Lord. In both (and we shall immediately see  
this still more fully brought out in the apocalyptic vision) we are  
introduced to Him at once, not as growing up to be the Light of the  
world, but as already grown up and as perfect light. In both we have  
the same light and the same darkness, and in both the same contrariety  
and struggle between the two. Nor does the comparison end here. We  
have also the same singular method of expressing the deliverance of  
the light from the enmity of the darkness. In John i. 5, correctly  
translated, we read "The light shineth in the darkness, and the  
darkness \_overcame\_ it not," the thought being rather negative than  
positive, rather that of preservation than of victory. In the  
Apocalypse we read, \_And her child was caught up unto God, and unto  
His throne\_, the idea being again that of preservation rather than of  
victory.  
  
Such is the general conception of the first paragraph of this chapter.  
The individual expressions need not detain us long. The woman's raiment  
of light has been already spoken of. Passing therefore from that, it  
need occasion no surprise that He who is Himself the Giver of light  
should be represented as the \_Son\_ of light. God "is light, and in Him  
is no darkness at all."[288] Jesus, as the Son of God, is thus also the  
Son of light. No doubt the conception is continued even after we behold  
the woman in her actual, not her ideal, state. Jesus is still her  
Son.[289] Yet there is a true sense in which we may describe our Lord  
not only as the Foundation, but also as the Son, of the Church. He is  
"the First-born among many brethren,"[290] the elder Brother in a common  
Father's house. He is begotten by the power of the Holy Spirit[291]; and  
they that believe in His name are "born, not of blood, nor of the will  
of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."[292] So close indeed  
in the teaching of St. John is the identification of Christ and His  
people, that whatever is said of Him may be said of them, and what is  
said of them may be said of Him. Human thought and language fail to do  
justice to a relation so profound and mysterious. But it is everywhere  
the teaching of the beloved disciple--in his Gospel, in his Epistles,  
in his Revelation--although the Church may not fully understand it until  
she has lived herself more into it than she has done. Her "life" will  
then bring her "light."[293]  
  
The dragon of the passage is \_great\_ and \_red\_: "great" because of the  
power which he possesses; "red," the colour of blood, because of the  
ferocity with which he destroys men: "He was a murderer from the  
beginning;" "Cain was of the evil one, and slew his brother;" "And I saw  
the woman" (that is, the woman who rode upon the scarlet-coloured beast)  
"drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs  
of Jesus."[294] The dragon has further \_seven heads\_,--seven, the number  
of completeness, so that he possesses everything to enable him to  
execute his plans; and \_ten horns\_, the emblem at once of his strength  
and of his rule over all the kingdoms of the world. Upon the heads, too,  
are \_seven diadems\_, a word different from that which had been employed  
for the woman's "crown" in the first verse of the chapter. Hers is a  
crown of victory; the diadems of the dragon are only marks of royalty,  
and may be worn, as they will be worn, in defeat. The dragon's \_tail\_,  
again, like the tails of the locusts of the fifth Trumpet and of the  
horses of the sixth, is the instrument with which he destroys[295]; and  
\_the third part of the stars of heaven\_ corresponds to "the third part"  
mentioned in each of the first four Trumpets. The figure of \_casting the  
stars into the earth\_ is taken from the prophecy of Daniel, in which it  
is said of the "little horn" that "it waxed great, even to the host of  
heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the  
ground, and stamped upon them."[296]  
  
The dragon next takes up his position \_before the woman which was  
about to be delivered, that when she was delivered he might devour her  
child\_; and the first historical circumstances to which the idea  
corresponds, and in which it is realized, may be found in the effort  
of Pharaoh to destroy the infant Moses. Pharaoh is indeed often  
compared in the Old Testament to a dragon: "Thou didst divide the sea  
by Thy strength: Thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters;"  
"Speak, and say, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against thee,  
Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his  
rivers, which hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for  
myself."[297] The power, and craft, and cruelty of the Egyptian king  
could hardly have been absent from the Seer's mind when he employed  
the figure of the text. But he was certainly not thinking of Pharaoh  
alone. He remembered also the plot of Herod to destroy the Child  
Jesus.[298] Pharaoh and Herod--men quailed be

fore them; yet both were  
no more than instruments in the hands of God. Both worked out His  
"determinate counsel and foreknowledge."[299]  
  
The child is born, and is described in language worthy of our notice. He  
is \_a son, a man-child\_; and the at first sight tautological information  
appears to hint at more than the mere sex of the child. He is already  
more than a child: he is a man. There is a similar emphasis in the words  
of our Lord when He said to His disciples in His last consolatory  
discourse, "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her  
hour is come: but when she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no  
more the anguish, for the joy that \_a man\_ is born into the world."[300]  
From the first the child is less a child than a man, strong, muscular,  
and vigorous, who \_as a shepherd shall tend all the nations with a  
sceptre of iron\_. Strange that we should be invited to dwell on this  
ideal aspect of the Son's work rather than any other! No doubt the words  
are quoted from the second Psalm. This, however, only removes the  
difficulty a step further back. Why either there or here should the  
shepherd work of the Messiah be connected with an iron sceptre rather  
than a peaceful crook? The explanation is not difficult. Both the Psalm  
and the Apocalypse are occupied mainly with the victory of Christ over  
His adversaries. His friends have already been secured in the possession  
of a complete salvation. It remains only that His foes shall be finally  
put down. Hence the "sceptre of iron." Strange also, it may be thought,  
that in this ideal picture we should find no "pattern" of the life of  
our Lord on earth, of His labours, or sufferings, or death; and that we  
should only be invited to behold Him in His incarnation and ascension  
into heaven! But again the explanation is not difficult. Over against  
Satan stands, not a humbled merely, but a risen and glorified, Redeemer.  
The process by which He conquered it is unnecessary to dwell upon.  
Enough that we know the fact.  
  
The woman's child being thus safe, \_the woman\_ herself \_fled into the  
wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God\_, and where she shall  
be nourished by heavenly sustenance. Thus Israel wandered forty years,  
fed with the manna that fell from heaven and the water that flowed from  
the smitten rock.[301] Thus Elijah fled to the brook Cherith, and  
afterwards to the wilderness, where his wants were supplied in the one  
case by the ravens, in the other by an angel.[302] And thus was our Lord  
upheld for forty days by the words that proceeded out of the mouth of  
God.[303] This wilderness life of the Church, too, continues during the  
whole Christian era, during the whole period of witnessing.[304] Always  
in the wilderness so long as her Lord is personally absent, she eats  
heavenly food and drinks living water.  
  
Such is the first scene of this chapter; and, glancing once more over  
it, it would seem as if its chief purpose were to present to us the  
two great opposing forces of light and darkness, of the Son and the  
dragon, considered in themselves.  
  
The second scene follows:--  
  
 And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels going forth to  
 war with the dragon; and the dragon warred and his angels: and  
 they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in  
 heaven. And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he  
 that is called the devil, and Satan, the deceiver of the whole  
 inhabited earth: he was cast down into the earth, and his angels  
 were cast down with him. And I heard a great 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 down, which accuseth 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 even unto death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and ye  
 that tabernacle in them. Woe for the earth and for the sea!  
 because the devil is gone down unto you, having great wrath,  
 knowing that he hath but a short season (xii. 7-12).  
  
If our conception of the first six verses of the chapter be correct,  
it will be evident that the idea often entertained, that the verses  
following them form a break in the narrative which is only resumed at  
ver. 13, is wrong. There is no break. The progress of the thought is  
continuous. The combatants have been set before us, and we have now  
the contest in which they are engaged. This consideration also helps  
us to understand the personality of Michael and the particular  
conflict in the Seer's view.  
  
For, as to the first of these two points, it is even in itself  
probable that the Leader of the hosts of light will be no other than  
the Captain of our salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The  
dragon leads the hosts of darkness. The Son has been described as the  
opponent against whom the enmity of the dragon is especially directed.  
When the war begins, we have every reason to expect that as the one  
leader takes the command, so also will the other. There is much to  
confirm this conclusion. The name Michael leads to it, for that word  
signifies, "Who is like God?" and such a name is at least more  
appropriate to a Divine than to a created being. In the New Testament,  
too, we read of "Michael the archangel"[305]--there seems to be only  
one, for we never read of archangels[306]--and an archangel is again  
spoken of in circumstances that can hardly be associated with the  
thought of any one but God: "The Lord Himself shall descend from  
heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the  
trump of God."[307] Above all, the prophecies of Daniel, in which the  
name Michael first occurs, may be said to decide the point. A person  
named Michael there appears on different occasions as the defender of  
the Church against her enemies,[308] and once at least in a connexion  
leading directly to the thought of our Lord Himself: "And at that  
time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the  
children of Thy people: and 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. 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. And they that be wise shall shine as the  
brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness  
as the stars for ever and ever."[309] These considerations justify the  
conclusion that the Michael now spoken of is the representative of  
Christ; and we have already seen, in examining the vision of the  
"strong angel" in chap. x., that such a mode of speaking is in perfect  
harmony with the general method of St. John.  
  
Light is thus thrown also upon the second point above mentioned: the  
particular conflict referred to in these verses. The statement that  
\_there was war in heaven\_, and that when the dragon was defeated he  
was \_cast down into the earth\_, might lead us to think of an earlier  
conflict between good and evil than any in which man has part: of that  
mentioned by St. Peter and St. Jude, when the former consoles the  
righteous by the thought that "God spared not angels when they sinned,  
but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness, to  
be reserved unto judgment,"[310] and when the latter warns sinners to  
remember that "angels which kept not their own principality, but left  
their proper habitation, He hath kept in everlasting bonds under  
darkness unto the judgment of the great day."[311] The circumstances,  
however, of the war, lead rather to the thought of a conflict in  
which the Son, incarnate and glorified, takes His part. For \_this\_  
"Son" is the opponent of the dragon introduced to us in the first  
paragraph of the chapter. "Heaven" is not so much a premundane or  
supramundane locality as the spiritual sphere within which believers  
dwell even during their earthly pilgrimage, when that pilgrimage is  
viewed upon its higher side. And the means by which the victory is  
gained--for the victors \_overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the  
word of their testimony\_--distinctly indicate that the struggle  
referred to took place after the work of redemption had been  
completed, not before it was begun.  
  
Several other passages of the New Testament are in harmony with this  
supposition. Thus it was that when the seventy returned to our Lord with  
joy after their mission, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject unto  
us in Thy name," He, beholding in this the pledge of His completed  
victory, exclaimed, "I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from  
heaven."[312] Thus it was that when charged with casting out demons by  
Beelzebub, the prince of the demons, our Lord pointed out to His  
accusers that His actions proved Him to be the Conqueror, and that the  
kingdom of God was come unto them: "When the strong man fully armed  
guardeth his own court, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than  
he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him his whole  
armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils."[313] To the same  
effect are all those passages where our Lord or His Apostles speak, not  
of a partial, but of a complete, victory over Satan, so that for His  
people the great enemy of man is already judged, and overthrown, and  
bruised beneath their feet: "Now is a judgment of this world: now shall  
the prince of this world be cast out;" "And when He" (the Advocate) "is  
come, He will convince the world of judgment, because the prince of this  
world hath been judged;" "Since then the children are sharers in flesh  
and blood, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same; that  
through death He might bring to nought him that had the power of death,  
that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death  
were all their lifetime subject to bondage;" "Whatsoever is begotten of  
God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the  
world, even our faith;" "We know that whosoever is begotten of God  
sinneth not; but He that was begotten of God keepeth him, and the evil  
one toucheth him not."[314]  
  
In passages such as these we have the same thought as that before us  
in this vision. Satan has been cast out of heaven; that is, \_in his  
warfare against the children of God he has been completely  
overthrown\_. Over their higher life, their life in a risen and  
glorified Redeemer, he has no power. They are for ever escaped from  
his bondage, and are free. But he has been \_cast down into the earth,  
and his angels with him\_; that is, over the \_men of the world\_ he  
still exerts his power, and they are led captive by him at his will.  
Hence, accordingly, the words of the \_great voice\_ heard in heaven  
which occupy all the latter part of the vision, words which distinctly  
bring out the difference between the two aspects of Satan now adverted  
to,--(1) his impotence as regards the disciples of Jesus who are  
faithful unto death: \_Rejoice, O heavens, and ye that dwell in them\_;  
(2) his mastery over the ungodly: \_Woe for the earth and for the sea!  
for the devil is gone down unto you in great wrath, knowing that he  
hath but a short season.\_ Although, therefore, the fall of the angels  
from their first estate may be remotely hinted at, the vision refers  
to the spiritual contest begun after the resurrection of Jesus; and we  
ask our readers only to pay particular regard to the double relation  
of Satan to mankind which is referred to in it: his subjection to the  
righteous and the subjection of the wicked to him. One phrase only may  
seem inconsistent with this view. In ver. 9 Satan is described as \_the  
deceiver of the whole inhabited earth\_, for that, and not "the whole  
world," is the true rendering of the original.[315] "The whole  
inhabited earth" cannot be the same as "the earth." The latter is  
simply the wicked; the former includes all men. But the words describe  
a characteristic of Satan in himself, and not what he actually  
effects. He \_is\_ the deceiver of the whole inhabited earth. He lays  
his snares for all. He tempted Jesus Himself in the wilderness, and  
many a time thereafter during His labours and His sufferings. The  
vision gives no ground for the supposition that God's children are not  
\_attacked\_ by him. It assures us only that when the attack is made it  
is at the same instant foiled. There is a battle, but Christians  
advance to it as conquerors; before it begins victory is theirs.[316]  
  
One other expression of these verses may be noted: the \_short season\_  
spoken of in ver. 12. This period of time is not to be looked at as if  
it were a brief special season at the close of the Christian age,  
when the wrath of Satan is aroused to a greater than ordinary degree  
because the last hour is about to strike. The \_great wrath\_ with which  
he goes forth is that stirred in him by his defeat through the death,  
resurrection, and ascension of our Lord. It was roused in him when he  
was "cast into the earth," and from that moment of defeat therefore  
the "short season" begins.  
  
The third paragraph of the chapter follows:--  
  
 And when the dragon saw that he was cast down into the earth, he  
 persecuted the woman which brought forth the man-child. And there  
 were given to the woman the two wings of the great eagle, that she  
 might fly into the wilderness, unto her place, where she is  
 nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of  
 the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth after the woman  
 water as a river, that he might cause her to be carried away by  
 the stream. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened  
 her mouth, and swallowed up the river which the dragon cast out of  
 his mouth. And the dragon waxed wroth with the woman, and went  
 away to make war with the rest of her seed, which keep the  
 commandments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus; and he stood  
 upon the sand of the sea (xii. 13-xiii. 1\_a\_).  
  
We have already seen that the woman introduced to us in the first  
paragraph of this chapter is the embodiment and the bearer of light.  
She is there indeed set before us in her ideal aspect, in what she is  
in herself, rather than in her historical position. Now we meet her in  
actual history, or, in other words, she is the historical Church of  
God in the New Testament phase of her development. As such she has a  
mission to the world. She is "the sent" of Christ, as Christ was "the  
sent" of the Father.[317] In witnessing for Christ, she has to reveal  
to the children of men what Divine love is. But she has to do this in  
the midst of trouble. This world is not her rest; and she must bear  
the Saviour's cross if she would afterwards wear His crown.  
  
Persecuted, however, she is not forsaken. She had given her \_the two  
wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, unto  
her place\_--the place prepared of God for her protection. There can be  
little doubt as to the allusion. The "great eagle" is that of which  
God Himself spoke to Moses in the mount: "Ye have seen what I did unto  
the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you  
unto Myself;"[318] and that alluded to by Moses in the last song  
taught by him to the people: "As an eagle stirreth up her nest,  
fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them,  
beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him, and there  
was no strange god with him."[319] The same eagle was probably in view  
of David when he sang, "How excellent is Thy lovingkindness, O God!  
therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy  
wings;"[320] while it was also that on the wings of which the members  
of the Church draw continually nearer God: "They mount up with wings  
as eagles."[321] To the woman then there was given a "refuge from the  
storm," a "covert from the heat," of trial, that she might abide in  
it, nourished with her heavenly food, \_for a time, and times, and half  
a time\_. Of this period we have already spoken. It is the same as that  
of the three and a half years, the "forty-two months," the "thousand  
two hundred and threescore days." It is thus the whole period of the  
Church's militant history upon earth. During all of it she is  
persecuted by Satan; during all of it she is preserved and nourished  
by the care of God. At first sight indeed it may seem as if this  
shelter in the wilderness were incompatible with the task of  
witnessing assigned to her. But it is one of the paradoxes of the  
position of the children of God in this present world that while they  
are above it they are yet in it; that while they are seated "in the  
heavenly places" they are exposed to the storms of earth; that while  
their life is hid with Christ in God they witness and war before the  
eyes of men. The persecution and the nourishment, the suffering and  
the glory, run parallel with each other. One other remark may be made.  
There is obviously an emphasis upon the word "two" prefixed to  
"wings." Though founded upon the fact that the wings of the bird are  
two in number, a deeper meaning would seem to be intended; and that  
meaning is suggested by the fact that the witnesses of chap. xi. were  
also two. The protection extended corresponds exactly to the need for  
it. The "grace" of God is in all circumstances "sufficient" for His  
people.[322] No temptation can assail them which He will not enable  
them to endure, or out of which He will not provide for them a way of  
escape.[323] Therefore may they always take up the language of the  
Apostle and say, "Most gladly will I rather glory in my weaknesses,  
that the strength of Christ may spread a tabernacle over me. Wherefore  
I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in  
persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak,  
then am I strong."[324]  
  
The woman fled into the wilderness, but she was not permitted to flee  
thither without a final effort of Satan to overwhelm her; and in the  
manner in which this effort is made we again recognise the language of  
the Old Testament. There the assaults of the ungodly upon Israel are  
frequently compared to those floods of waters which, owing to the  
sudden risings of the streams, are in the East so common and so  
disastrous. Isaiah describes the enemy as coming in "like a  
flood."[325] Of the floods of the Euphrates and the destruction which  
they symbolized we have already spoken[326]; and in hours of  
deliverance from trouble the Church has found the song of triumph most  
suitable to her condition in the words of the Psalmist, "If it had not  
been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us: then  
they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against  
us: then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our  
soul: then the proud waters had gone over our soul. Blessed be the  
Lord, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth."[327] The main  
reference is, however, in all probability to the passage of Israel  
across the Red Sea, for then, says David, calling to mind that great  
deliverance in the history of his people, and finding in it the type  
of deliverances so often experienced by himself, "the sorrows of death  
compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.... In my  
distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God.... He sent  
from above, He took me. He drew me out of many waters."[328]  
  
The most remarkable point to be noticed here is, however, not the  
deliverance itself, but the method by which it is accomplished. To  
understand this, as well as the wrath of Satan immediately afterwards  
described, it is necessary to bear in mind that twofold element in the  
Church the existence of which is the key to so many of the most  
intricate problems of the Apocalypse. The Church embraces both true and  
false members within her pale. She is the "vine" of our Lord's last  
discourse to H

is disciples, some of the branches of which bear much  
fruit, while others are only fit to be cast into the fire and  
burned.[329] The thought of these latter members is in the mind of St.  
John when he tells us, in a manner so totally unexpected, that \_the  
earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up  
the river which the dragon cast out of his mouth\_. He is thinking of the  
nominal members of the Church, of the merely nominal Christianity which  
she has so often exhibited to the world. That Christianity the world  
loves. When the Church's tone and life are lowered by her yielding to  
the influence of the things of time, then the world, "the earth," is  
ready to hasten to her side. It offers her its friendship, courts  
alliance with her, praises her for the good order which she introduces,  
by arguments drawn from eternity, into the things of time, and swallows  
up the river which the dragon casts out of his mouth against her. When  
Christ's disciples are of the world, the world loves its own.[330] They  
are helping "the earth" to do its work. Why should the earth not  
recognise and welcome the assistance given it by foolish foes as well as  
friends? Therefore it helps the woman.  
  
But side by side with this aspect of the Church which met the  
approbation of "the earth," the dragon saw that she had another aspect  
of determined hostility to his claims; and he \_waxed wroth\_ with her.  
She had within her not only degenerate but true members, not only  
worldly professors, but those who were one with her Divine and  
glorified Lord. These were \_the rest of her seed, which keep the  
commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus\_. They were the "few  
names in Sardis which did not defile their garments,"[331] "the  
remnant according to the election of grace,"[332] "the seed which the  
Lord hath blessed."[333] Such disciples of Jesus the dragon could not  
tolerate, and he \_went away to make war\_ with them. Thus is the  
painful distinction still kept up which marks all the later part of  
the Apocalypse. The spectacle was one over which St. John had mourned  
as he beheld it in the Church of his own day: "They went out from us,  
but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have  
continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest  
that not all are of us. Little children, it is the last hour."[334] It  
was a spectacle which he knew would be repeated so long as the Church  
of Christ was in contact with the world; and he notes it now.  
  
One other point ought to be noticed in connexion with these verses. The  
helping of the woman by the earth seems to be the Scripture parallel to  
the difficult words of St. Paul when he says in writing to the  
Thessalonians, "And now ye know that which restraineth to the end that  
he may be revealed in his own season. For the mystery of lawlessness  
doth already work: only there is one that restraineth now, until he be  
taken out of the way."[335] This "restraining" power, generally, and in  
all probability correctly, understood of the Roman State, is "the  
earth" of St. John helping the woman because it is helped by her.  
  
We have been introduced to the first great enemy of the Church of  
Christ. It remains only that he shall take up his position on the field.  
The next clause therefore which meets us, and which ought to be read,  
not as the first clause of chap. xiii., but as the last of chap. xii.,  
and in which the third person ought to be substituted for the first,  
describes him as doing so: \_And he stood upon the sand of the sea\_, upon  
the shore between the earth and the sea, where he could so command them  
both as to justify the "Woe" already uttered over both in the twelfth  
verse of the chapter. There we leave him for a time, only remarking that  
we are not to think of ocean lying before us in a calm, but of the  
restless and troubled sea, raised into huge waves by the storm-winds  
contending upon it for the mastery and dashing its waves upon the beach.  
  
FOOTNOTES:  
  
[285] Chap. xix. 20.  
  
[286] Gen. i. 16.  
  
[287] Chap. xxi. 12.  
  
[288] 1 John i. 5.  
  
[289] Comp. ver. 17.  
  
[290] Rom. viii. 29.  
  
[291] Matt. i. 20.  
  
[292] John i. 13.  
  
[293] Comp. John i. 4.  
  
[294] John viii. 44; 1 John iii. 12; Rev. xvii. 6  
  
[295] Chap. ix. 10, 19.  
  
[296] Dan. viii. 10.  
  
[297] Ps. lxxiv. 13; Ezek. xxix. 3.  
  
[298] Matt. ii. 16.  
  
[299] Acts ii. 23.  
  
[300] John xvi. 21.  
  
[301] 1 Cor. x. 3, 4.  
  
[302] 1 Kings xvii. 6; xix. 5.  
  
[303] Matt. iv. 4.  
  
[304] Chap. xi. 3.  
  
[305] Jude 9.  
  
[306] Brown, \_The Book of Revelation\_, p. 69.  
  
[307] 1 Thess. iv. 16.  
  
[308] Dan. x. 13, 21.  
  
[309] Dan. xii. 1-3.  
  
[310] 2 Pet. ii. 4.  
  
[311] Jude 6.  
  
[312] Luke x. 17, 18.  
  
[313] Luke xi. 21, 22.  
  
[314] John xii. 31; xvi. 11; Heb. ii. 14, 15; 1 John v. 4, 18.  
  
[315] Comp. R.V. (margin).  
  
[316] Comp. 1 John v. 4.  
  
[317] John xx. 21.  
  
[318] Exod. xix. 3, 4.  
  
[319] Deut. xxxii. 11, 12.  
  
[320] Ps. xxxvi. 7.  
  
[321] Isa. xl. 31.  
  
[322] 2 Cor. xii. 9.  
  
[323] 1 Cor. x. 13.  
  
[324] 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10.  
  
[325] Isa. lix. 19.  
  
[326] Comp. p. 150.  
  
[327] Ps. cxxiv. 2-6.  
  
[328] Ps. xviii. 4-16.  
  
[329] John xv. 5, 6.  
  
[330] John xv. 19.  
  
[331] Chap. iii. 4.  
  
[332] Isa. lxi. 9.  
  
[333] Rom. xi. 5.  
  
[334] 1 John ii. 18, 19.  
  
[335] 2 Thess. ii. 6, 7.  
  
  
  
  
 CHAPTER X.  
  
 \_THE SECOND AND THIRD GREAT ENEMIES OF THE  
 CHURCH.\_  
  
 REV. xiii.  
  
  
We have seen that the main purpose of chap. xii. was to introduce to  
our notice the dragon, or Satan, the first great enemy of the Church.  
The object of chap. xiii. is to make us acquainted with her second and  
third great enemies, and thus to enable us to form a distinct  
conception of the powerful foes with which the followers of Christ  
have to contend. The two enemies referred to are respectively styled  
"a beast" (ver. 1) and "another beast" (ver. 11), or, as they are  
generally termed, the first beast and the second beast. To the word  
"beast" must be assigned in both cases its fullest and most pregnant  
sense. The two "beasts" are not only beasts, but wild beasts, strong,  
fierce, rapacious, and cruel, even the apparent softness and  
tenderness of the second being associated with those dragon words  
which can proceed only from a dragon heart.[336]  
  
The first is thus described:--  
  
 And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and  
 seven heads, and on his horns ten diadems, and upon his heads  
 names of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a  
 leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as  
 the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his  
 throne, and great authority. And I saw one of his heads as though  
 it had been slaughtered unto death; and the stroke of his death  
 was healed: and the whole earth marvelled after the beast. And  
 they worshipped the dragon because he gave his authority unto the  
 beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the  
 beast, and who is able to war with him? And there was given to him  
 a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and there was given  
 to him authority to continue forty and two months. And he opened  
 his mouth for blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name, and  
 His tabernacle, even them that tabernacle in the heaven. And it  
 was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome  
 them: and there was given to him authority over every tribe, and  
 people, and tongue, and nation. And all that dwell on the earth  
 shall worship him, every one whose name hath not been written from  
 the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that  
 hath been slaughtered. If any one hath an ear, let him hear. If  
 any one leadeth into captivity, into captivity he goeth: if any  
 one shall kill with the sword, with the sword must he be killed.  
 Here is the patience and the faith of the saints (xiii. 1\_b\_-10).  
  
The description carries us back to the prophecies of Daniel, and the  
language of the prophet helps us to understand that of the Seer. It is  
thus that the former speaks: "Daniel spake and said, I saw in my  
vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven brake forth  
upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea,  
diverse one from another. The first was like a lion, and had eagle's  
wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted  
up from the earth, and made to stand upon two feet as a man, and a  
man's heart was given to it. And behold another beast, a second, like  
to a bear, and it was raised up on one side, and three ribs were in  
his mouth between his teeth: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour  
much flesh. After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which  
had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four  
heads; and dominion was given to it. After this I saw in the night  
visions, and behold a fourth beast, terrible and powerful, and strong  
exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in  
pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet: and it was diverse from  
all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered  
the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another horn, a  
little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by  
the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man,  
and a mouth speaking great things."[337] These particulars embody the  
prophet's picture of the world-power in four successive phases of its  
manifestation, until it culminates in the "little horn;" and it is not  
possible to doubt that the Seer, while modifying them with  
characteristic freedom, finds in them the foundation of his figure.  
  
In both cases there is the same origin,--the sea swept by strong winds  
from every point of the compass, until the opposing forces rush upon one  
another, mingle in wild confusion, send up their spray into the air, and  
then, dark with the reflection of the clouds above and turbid with sand,  
exhaust themselves with one long, sullen roar upon the beach. In both  
cases the same animals are referred to, though in the vision of Daniel  
they are separated, in that of St. John combined: the leopard, with his  
sudden, cruel spring; the bear, with his slow, relentless brutishness;  
and the lion, with his all-conquering power. Finally, in the case of  
both mention is made also of "ten horns," which are distinct from the  
lineal succession of the heads. So far, therefore, we can have little  
hesitation in affirming the conclusion arrived at by most commentators  
that in this \_beast coming up out of the sea\_ we have an emblem of that  
power of the world which, under the guidance of "the prince of the  
world," opposes and persecutes the Church of Christ. Several particulars  
regarding it, however, still demand our notice.  
  
1. The horns are not to be thought of as distributed among the heads,  
but rather as a group by themselves, constituting along with the  
seventh head a manifestation of the beast distinct from that expressed  
by each of the separate heads. In a certain sense the seventh head,  
with its ten horns, is thus one of the seven, for in them the beast  
expresses himself. In another sense it is like the "fourth beast" of  
the prophet Daniel: "diverse from all the beasts that were before it"  
and even more terrible than they.  
  
2. The seven heads seem most fittingly to represent seven powers of  
the world by which the children of God had been persecuted in the past  
or were to be persecuted in the future. The supposition has indeed  
been often made that they represent seven forms of Roman government or  
seven emperors who successively occupied the imperial throne. But  
neither of these sevens can be definitely fixed by the advocates of  
the general thought; while the whole strain of the passage suggests  
that the beast which, in the form now dealt with, unquestionably  
represents a world-power conterminous with the whole earth, grows up  
into this form only in his seventh head and ten horns manifestation.  
The other heads are rather preparatory to the last than to be ranked  
equally along with it. Making a natural beginning, therefore, with the  
oldest persecuting power mentioned in that Bible history of which the  
Apocalyptist makes such extensive use, and following the line down to  
the Seer's time, the seven heads appear to represent the Egyptian,  
Assyrian, Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek, and Roman powers, together  
with that power, wider even than the Roman, which St. John saw was  
about to rage in the hurried days of "the last time" against the  
simplicity, purity, holiness, and unworldliness of Christ's little  
flock. Each of these powers is a "head." The last is the concentrated  
essence, the most universal, the most penetrating, influence of them  
all. Taken together, they supply, as no other interpretation does,  
what is absolutely essential to a correct understanding of the  
figure,--the idea of completeness.  
  
3. By such a rendering also we gain a natural interpretation of the  
head beheld \_as though it had been slaughtered unto death; and the  
stroke of his death was healed\_. Other renderings fail to afford this,  
for no successive forms of government at Rome and no successive  
emperors furnish a member of their series of which it may be said that  
it is first slain and then brought back to a life of greater energy  
and more quickened action. Yet without the thought of death and  
resurrection it is impossible to fulfil the conditions of the problem.  
The head spoken of in ver. 3 had not been merely \_wounded\_ or  
\_smitten\_: it had been "\_slaughtered\_ unto death;" and it was not  
merely his "deadly wound,"[338] or even "his death-stroke:"[339] it  
was the "stroke of his death" that had been healed. There had been  
actual death and resurrection from death, the contrast and travesty of  
that death and resurrection which had befallen the Lamb slaughtered  
and raised again.[340] Such a death and resurrection can only be  
fittingly applied to that system of worldly influence, or, in other  
words, to that "prince of the world," whose power over His people  
Jesus was not simply to modify, but to extinguish. The Redeemer of the  
world came, not to wound or weaken only, but to "bring to nought," him  
that had the power of death--that is, the devil--and to give perfect  
and eternal freedom to all who would allow the chains in which Satan  
had bound them to be broken.[341] But the death, if we may so speak,  
of Satan in relation to them was accompanied by his resurrection in  
relation to the world, over which the great enemy of souls was  
thenceforward to exercise a more irresistible sway than ever. The time  
is that already spoken of in the previous chapter, when the devil went  
down into the earth, "having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a  
short season."[342] Nor is there any difficulty in determining to  
which of the seven heads of the beast the death and resurrection  
spoken of apply, for a comparison of chap. xvii. 8-11 with the present  
passage shows that it is to the sixth, or Roman, head that St. John  
intends his language to refer.  
  
4. Particular attention must be paid to the fact that it is upon the  
beast in his \_resurrection state\_ that we are to dwell, for the whole  
earth marvels after the beast not previously, but subsequently, to the  
point of time at which the stroke of his death is healed.[343] In that  
condition, too, he is not thought of as raging only in the Roman  
empire. His influence is universal. Wherever men are he is: \_And there  
was given to him authority over every tribe, and people, and tongue,  
and nation.\_[344] The fourfold division indicates absolute  
universality; and the \_whole earth\_--that is, all ungodly  
ones--worships the beast, even every one whose name has not been  
written in the Lamb's book of life.[345] Thus raging with an extent of  
power never possessed by any form of Roman government or any emperor  
of Rome, he rages also throughout all time, from the first to the  
second coming of the Lord, for he has \_authority given to him to  
continue forty and two months\_,[346] the period so denoted embracing  
the whole Christian era from its beginning to its close.[347]  
  
5. Three points more may be noticed before drawing the general  
conclusion to which all this leads. In the first place, the beast is  
the vicegerent of another power which acts through him and by means of  
him. \_The dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great  
authority.\_ The dragon himself does not directly act. He has his  
representative, or vicar, or substitute, in the beast. In the second  
place, the worship paid by "the whole earth" to the beast, when it  
cries, \_Who is like unto the beast? and who is able to make war with  
him?\_ is an obvious imitation of the ascriptions of praise to God  
contained in not a few passages of the Old Testament: "Who is like  
unto the Lord our God, that hath His seat on high?"; "To whom then  
will ye liken Me, that I should be equal to him? saith the Holy One;"  
"Hearken unto Me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house  
of Israel.... To whom will ye liken Me, and make Me equal, and compare  
Me, that we may be like?"[348] In the third place, the beast opens his  
mouth, not only to blaspheme against God, but \_against His tabernacle,  
even them that tabernacle in the heaven\_,[349] expressions in which  
the use of the word "tabernacle" leads directly to the thought of  
opposition to Him who became flesh and tabernacled among us, and who  
now spreads His tabernacle over His saints.[350]  
  
The whole description of the beast is thus, in multiplied particulars,  
a travesty of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the Head and King, the  
Guardian and Protector, of His people. Like the latter, the former is  
the representative, the "sent," of an unseen power, by whom all  
authority is "given" him; he has his death and his resurrection from  
the dead; he has his throngs of marvelling and enthusiastic  
worshippers; his authority over those who own his sway is limited by  
no national boundaries, but is conterminous with the whole world; he  
gathers up and unites in himself all the scattered elements of  
darkness and enmity to the truth which had previously existed among  
men, and from which the Church of God had suffered.  
  
What then can this first beast be? Not Rome, either pagan or papal;  
not any single form of earthly government, however strong; not any  
Roman emperor, however vicious or cruel; but the general influence of  
the world, in so far as it is opposed to God, substituting the human  
for the Divine, the seen for the unseen, the temporal for the eternal.  
He is the impersonation of that world of which St. Paul writes, "We  
received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of  
God,"[351] of which St. James speaks when he says, "Whosoever  
therefore would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of  
God,"[352] and in regard to which St. John exhorts, "Love not the  
world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the  
world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the  
world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the  
vain-glory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."[353]  
This beast, in short, is the world viewed in that aspect in which our  
Lord Himself could say of it that the devil was its prince, which He  
told His disciples He had overcome, and in regard to which He prayed  
in His high-priestly prayer, "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them  
out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them out of the evil  
one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."[354]  
  
The influence of the beast here spoken of is therefore confined to no  
party, or sect, or age. It may be found in the Church and in the State,  
in every society, in every family, or even in every heart, for wherever  
man is ruled by the seen instead of the unseen or by the material  
instead of the spiritual, there "the world" is. "Our wrestling is not  
against flesh and blood, but against

the principalities, against the  
powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual  
hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."[355]  
  
Against this foe the true life of the saints will be preserved. Nothing  
can harm the life that is hid with Christ in God. But the saints may  
nevertheless be troubled, and persecuted, and killed, as were the  
witnesses of chap. xi., by the beast that \_had given unto him to make  
war with them, and to overcome them\_. Such is the thought that leads to  
the last words of the paragraph with which we are now dealing: \_If any  
one leadeth into captivity, into captivity he goeth; if any one shall  
kill with the sword, with the sword must he be killed.\_ In the great law  
of God, the \_lex talionis\_, consolation is given to the persecuted.  
Their enemies would lead them into captivity, but a worse captivity  
awaits themselves. They would kill with the sword, but with a sharper  
sword than that of human power they shall themselves be killed. Is there  
not enough in that to inspire the saints with patience and faith? Well  
may they endure with unfainting hearts when they remember who is upon  
their side, for "it is a righteous thing with God to recompense  
affliction to them that afflict them," and to them that are afflicted  
"rest"[356]--rest with Apostles, prophets, martyrs, the whole Church of  
God, rest never again to be disturbed either by sin or sorrow. \_Here is  
the patience and the faith of the saints.\_  
  
The second enemy of the Church, or the first beast, has been described.  
St. John now proceeds to the third enemy, or the second beast:--  
  
 And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two  
 horns like unto a lamb, and he spoke as a dragon. And he  
 exerciseth all the authority of the first beast in his sight; and  
 he maketh the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the  
 first beast, the stroke of whose death was healed. And he doeth  
 great signs, that he should even make fire to come down out of  
 heaven upon the earth in the sight of men. And he deceiveth them  
 that dwell on the earth by reason of the signs which it was given  
 him to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on  
 the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, who hath  
 the stroke of the sword, and lived. And it was given unto him to  
 give breath to it, even to the image of the beast, that the image  
 of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as should  
 not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he  
 causeth all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor,  
 and the free and the bond, that there be given them a mark on  
 their right hand, or upon their forehead: and that no man should  
 be able to buy or to sell, save he that hath the mark, even the  
 name of the beast or the number of his name (xiii. 11-17).  
  
The first beast came up out of "the sea" (ver. 1); the second beast  
comes up out of \_the earth\_: and the contrast, so strongly marked,  
between these two sources, makes it necessary to draw a clear and  
definite line of distinction between the origin of the one beast and  
that of the other. The "sea," however, both in the Old Testament and  
in the New, is the symbol of the mass of the Gentile nations, of the  
heathen world in its condition of alienation from God and true  
religious life. In contrast with this, the "earth," as here used, must  
be the symbol of the Jews, among whom, to whatever extent they had  
abused their privileges, the Almighty had revealed Himself in a  
special manner, showing "His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His  
judgments unto Israel."[357] The Jews were an agricultural, not a  
commercial, people; and upon that great highway along which the  
commerce of the nations poured they looked with suspicion and dislike.  
Hence the sea, in its restlessness and barrenness, became to them the  
emblem of an irreligious world; the land, in its quiet and  
fruitfulness, the emblem of religion with all its blessings. In this  
sense the contrast here must be understood; and the statement as to  
the different origin of the first and second beasts is of itself  
sufficient to determine that, while the former belongs to a secular,  
the latter belongs to a religious, sphere. Many other particulars  
mentioned in connexion with the second beast confirm this conclusion.  
  
1. \_The two horns like unto a lamb\_ are unquestionably a travesty of  
the "seven horns" of the Lamb, so often spoken of in these visions;  
and the description carries us to the thought of Antichrist, of one  
who sets himself up as the true Christ, of one who, professing to  
imitate the Redeemer, is yet His opposite.  
  
2. The words \_And he spoke as a dragon\_ remind us of the description  
given by our Lord of those false teachers who "come in sheep's clothing,  
but inwardly are ravening wolves,"[358] as well as of the language of  
St. Paul when he warns the Ephesian elders that after his departing  
"grievous wolves shall enter in among them, not sparing the flock."[359]  
  
3. The function to which this beast devotes himself is religious, not  
secular. \_He maketh the earth and them that dwell therein to worship  
the first beast\_; and, having persuaded them to make an image to that  
beast, \_it was given unto him to give breath to it, even to the image  
of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause  
that as many as should not worship the image of the beast should be  
killed\_.[360]  
  
4. The great signs and wonders done by this beast, such as making \_fire  
to come down out of heaven upon the earth in the sight of men\_, are a  
reminiscence of the prophet Elijah at Carmel; while the \_signs\_ by which  
he successfully deceives the world take us again to the words of Jesus:  
"There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show  
great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the  
elect."[361] St. Paul's words also, when he speaks of the man of sin,  
make similar mention of his "signs:" "Whose coming is according to the  
working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with  
all deceit of unrighteousness for them that are perishing; because they  
received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved."[362]  
  
5. Finally, the fact that this beast bears the name of "the false  
prophet,"[363] the very term used by St. John when speaking of the  
false teachers who had arisen in his day,[364] may surely be accepted  
as conclusive that we have here a symbol of the antichrists of the  
first Epistle of that Apostle. Of the antichrists, let it be observed,  
not of Antichrist as a single individual manifestation. For there is a  
characteristic of this beast which leads to the impression that more  
than one agent is included under the terms of the symbol. The beast  
has \_two horns\_. Why two? We may be sure that the circumstance is not  
without a meaning, and that it is not determined only by the fact that  
the animal referred to has in its natural condition the rudiments of  
no more than two. In other visions of the Apocalypse we read of a lamb  
with "seven horns," and of a head of the beast with "ten horns," the  
numbers in both cases being symbolical. The "two horns" now spoken of  
must also be symbolical; and thus viewed, the expression leads us to  
the thought of the two witnesses, of the two prophets of truth, spoken  
of in chap. xi. But these two witnesses represent all faithful  
witnesses for Christ; and, in like manner, the two horns represent the  
many perverters of the Christian faith beheld by the Seer springing up  
around him, who, professing to be Apostles of the Lamb, endeavoured  
to overthrow His Gospel.  
  
These considerations lead to a natural and simple interpretation of what  
is meant by the second beast. The plausible interpretation suggested by  
many of the ablest commentators on this book, that by the second beast  
is meant "worldly wisdom, comprehending everything in learning, science  
and art which human nature of itself, in its civilized state, can attain  
to, the worldly power in its more refined and spiritual elements, its  
prophetical or priestly class,"[365] must be unhesitatingly dismissed.  
It fails to apprehend the very essence of the symbol. It speaks of a  
secular and mundane influence, when the whole point of St. John's words  
lies in this,--that the influence of which he speaks is religious. Not  
in anything springing out of the world in its ordinary sense, but in  
something springing out of the Church and the Church's faith, is the  
meaning of the Apostle to be sought.  
  
Was there anything then in St. John's own day that might have  
suggested the figure thus employed? Had he ever witnessed any  
spectacle that might have burned such thoughts into his soul? Let us  
turn to his Gospel and learn from it to look upon the world as it was  
when it met his eyes. What had he seen, and seen with an indignation  
that penetrates to the core his narrative of his Master's life? He had  
seen the Divine institution of Judaism, designed by the God of Israel  
to prepare the way for the Light and the Life of men, perverted by its  
appointed guardians, and made an instrument for blinding instead of  
enlightening the soul. He had seen the Eternal Son, in all the glory  
of His "grace" and "truth," coming to the things that were His own,  
and yet the men that were His own rejecting Him, under the influence  
of their selfish religious guides. He had seen the Temple, which ought  
to have been filled with the prayers of a spiritual worship, profaned  
by worldly traffic and the love of gain. Nay more, he remembered one  
scene so terrible that it could never be forgotten by him, when in the  
judgment-hall of Pilate even that unscrupulous representative of Roman  
power had again and again endeavoured to set Jesus free, and when the  
Jews had only succeeded in accomplishing their plan by the argument,  
"If thou release this man, thou art not C?ar's friend."[366] They  
C?ar's friends! They attach value to honours bestowed by C?ar! O  
vile hypocrisy! O dark extremity of hate! Judaism at the feet of  
C?ar! So powerfully had the thought of these things taken possession  
of the mind of the beloved disciple, so deeply was he moved by the  
narrowness and bigotry and fanaticism which had usurped the place of  
generosity and tenderness and love, that, in order to find utterance  
for his feelings, he had been compelled to put a new meaning into an  
old word, and to concentrate into the term "the Jews" everything most  
opposed to Christ and Christianity.  
  
Nor was it only in Judaism that St. John had seen the spirit of religion  
so overmastered by the spirit of the world that it became the world's  
slave. He had witnessed the same thing in Heathenism. It is by no means  
improbable that when he speaks of \_the image of the beast\_ he may also  
think of those images of C?ar the worshipping of which was everywhere  
made the test of devotion to the Roman State and of abjuration of the  
Christian faith. There again the forms and sanctions of religion had  
been used to strengthen the dominion of secular power and worldly force.  
Both Judaism and Heathenism, in short, supplied the thoughts which,  
translated into the language of symbolism, are expressed in the  
conception of the second beast and its relation to the first.  
  
Yet we are not to imagine that, though St. John started from these  
things, his vision was confined to them. He thinks not of Jew or  
heathen only at a particular era, but of man; not of human nature only  
as it appears amidst the special circumstances of his own day, but as  
it appears everywhere and throughout all time. He is not satisfied  
with dwelling upon existing phenomena alone. He penetrates to the  
principles from which they spring. And wherever he sees a spirit  
professing to uphold religion, but objecting to all the unpalatable  
truths with which it is connected in the Christian faith, wherever he  
sees the gate to future glory made wide instead of narrow and the way  
broad instead of straitened, there he beholds the dire combination of  
the first and second beasts presented in this chapter. The light has  
become darkness, and how great is the darkness![367] The salt has lost  
its savour, and is fit neither for the land nor for the dunghill.[368]  
  
In speaking of the subserviency of the second to the first beast, the  
Seer had spoken of \_a mark given\_ to all the followers of the latter  
\_on their right hand, or upon their forehead\_, and without which no  
one was to be admitted to the privileges of their association or of  
buying or selling in their city. He had further described this mark  
as being either \_the name of the beast or the number of his name\_. To  
explain more fully the nature of this "mark" appears to be the aim of  
the last verse of the chapter:--  
  
 Here is wisdom. He that hath understanding, let him count the  
 number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number  
 is six hundred and sixty and six (xiii. 18).  
  
To discuss with anything like fulness the difficult questions  
connected with these words would require a volume rather than the few  
sentences at the close of a chapter that can be here devoted to it.  
Referring, therefore, his readers to what he has elsewhere written on  
this subject,[369] the writer can only make one or two brief remarks,  
in order to point out the path in which the solution of the problems  
suggested by the words must be sought.  
  
It is indeed remarkable that the Seer should speak at all of "the  
number" of the name of the beast; that is, of the number which would  
be gained by adding together the numbers represented by the several  
letters of the name. Why not be content with the name itself?  
Throughout this book the followers of Christ are never spoken of as  
stamped with a number, but either with the name of the Father or the  
Son, or with a new name which no one "knoweth" saving he that  
receiveth it.[370] Now the principle of Antithesis or Contrast, which  
so largely rules the structure of the Apocalypse, might lead us to  
expect a similar procedure in the case of the followers of the beast.  
Why then is it not resorted to?  
  
1. St. John may not himself have known the name. He may have been  
acquainted only with the character of the beast, and with the fact,  
too often overlooked by inquirers, that to that character its name,  
when made known, must correspond. It is not any name, any designation,  
by which the beast may be individualized, that will fulfil the  
conditions of his thought. No reader of St. John's writings can have  
failed to notice that to him the word "name" is far more than a mere  
appellative. It expresses the inner nature of the person to whom it is  
applied. The "name" of the Father expresses the character of the  
Father, that of the Son the character of the Son. The Seer, therefore,  
might be satisfied in the present instance with his conviction that  
the name of the beast, whatever it be, must be a name which will  
express the inner nature of the beast; and he may have asked no more.  
Not only so. When we enter into the style of the Apostle's thought, we  
may even inquire whether it was possible for a Christian to know the  
\_name\_ of the beast in the sense which the word "name" demands. No man  
could know the new name written upon the white stone given to him that  
overcometh "but he that receiveth it."[371] In other words, no one but  
a Christian indeed could have that Christian experience which would  
enable him to understand the "new name." In like manner now, St. John  
may have felt that it was not possible for the followers of Christ to  
know the \_name\_ of Antichrist. Antichristian experience alone could  
teach the name of Antichrist, service of the beast the name of the  
beast; and such experience no Christian could have. But this need not  
hinder him from giving the number. The "number" spoke only of general  
character and fate; and knowledge of it did not imply, like knowledge  
of the "name," communion of spirit with him to whom the name belonged.  
  
2. From this it follows that not the "name," but the "number" of the  
name, is of importance in the Apostle's view. The name no doubt must  
have a meaning which, taken even by itself, would be portentous; but,  
according to the artificial system of thought here followed, the  
"number" is the real portent, the real bearer of the Divine message of  
wrath and doom.  
  
3. This is precisely the lesson borne by the number 666. The number  
six itself awakened a feeling of dread in the breast of the Jew who  
felt the significance of numbers. It fell below the sacred number  
seven just as much as eight went beyond it. This last number denoted  
more than the simple possession of the Divine. As in the case of  
circumcision on the eighth day, of the "great day" of the feast on the  
eighth day, or of the resurrection of our Lord on the first day of the  
week, following the previous seven days, it expressed a new beginning  
in active power. By a similar process the number six was held to  
signify inability to reach the sacred point and hopeless falling short  
of it. To the Jew there was thus a doom upon the number six even when  
it stood alone. Triple it; let there be a multiple of it by ten and  
then a second time by ten until you obtain three mysterious \_sixes\_  
following one another, 666; and we have represented a potency of evil  
than which there can be none greater, a direfulness of fate than which  
there can be none worse. The \_number\_ then is important, not the  
\_name\_. Putting ourselves into the position of the time, we listen to  
the words, \_His number is six hundred sixty and six\_; and we have  
enough to make us tremble. Nay, there is in them a depth of sin and a  
weight of punishment which no one can "know" but he who has committed  
the sin and shared the punishment.  
  
From all that has been said it would seem that there is no possibility  
of finding the name of the beast in the name of any single individual  
who has yet appeared upon the stage of history. It may well be that in  
Nero, or Domitian, or any other persecutor of the Church, the Seer  
beheld a type of the beast; but the whole strain of the chapter  
forbids the supposition that the meaning of the name is exhausted in  
any single individual. No merely human ruler, no ruler over merely a  
portion of the world however large, no ruler who had not died and  
risen from the grave, and who after his resurrection had not been  
hailed with enthusiasm by "every tribe, and tongue, and people, and  
nation," can be the beast referred to. Whether St. John expected such  
a ruler in the future; whether this beast, like the "little horn" of  
Daniel, which had "eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking  
great things,"[372] was not only bestial, but human; or whether in its  
individuality it was no more than a personification of antichristian  
sin and cruelty, is another and a more difficult question. Yet his  
tendency to represent abstract ideas by concrete images would lead to  
the latter rather than the former supposition. One thing is clear:  
that the bestial principle was already working, although it might not  
have reached its full development. The "many antichrists"[373] might  
be the precursors of a still more terrible Antichrist, but they worked  
in the same spirit and towards the same end. Nor are they to be less  
the object of alienation and abhorrence to the Christian now than  
when they may be concentrated in "the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus  
shall slay with the breath of His mouth, and bring to nought by the  
manifestation of His coming."[374]  
  
FOOTNOTES:  
  
[336] Ver. 11.  
  
[337] Dan. vii. 2-8.  
  
[338] Chap. xiii. 3, A.V.  
  
[339] Chap. xiii. 3, R.V.  
  
[340] Chap. v. 6.  
  
[341] Heb. ii. 14.  
  
[342] Chap. xii. 12.  
  
[343] Vers. 3, 4.  
  
[344] Ver. 7.  
  
[345] Ver. 8.  
  
[346] Ver. 5.  
  
[347] Comp. p. 175.  
  
[348] Ps. cxiii. 5; Isa. xl. 25, xlvi. 3, 5.  
  
[349] Ver. 6.  
  
[350] John i. 14; Rev. vii. 15.  
  
[351] 1 Cor. ii. 12. Comp. Gal. vi. 14.  
  
[352] James iv. 4.  
  
[353] 1 John ii. 15, 16.  
  
[354] John xiv. 30; xvi. 33; xvii. 15, 16.  
  
[355] Eph. vi. 12.  
  
[356] 2 Thess. i. 6, 7.  
  
[357] Ps. cxlv

ii. 19.  
  
[358] Matt. vii. 15.  
  
[359] Acts xx. 29.  
  
[360] Vers. 12, 15.  
  
[361] Matt. xxiv. 24.  
  
[362] 2 Thess. ii. 9, 10.  
  
[363] Comp. chaps. xvi. 13; xix. 20; xx. 10.  
  
[364] 1 John iv. 1.  
  
[365] Fairbairn, \_On Prophecy\_, p. 328.  
  
[366] John xix. 12.  
  
[367] Matt. vi. 23.  
  
[368] Luke xiv. 34, 35.  
  
[369] \_The Revelation of St. John: Baird Lectures published by  
Macmillan and Co.\_, second edition, p. 142, etc., 319, etc.  
  
[370] Comp. chaps. iii. 12; xiv. 1; ii. 17.  
  
[371] Chap. ii. 17. Comp. John i. 31; iv. 32.  
  
[372] Dan. vii. 8.  
  
[373] Comp. 1 John ii. 18.  
  
[374] 2 Thess. ii. 8.  
  
  
  
  
 CHAPTER XI.  
  
 \_THE LAMB ON THE MOUNT ZION AND THE HARVEST  
 AND VINTAGE OF THE WORLD.\_  
  
 REV. xiv.  
  
  
The twelfth and thirteenth chapters of this book were designed to set  
before us a picture of the three great enemies of the Church of  
Christ. We have been told of the dragon, the principle and root of all  
the evil, whether inward or outward, from which that Church suffers.  
He is the first enemy. We have been further told of the first beast,  
of that power or prince of the world to whom the dragon has committed  
his authority. He is the second enemy. Lastly, we have been told of  
that false spirit of religion which unites itself to the world, and  
which, even more opposed than the world itself to the unworldly spirit  
of Christianity, makes the relation of God's children to the world  
worse than it might otherwise have been. The picture thus presented is  
in the highest degree fitted to depress and to discourage. The thought  
more especially of faithlessness in the Church fills the heart with  
sorrow. The saddest feature in the sufferings of Jesus was that He was  
"wounded in the house of His friends;" and there is a greater than  
ordinary depth of pathos in the words with which the beloved disciple  
draws to a close his record of his Master's struggle with the Jews:  
"These things spake Jesus; and He departed, and was hidden from them.  
But though He had done so many signs before them, yet they believed  
not on Him: that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled,  
which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath  
the arm of the Lord been revealed?"[375]  
  
Even then, however, it was not wholly darkness and defeat, for the  
Evangelist immediately adds, "Nevertheless even of the rulers many  
believed on Him;" and he closes the struggle with the words of calm  
self-confidence on the part of Jesus, "The things therefore which I  
speak, even as the Father hath said unto Me, so I speak."[376] Thus also  
is it here, and we pass from the dark spectacle on which our eyes have  
rested to a scene of heavenly light, and beauty, and repose. The reader  
may indeed at first imagine that the symmetry of structure which has  
been pointed out as a characteristic of the Apocalypse is not preserved  
by the arrangement of its parts in the present instance. We are about to  
meet in the following chapter the third and last series of plagues; and  
we might perhaps expect that the consolatory visions contained in this  
chapter ought to have found a place between the sixth and seventh Bowls,  
just as the consolatory visions of chap. vii. and of chaps. x. and xi.  
found their place between the sixth and seventh Seals and the sixth and  
seventh Trumpets. Instead of this the seventh Bowl, at chap. xv. 17,  
immediately follows the sixth, at ver. 12 of the same chapter; and the  
visions of encouragement contained in the chapter before us precede all  
the Bowls. The explanation may be that the Bowls are the last and  
highest series of judgments, and that when they begin there can be no  
more pause. One plague must rush upon another till the end is reached.  
The final judgments brook neither interruption nor delay.  
  
In this spirit we turn to the first vision of chap. xiv.:--  
  
 And I saw, and, behold, the Lamb standing on the mount Zion, and  
 with Him a hundred and forty and four thousand, having His name  
 and the name of His Father written on their foreheads. And I heard  
 a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice  
 of a great thunder: and the voice which I heard was as the voice  
 of harpers harping with their harps: and they sang as it were a  
 new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures,  
 and the elders: and no man could learn the song save the hundred  
 and forty and four thousand, even they that had been purchased out  
 of the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women;  
 for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb  
 whithersoever He goeth. These were purchased from among men, a  
 first-fruits unto God and unto the Lamb. And in their mouth was  
 found no lie; they are without blemish (xiv. 1-5).  
  
The scene of the vision is "the mount Zion," that Zion so often spoken  
of both in the Old and in the New Testament as God's peculiar seat, and  
in the eyes of Israel famous for the beauty of its morning dews.[377] It  
is the Zion in which God "dwells,"[378] the mount Zion which He  
"loved,"[379] and "out of which salvation comes."[380] It is that "holy  
hill of Zion" upon which God set the Son as King when He said to Him,  
"Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee."[381] It is that Zion,  
too, to which "the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come with  
singing; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads."[382] Finally,  
it is that home of which the sacred writer, writing to the Hebrews,  
says, "Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living  
God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the  
general assembly and Church of the first-born, who are enrolled in  
heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made  
perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood  
of sprinkling, that speaketh better than that of Abel."[383] Upon this  
mount Zion the Lamb--that is, the crucified and risen Lamb of chap.  
v.--stands, firm, self-possessed, and calm.  
  
There is more, however, than outward beauty or sacred memories to mark  
the scene to which we are introduced. Mount Zion may be "beautiful in  
elevation, the joy of the whole earth, on the sides of the north, the  
city of the great King."[384] But there is music for the ear as well  
as beauty for the eye. The mount resounds with song, rich and full of  
meaning to those who can understand it. A voice is heard from heaven  
which seems to be distinguished from the voice of the hundred and  
forty and four thousand to be immediately spoken of. We are not told  
from whom it comes; but it is there, \_as the voice of many waters, and  
as the voice of a great thunder, and as the voice of harpers harping  
with their harps\_. Majesty and sweetness mark it. It is the music that  
is ever in God's presence, not the music of angels only, or glorified  
saints, or a redeemed creation. More probably it is that of all of  
them together. And the song which they sing is \_new\_, like that of  
chap. v. 9, which is sung by "the four living creatures and the  
four-and-twenty elders, who have each one a harp, and golden bowls of  
incense, which are the prayers of the saints." That song the Church on  
earth understands, and she alone can understand. It spoke of truths  
which the redeemed alone could appreciate, and of joys which they  
alone could value. There is a communion of saints, of all saints on  
earth and of all who fill the courts of the Lord's house on high. Even  
now the Church can listen with ravished ear to songs which she shall  
hereafter join in singing.  
  
Standing beside the Lamb upon Mount Zion, there are \_a hundred and  
forty and four thousand, having the Lamb's name and the name of His  
Father written on their foreheads\_, in token of their priestly state.  
We cannot avoid asking, Are these the same hundred and forty and four  
thousand of whom we have read in chap. vii. as sealed upon their  
foreheads, or are they different? The natural inference is that they  
are the same. To use such a peculiar number of two different portions  
of the Church of God would lead to a confusion inconsistent with the  
usually plain and direct, even though mystical, statements of this  
book. Besides which they have the mark or seal of God in both cases on  
the same part of their bodies,--the forehead. It is true that the  
definite article is not prefixed to the number; but neither is that  
article prefixed to the "glassy sea" of chap. xv. 1, and yet no one  
doubts that this is the same "glassy sea" as that of chap. iv. Besides  
which the absence of the article may be accounted for by the fact that  
the reference is not \_directly\_ to the hundred and forty and four  
thousand of chap. vii. 4, but to the innumerable multitude of chap.  
vii. 9.[385] We have already seen, however, that these two companies  
are the same, although the persons composing them are viewed in  
different lights; and the hundred and forty and four thousand here  
correspond, not to the first, but to the second, company. They are in  
full possession of their Christian privileges and joys. They are not  
"in heaven," in the ordinary meaning of that term. They are on earth.  
But the two companies formerly mentioned meet in them. They are both  
sealed, and in the presence of the Lamb.  
  
The character of the hundred and forty and four thousand next claims  
our thoughts.  
  
1. They were \_not defiled with women, for they are virgins\_. The words  
cannot be literally understood, but must be taken in the sense of  
similar words of the Apostle Paul, when, writing to the Corinthians,  
he says, "For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I  
espoused you to one Husband, that I might present you as a pure virgin  
to Christ."[386] Such "a pure virgin" were the hundred and forty and  
four thousand now standing upon the mount Zion. They had renounced all  
that unfaithfulness to God and to Divine truth which is so often  
spoken of in the Old Testament as spiritual fornication or adultery.  
They had renounced all sin. In the language of St. John in his first  
Epistle, they had "the true God, and eternal life." They had "guarded  
themselves from idols."[387]  
  
2. They \_follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth\_. They shrink from no  
part of the Redeemer's life whether on earth or in heaven. They follow  
Him in His humiliation, labours, sufferings, death, resurrection, and  
ascension. They obey the command "Follow thou Me"[388] in prosperity  
or adversity, in joy or sorrow, in persecution or triumph. Wherever  
their Lord is they also are, one with Him, members of His Body and  
partakers of His Spirit.  
  
3. They are \_purchased from among men, a first-fruits unto God and  
unto the Lamb\_. \_And in their mouth was found no lie; they are without  
blemish.\_ Upon the fact that they are "purchased" it is unnecessary to  
dwell. We have already met with the expression in chap. v. 9, in one  
of the triumphant songs of the redeemed. Nor does it seem needful to  
speak of the moral qualifications here enumerated, further than to  
observe that in other parts of this book the "lie" is expressly said  
to exclude from the new Jerusalem, and to be a mark of those upon whom  
the door is shut,[389] while the epithet "without blemish" is  
elsewhere, on more than one occasion, applied to our Lord.[390]  
  
The appellation "a first-fruits" demands more notice. The figure is  
drawn from the well-known offering of "first-fruits" under the Jewish  
law, in which the first portion of any harvest was dedicated to God,  
in token that the whole belonged to Him, and was recognised as His.  
Hence it always implies that something of the same kind will follow  
it, and in this sense it is often used in the New Testament: "If the  
first-fruit is holy, so is the lump;" "Ep?etus, who is the  
first-fruits of Asia unto Christ;" "Now hath Christ been raised from  
the dead, the first-fruits of them that are asleep;" "Ye know the  
house of Stephanas, that it is the first-fruits of Achaia."[391] In  
like manner the mention of the hundred and forty and four thousand as  
"first-fruits" suggests the thought of something to follow. What that  
is it is more difficult to say. It can hardly be other Christians  
belonging to a later age of the Church's history upon earth, for the  
end is come. It can hardly be Christians who have done or suffered  
more than other members of the Christian family, for in St. John's  
eyes all Christians are united to Christ, alike in work and martyrdom.  
Only one supposition remains. The hundred and forty and four thousand,  
as the whole Church of God, are spoken of in the sense in which the  
same expression is used by the Apostle James: "Of His own will He  
brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of  
first-fruits of His creatures."[392] Not as the first portion of the  
Church on earth, to be followed by another portion, but as the first  
portion of a kingdom of God wider and larger than the Church, are the  
words to be understood. The whole Church is God's first-fruits; and  
when she is laid upon His altar, we have the promise that a time is  
coming when creation shall follow in her train, when "it shall be  
delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory  
of the children of God,"[393] when "the mountains and the hills shall  
break forth before the Redeemer into singing, and all the trees of the  
field shall clap their hands."[394]  
  
Why shall nature thus rejoice before the Lord? Let the Psalmist answer:  
"For He cometh, for He cometh to judge the earth: He shall judge the  
world with righteousness, and the people with His truth."[395] This  
thought may introduce us to the next portion of the chapter:--  
  
 And I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven, having an eternal  
 gospel to proclaim over them that sit on the earth, and over every  
 nation, and tribe, and tongue, and people; and he saith with a  
 great voice, Fear God, and give Him glory; for the hour of His  
 judgment is come: and worship Him that made the heaven, and the  
 earth, and sea, and fountains of waters.  
  
 And another, a second angel, followed, saying, Fallen, fallen, is  
 Babylon the great, which hath made all the nations to drink of the  
 wine of the wrath of her fornication.  
  
 And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a great  
 voice, If any man worshippeth the beast and his image, and  
 receiveth a mark on his forehead, or upon his hand, he also shall  
 drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mingled unmixed in  
 the cup of His anger; and he shall be tormented with fire and  
 brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence  
 of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment goeth up unto ages of  
 ages: and they have no rest day and night, they that worship the  
 beast and his image, and whoso receiveth the mark of his name.  
 Here is the patience of the saints, they that keep the  
 commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. 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 toils; for their works follow with them.  
  
 And I saw, and behold a white cloud, and on the cloud I saw One  
 sitting like unto a Son of man, having on His head a golden crown,  
 and in His hand a sharp sickle.  
  
 And another angel came out from the temple, crying with a great  
 voice to Him that sat on the cloud, Send forth Thy sickle, and  
 reap: for the hour to reap is come; for the harvest of the earth  
 is fully ripe. And He that sat on the cloud cast His sickle upon  
 the earth; and the earth was reaped.  
  
 And another angel came out from the temple which is in heaven, he  
 also having a sharp sickle.  
  
 And another angel came out from the altar, he that hath power over  
 fire; and he called with a great voice to him that had the sharp  
 sickle, saying, Send forth thy sharp sickle, and gather the  
 clusters of the vine of the earth; for her bunches of grapes are  
 ripe. And the angel cast his sickle into the earth, and gathered  
 the vine of the earth, and cast it into the winepress, the great  
 winepress, of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden  
 without the city, and there came out blood from the winepress,  
 even unto the bridles of the horses, as far as a thousand and six  
 hundred furlongs (xiv. 6-20).  
  
The first point to be noticed in connexion with these verses is their  
structure, for the structure is of importance to the interpretation. The  
passage as a whole, it will be easily observed, consists of seven  
parts, the first three and the last three being introduced by an  
"angel," while the central or chief part is occupied with One who, from  
the description, can be no other than our Lord Himself. In this part it  
is also obvious that the Lord comes to wind up the history of the world,  
and to gather in that harvest of His people which is already fully or  
even overripe. There can be no doubt, therefore, that we are here at the  
very close of the present dispensation; and, as five out of the six  
parts which are grouped around the central figure are occupied with  
judgment on the wicked, the presumption is that the only remaining part,  
the first of the six, will be occupied with the same topic.  
  
In this first part indeed we read of \_an eternal gospel proclaimed  
over them that sit on the earth, and over every nation, and tribe, and  
tongue, and people\_; and the first impression made upon us is that we  
have here a universal and final proclamation of the glad tidings of  
great joy, in order that the world may yet, at the last moment,  
repent, believe, and be saved. But such an interpretation, however  
plausible and generally accepted, must be set aside. The light thrown  
upon the words by their position in the series of seven parts already  
spoken of is a powerful argument against it. Everything in the passage  
itself leads to the same conclusion. We do not read, as we ought, were  
this the meaning, to have read, of "the," but of "an," eternal gospel.  
This gospel is proclaimed, not "unto," but "over," those to whom it is  
addressed. Its hearers do not "dwell," as in both the Authorised and  
Revised Versions, but, as in the margin of the latter, "sit," on the  
earth, in the sinful world, in the carelessness of pride and  
self-confident security. Thus the great harlot "sitteth upon many  
waters;" and thus Babylon says in her heart, "I sit a queen, and am no  
widow, and shall in no wise see mourning."[396] There is no  
humiliation, no spirit of repentance, no preparation for the Gospel,  
here; while the mention of the "earth" and the fourfold division of  
its inhabitants lead us to think of men continuing in their sins, over  
whom a doom is to be pronounced.[397] Still further, the words put  
into the mouth of him who speaks "with a great voice," and which  
appear to contain the substance of the gospel thus proclaimed, have in  
them no sound of mercy, no story of love, no mention of the name of  
Jesus. They speak of \_fearing God and giving glory to Him\_, as even  
the lost may do,[398] of the \_hour\_, not even the "day," \_of His  
judgment\_; and they describe the rule of the great Creator by bringing  
together the four things--\_the heaven, and the earth, and sea, and  
fountains of waters\_--upon which judgment has already fallen in the  
series of the Trumpets, and is yet to fall in that of the Bowls.[399]  
Lastly, the description given of the angel reminds us so much of the  
description given of the "eagle" in chap. viii. 13 as to make it at  
least probable that his mission is a similar one of woe.  
  
In the light of all these circumstances, we seem compelled to come to  
the conclusion that the "gospel" referred to is a proclamation of  
judgment, that it is that side of the Saviour's mission in which He  
appears as the winnowing fan by which His enemies are scattered as the  
chaff, while His disciples are gathered as the wheat. There is no  
intimation here, then, of a conversion of the world. The world

stands  
self-convicted before the bar of judgment, to hear its doom.  
  
The cry of the second angel corresponds to that of the first. It  
proclaims the fall of Babylon and its cause. The deeply interesting  
questions relating to this city will meet us at a later point. In the  
meantime it is enough to observe that Babylon is described as \_fallen\_.  
The Judge is not only standing at the door: He has begun His work.  
  
The words of the third angel continue the strain thus begun, and  
constitute the most terrible picture of the fate of the ungodly to be  
found in Scripture. The eye shrinks from the spectacle. The heart  
fails with fear when the words are read. That \_wine of the wrath of  
God which is mingled unmixed in the cup of His anger\_, that wine into  
which, contrary to the usage of the time, no water, no mitigating  
element, has been allowed to enter; that \_torment with fire and  
brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of  
the Lamb\_; that \_smoke of their torment going up unto ages of ages\_;  
that \_no-rest day and night\_, of so different a kind from the no-rest  
of which we have read in chap. iv. 8--all present a picture from which  
we can hardly do aught else than turn away with trembling. Can this be  
the Gospel of Jesus, the Lamb of God? Can this be a revelation given  
to the disciple whom Jesus loved, and who had entered so deeply into  
his Master's spirit of tenderness and compassion for the sinner?  
  
1. Let us consider that the words are addressed, not directly to  
sinners, but to the Church of Christ, which is safe from the threatened  
doom; not to the former that they may be led to repentance, but to the  
latter that through the thought of what she has escaped she may be  
filled with eternal gratitude and joy 2. Let us notice the degree to  
which sin is here supposed to have developed; that it is not the sin of  
Mary in the house of Simon, of the penitent thief, of the Philippian  
gaoler, or of the publicans and harlots who gathered around our Lord in  
the days of His flesh to listen to Him, but sin bold, determined, loved,  
and clung to as the sinner's self-chosen good, the sin of sinners who  
will die for sin as martyrs die for Christ and holiness. 3. Let us  
observe that, whatever the angel may mean, he certainly does not speak  
of never-ending existence in never-ending torment, for the words of the  
original unhappily translated both in the Authorised and Revised  
Versions "for ever and ever" ought properly to be rendered "unto ages of  
ages;"[400] and, distinguished as they are on this occasion alone in the  
Apocalypse from the first of these expressions by the absence of the  
Greek articles, they ought not to be translated in the same way. 4. Let  
us recall the strong figures of speech in which the inhabitants of the  
East were wont to give utterance to their feelings, figures illustrated  
in the present instance by the mention of that "fire and brimstone"  
which no man will interpret literally, as well as by the language of St.  
Jude when he describes Sodom and Gomorrah as "an example of eternal  
fire."[401] 5. Let us remember that hatred of sin is the correlative of  
love of goodness, and that the kingdom of God cannot be fully  
established in the world until sin has been completely banished from it.  
6. Above all, let us mark carefully the distinction, so often forced  
upon us in the writings of St. John, between sinners in the ordinary  
sense and the system of sin to which other sinners cling in deadliest  
enmity to God and righteousness; and, as we do all this, the words of  
the third angel will produce on us another than their first impression.  
So far as the human being is before us we shall be moved only to  
compassion and eagerness to save. But his sin, the sin which has  
mastered the Divinely implanted elements of his nature, which has fouled  
what God made pure and embittered what God made sweet, the sin which has  
subjected one created in the nobility of the image of God to the  
miserable thraldom of the devil, the sin the thought of which we can  
separate, like the Apostle Paul, from the "I" of man's true  
nature[402]--of that sin we can only say, Let the wrath of God be poured  
out upon it unmingled with mercy; let it be destroyed with a destruction  
the memory of which shall last "unto ages of ages" and even take its  
place amidst the verities sustaining the throne of the Eternal and  
securing the obedience and the happiness of His creatures.[403] If a  
minister of Christ thinks that he may gather from this passage, or  
others similar to it, a commission to go to sinners rather than to sin  
with "tidings of damnation," he mistakes alike the Master whom he serves  
and the commission with which he has been entrusted.  
  
At this point, after the thought of that spirit of allegiance to the  
beast which draws down such terrors upon itself, and before we reach the  
central figure of the whole movement, we have some words of comfort  
interposed. The meaning of the first part of them is similar to that of  
chap. xiii. 10, and need not be further spoken of. The meaning of their  
second part, conveying to us the contents of the "voice from heaven,"  
demands a moment's notice. \_Blessed\_, exclaims the heavenly voice (at  
the same time prefixing the command \_Write\_), \_are the dead which die in  
the Lord from henceforth\_. It is difficult to determine the precise  
point of time referred to in the word "henceforth." If it be the moment  
of the end, the moment of the Second Coming of the Lord, then the  
promise must express the glory of the resurrection. But, to say nothing  
of the fact that "resting from labours" is too weak to bring out the  
glory of the resurrection state, there is at that instant no more time  
to die in the Lord. The living shall be "changed." It seems better,  
therefore, to understand the words as a voice of consolation running  
throughout the whole Christian age. In the view of "heaven" the lapse of  
time is hardly thought of. All is Now. The meaning of "dying in the  
Lord," again, must not be regarded as equivalent to the Scriptural  
expression "falling asleep in Jesus." Not the thought of "falling  
asleep" in a quiet Christian home, but of "dying" as Jesus died, is in  
the Seer's mind; and not the thought of rest from work, but of rest from  
\_toils\_, an entirely different and far stronger word, is in the answer  
of the Spirit. Thus are believers blessed. Their life is a life of toil,  
of hardship, of trial, of persecution, of death; but when they die, they  
"rest." And their "works"--that is, their Christian character and  
life--are not lost. They \_follow with them\_, and meet them again in the  
heavenly mansions as the record of all that they have done and suffered  
in their Master's cause.  
  
The first three angels have accomplished their task. We now reach the  
fourth and chief member in this series of seven, and meet with the Lord  
as He comes to take His people to Himself, that where He is, there they  
may also be. That it is the Lord who is here before us we cannot for a  
moment doubt. The designation \_like unto a Son of man\_, the same as that  
of chap. i. 13, itself establishes the fact, which is again confirmed by  
the mention of the \_white cloud\_ and of the \_golden crown\_. \_In His  
hand\_ He holds \_a sharp sickle\_, with which to reap. Thus also in  
different passages of the New Testament our Lord speaks of the harvest  
of His people, although in them He acts by His angels and Apostles.[404]  
In one passage of the Gospel of St. John He acts by Himself.[405] The  
glorified Redeemer is thus ready to complete His work.  
  
\_Another angel\_ now appears, the first of the second series of three,  
and styled "another," not by comparison with Him who sat on the white  
cloud, and who is exalted far above all angels, but by comparison with  
the angels previously spoken of at the sixth, eighth, and ninth verses  
of the chapter. This angel is said to come \_out from the temple\_--that  
is, out of the \_naos\_, out of the innermost shrine of the temple--and  
the notice is important, for it shows that he comes from the immediate  
presence of God, and is a messenger from Him. Therefore it is that he  
can say to the Son, \_Send forth Thy sickle, and reap\_. "The Son can do  
nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father doing."[406] Until  
the Father gives the sign His "hour is not yet come;" and more  
especially of the hour now arrived Jesus had Himself said, "But of  
that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven,  
neither the Son, but the Father."[407] The day, the hour, the moment,  
has now arrived; and, as usual in this book, the message of the Father  
is communicated by an angel. The intimation that the hour is come is  
grounded upon the fact that the harvest about to be gathered in is  
\_fully ripe\_. The Revised Version translates "overripe;" but the  
translation, though literal, is unhappy, and so far false as it  
unquestionably suggests a false idea. God's time for working is always  
right, not wrong; and it is perfectly legitimate to understand the  
word of the original as meaning simply dry, hard, the soft juices of  
its ripening state absorbed, and the time of its firmness come.[408]  
Thus summoned by the message of the Father to the work, the Son enters  
upon it without delay. "As He hears, He judges."[409] \_He that sat on  
the cloud cast His sickle upon the earth; and the earth was reaped.\_  
  
The second angel of the second group of three next appears, having,  
like Him that sat upon the cloud, "a sharp sickle;" and he too waits  
for the summons to use it.  
  
This summons is given by the third angel of the second group, of whom  
it is said that he \_came out from the altar, he that hath power over  
fire\_. The altar of this verse must be that already spoken of in chap.  
viii. 3, where we were told that "another angel came and stood over  
the altar, having a golden censer," an altar which we have been led to  
identify with the brazen altar of chap. v. 9, beneath which were found  
the souls of the Old Testament saints; and the "fire" over which this  
angel has power must be the "fire" of chap. viii. 5, the fire taken  
from that altar to kindle the incense of the prayers of the saints.  
The angel is thus a messenger of judgment, about to command a final  
and full answer to be given to the prayer that the Almighty will  
finish His work and vindicate His cause. To this character,  
accordingly, his message corresponds, for \_he called with a great  
voice to him\_ (that is, to the second angel) \_that had the sharp  
sickle, saying, Send forth thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters  
of the vine of the earth; for her bunches of grapes are ripe\_. A  
vintage, not a harvest of grain, is here before us; and it is  
impossible to doubt that it is the purpose of the Seer to draw a broad  
line of distinction between the two. The latter is the harvest of the  
good; the former is the vintage of the evil: and the propriety of the  
figure thus used for the evil is easily perceived when we remember  
that grapes were gathered to be trodden in the winefat, and that the  
juice when trodden out had the colour of blood. The figure was indeed  
one already familiar to the prophets: "Let the nations bestir  
themselves, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat" (that is, The  
Lord judges): "for there will I sit to judge all the nations round  
about. Put ye in the sickle, for the vintage is ripe: come, tread ye;  
for the winepress is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is  
great;"[410] "Wherefore art Thou red in Thine apparel, and Thy  
garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the  
winepress alone; and of the people there was no man with Me: yea, I  
trod them in Mine anger, and trampled them in My fury; and their  
life-blood is sprinkled upon My garments, and I have stained all My  
raiment. For the day of vengeance is in Mine heart, and My year of  
redemption is come."[411] The figure is here employed in a similar  
manner, for the angel \_gathered the vine\_ (not "the vintage," the  
whole vine being plucked up by the roots) \_of the earth, and cast it  
into the winepress, the great winepress, of the wrath of God. And the  
winepress was trodden without the city, and there came out blood from  
the winepress, even unto the bridles of the horses, as far as a  
thousand and six hundred furlongs\_. In these words we have undoubtedly  
the judgment of the wicked, and the last portion of them alone need  
detain us for a moment.  
  
1. What is meant by the statement that the sea of blood thus created  
by the slaughter spoken of reached "even unto the bridles of the  
horses"? The horses are those of chap. xix. 11-16, where we have again  
a description of the final victory of Christ over all His enemies, and  
where it is again said of Him that "He treadeth the winepress of the  
fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God."[412] The same winepress  
which meets us here meets us there. The battle and the victory are the  
same; and the horses here are therefore those upon which He that is  
called Faithful and True, together with His armies that are in heaven,  
rides forth to conquest. The mention of "the bridles" of the horses is  
more uncertain and more difficult to explain, but one passage of the  
Old Testament helps us. In speaking of the glories of the latter day,  
the prophet Zechariah says, "In that day shall there be upon the bells  
of the horses (the bells strung along the bridles) HOLY UNTO THE  
LORD."[413] The sea of blood reached to, but could not be allowed to  
touch, these sacred words.  
  
2. What is meant by the space of "a thousand and six hundred furlongs,"  
over which the sea extended? To resolve it simply into a large space is  
at variance with the spirit of the Apocalypse; and to imagine that it  
marks the extent of the Holy Land from Dan to Beersheba is both to  
introduce an incorrect calculation and to forget who constitute the  
hosts of wickedness that had been engaged in the battle. These were not  
the inhabitants of Palestine only, but of "the earth," three times  
mentioned in the description. They were "all the nations" spoken of by  
the second angel of the first group, all that worship the beast and his  
image and receive a mark on their forehead or their hand, referred to by  
the third angel of the same group. They are thus the wicked gathered  
from every corner of the earth. With this idea the figures 1,600  
agree--four, the number of the world, multiplied by itself to express  
intensity, and then by a hundred, the number so often associated with  
evil in this book. Whether "furlongs," literally "stadia," are chosen as  
the measure of space because, as suggested by Cornelius a Lapide, the  
arena or circus in which the martyrs suffered was called "The  
Stadium,"[414] it may be vain to conjecture. Enough that the sixteen  
hundred furlongs represent the whole surface of the earth upon which the  
wicked "sit" at ease, the universal efficacy of the sickle by which they  
are gathered to their doom.  
  
One other point ought to be more particularly noticed before we close  
the consideration of this chapter. The harvest of the good is gathered  
in by the Lord Himself, that of the wicked by His angel. The same lesson  
appears to be read in the parables of the tares and of the drawnet. In  
the former (although allusions in each parable may seem to imply that  
angels take part in both acts) it is said that "at the end of the world  
the Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of  
His kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do  
iniquity."[415] In the latter we read, "So shall it be in the end of the  
world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the  
righteous, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire."[416] In like  
manner here. The Son of man Himself gathers His own to their eternal  
rest. It is an angel, though commissioned by Him, who gathers the wicked  
to their fate. "And is there not a beauty and tenderness in this  
contrast? It is as though that Son of man and Son of God who is the  
Judge of quick and dead, the Judge alike of the righteous and of the  
wicked, loved one half of His office, and loved not the other. It is as  
though He cherished as His own prerogative the harvest of the earth, and  
were glad to delegate to other hands the vintage. It is as though the  
ministry of mercy were His chosen office, and the ministry of wrath His  
stern necessity. One like unto the Son of man puts forth the sickle of  
the ingathering; one of created, though it be of angelic, nature is  
employed to send forth the sickle of destruction."[417]  
  
FOOTNOTES:  
  
[375] John xii. 36-38.  
  
[376] Vers. 42, 50.  
  
[377] Ps. cxxxiii. 3.  
  
[378] Ps. ix. 11.  
  
[379] Ps. lxxviii. 68.  
  
[380] Ps. xiv. 7.  
  
[381] Ps. ii. 6, 7.  
  
[382] Isa. xxxv. 10.  
  
[383] Heb. xii. 22-24.  
  
[384] Ps. xlviii. 2.  
  
[385] Comp. Lee in \_Speaker's Commentary in loc.\_ The distinction  
between the two references is there wrongly given.  
  
[386] 2 Cor. xi. 2.  
  
[387] 1 John v. 20, 21.  
  
[388] John xxi. 22.  
  
[389] Chaps. xxi. 27; xxii. 15.  
  
[390] Heb. ix. 14; 1 Pet. i. 19.  
  
[391] Rom. xi. 16; xvi. 5; 1 Cor. xv. 20; xvi. 15.  
  
[392] James i. 18.  
  
[393] Rom. viii. 21.  
  
[394] Isa. lv. 12.  
  
[395] Ps. xcvi. 13.  
  
[396] Chaps. xvii. 1; xviii. 7.  
  
[397] Comp. chaps. xi. 9; xiii. 7.  
  
[398] Comp. James ii. 19.  
  
[399] Chaps. viii., xv.  
  
[400] They are so rendered in the margin of the Revised Version.  
  
[401] Jude 7 (margin of R.V.).  
  
[402] Rom. vii.  
  
[403] Comp. p. 108.  
  
[404] Matt. ix. 37, 38; xiii. 29, 30.  
  
[405] John xiv. 3.  
  
[406] John v. 19.  
  
[407] Mark xiii. 32.  
  
[408] Comp. the "dried up" of the margin of the Revised Version.  
  
[409] John v. 30.  
  
[410] Joel iii. 12, 13.  
  
[411] Isa. lxiii. 2-4.  
  
[412] Ver. 15.  
  
[413] Zech. xiv. 20.  
  
[414] Comp. 1 Cor. ix. 24.  
  
[415] Matt. xiii. 41.  
  
[416] Matt. xiii. 49, 50.  
  
[417] Vaughan, \_u. s.\_, p. 378.  
  
  
  
  
 CHAPTER XII.  
  
 \_THE SEVEN BOWLS.\_  
  
 REV. xv., xvi.  
  
  
Nothing can more clearly prove that the Revelation of St. John is not  
written upon chronological principles than the scenes to which we are  
introduced in the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of the book. We have  
already been taken to the end. We have seen in chap. xiv. the Son of man  
upon the throne of judgment, the harvest of the righteous, and the  
vintage of the wicked. Yet we are now met by another series of visions  
setting before us judgments that must take place before the final issue.  
This is not chronology; it is apocalyptic vision, which again and again  
turns round the kaleidoscope of the future, and delights to behold under  
different aspects the same great principles of the Almighty's  
government, leading always to the same glorious results.  
  
One other preliminary observation may be made. The third series of  
judgments does not really begin till we reach chap. xvi. Chap. xv. is  
introductory, and we are thus reminded that the series of the Trumpets  
had a similar introduction in chap. viii. 1-6. It is the manner of St.  
John, who thus in his Gospel introduces his account of our Lord's  
conversation with Nicodemus in chap. iii. by the last three verses of  
chap. ii., which ought to be connected with the third chapter; and  
who also introduces his narrative regarding the woman of Samaria by  
the first three verses of chap. iv.  
  
To introduce chap. xvi. is the object of chap. xv.  
  
 And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven  
 angels having seven plagues, which are the last, for in them is  
 finished the wrath of God (xv. 1).  
  
The plagues about to be spoken of are "the last," and in them the  
final judgments of God upon evil are contained. What they are, and who  
are the special objects of them, will afterwards appear. Meanwhile,  
another vision is presented to our view:--  
  
 And I saw as it were a glassy sea mingled with fire; and them that  
 come victorious out of the beast, and out of his image, and out of  
 the number of his name, standing upon the glassy sea, having harps  
 of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and  
 the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvello

us are Thy works,  
 O Lord God the Almighty; righteous and true are Thy ways, Thou  
 King of the nations. Who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify Thy  
 name? for Thou only art holy: for all the nations shall come and  
 worship before Thee; for Thy righteous acts have been made  
 manifest (xv. 2-4).  
  
It can hardly be doubted that the \_glassy sea\_ spoken of in these  
words is the same as that already met with at chap. iv. 6. Yet again,  
as in the case of the hundred and forty and four thousand of chap.  
xiv. 1, the definite article is wanting; and, in all probability, for  
the same reason. The aspect in which the object is viewed, though not  
the object itself, is different. The glassy sea is here \_mingled with  
fire\_, a point of which no mention was made in chap. iv. The  
difference may be explained if we remember that the "fire" spoken of  
can only be that of the judgments by which the Almighty vindicates His  
cause, or of the trials by which He purifies His people. As these,  
therefore, now stand upon the sea, delivered from every adversary, we  
are reminded of the troubles which by Divine grace they have been  
enabled to surmount. It was otherwise in chap. iv. No persons were  
there connected with the sea, and it stretched away, clear as crystal,  
before Him all whose dealings with His people are "right." The sea  
itself is in both cases the same, but in the latter it is beheld from  
the Divine point of view, in the former from the human.  
  
The vision as a whole takes us back to the exodus of Israel from  
Egypt, and hence the mention of \_the song of Moses, the servant of  
God\_. The enemies of the Church have their type in Pharaoh and his  
host as they pursue Israel across the sands which had been laid bare  
for the passage of the chosen people; the waters, driven back for a  
time, return to their ancient bed; the hostile force, with its  
chariots and its chosen captains, "goes down into the depths like a  
stone;" and Israel raises its song of victory, "I will sing unto the  
Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously, the horse and his rider hath  
He thrown into the sea."[418]  
  
The song now sung, however, is not that of Moses only, the great  
centre of the Old Testament Dispensation; it is also \_the Song of the  
Lamb\_, the centre and the sum of the New Testament. Both Dispensations  
are in the Seer's thoughts, and in the number of those who sing are  
included the saints of each, the members of the one Universal Church.  
No disciple of Jesus either before or after His first coming is  
omitted. Every one is there from whose hands the bonds of the world  
have fallen off, and who has cast in his lot with the followers of the  
Lamb. Hence also the song is wider in its range than that by which  
the thought of it appears to have been suggested. It celebrates the  
\_great and marvellous works\_ of the Almighty in general. It speaks of  
Him as the \_King of the nations\_, that is, as the King who subdues the  
nations under Him. It rejoices in the fact that His \_righteous acts  
have been made manifest\_. And it anticipates the time when \_all the  
nations shall come and worship before\_ Him, shall bow themselves at  
His feet, and shall acknowledge that His judgments against sin are not  
only just in themselves, but are allowed to be so by the very persons  
on whom they fall.  
  
A second vision follows:--  
  
 And after these things I saw, and the temple of the tabernacle of  
 the testimony in heaven was opened; and there came out from the  
 temple the seven angels that had the seven plagues, clothed with a  
 precious stone pure and lustrous, and girt about their breasts  
 with golden girdles. And one of the four living creatures gave  
 unto the seven angels seven golden bowls 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 none was able to  
 enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels  
 should be finished (xv. 5-8).  
  
The \_temple\_ spoken of is, as upon every occasion when the word is used,  
the shrine or innermost sanctuary, the Holy of holies, the peculiar  
dwelling-place of the Most High; so that the seven angels with the seven  
last plagues come from God's immediate presence. But this sanctuary is  
now beheld in a different light from that in which it was seen in chap.  
xi. 19. There it contained the ark of God's covenant, the symbol of His  
grace. Here the eye is directed to the \_testimony\_, to the two tables of  
the law which were kept in the ark, and were God's witness both to the  
holiness of His character and the justice of His government. The giving  
of the law then was in the Seer's mind, and that fact will explain the  
allusions to the Old Testament found in his words. The description of  
the seven angels, as \_clothed with a precious stone pure and lustrous\_  
(not with "fine linen" as in the Authorised Version) may be explained,  
when we attend to the second characteristic of their appearance, \_girt  
about their breasts with golden girdles\_. These words take us back to  
the vision of the Son of man in chap. i., where the same expression  
occurs, and where we have already seen that it points to the priests of  
Israel, when engaged in the active service of the sanctuary. The angels  
now spoken of are thus priestly after the fashion of the Lord Himself,  
who is not merely the Priest but also the High Priest of His people. The  
high priest, however, wore a jewelled breastplate; and in correspondence  
with the nobler functions of the New Testament priesthood, these jewels  
are now extended to the whole clothing of the angels spoken of. A  
similar figure for the clothing of the glorified Church meets us in the  
prophecies of Isaiah: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall  
be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of  
salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness; as a  
bridegroom decketh himself (the margin of the Revised Version calling  
attention to the fact that the meaning of the original is "decketh  
himself as a priest") with a garland, and as a bride adorneth herself  
with her jewels;"[419] while the same figure, though applied to Tyre, is  
employed by Ezekiel: "Every precious stone was thy covering."[420] The  
seven angels are thus about to engage in a priestly work.  
  
This work is pointed out to them by \_one of the four living  
creatures\_, the representatives of redeemed creation. All creation  
owns the propriety of the judgments now about to be fulfilled.[421]  
  
These judgments are contained, not in seven "vials," as in the  
Authorised Version, but in \_seven golden bowls\_, vessels probably of a  
saucer shape, of no great depth, and their circumference largest at  
the rim. They are the "basins" of the Old Testament, used for carrying  
into the sanctuary the incense which had been lighted by fire from the  
brazen altar. They were thus much better adapted than "vials" for the  
execution of a final judgment. Their contents could be poured out at  
once and suddenly.  
  
The bowls have been delivered to the angels, and nothing remains but  
to pour them out. The moment is one of terror, and it is fitting that  
even all outward things shall correspond. \_Smoke\_, therefore, filled  
\_the sanctuary\_, and \_none was able to enter into it\_. Thus, when  
Moses reared up the tabernacle, and the glory of the Lord filled it,  
"Moses was not able to enter into the tent of meeting:"[422] thus,  
when Solomon dedicated the temple and the cloud filled the house of  
the Lord, "The priests could not stand to minister by reason of the  
cloud."[423] Thus, when Isaiah beheld the glory of the Lord in His  
temple, and heard the cry of the Seraphim, "Holy, holy, holy is the  
Lord of Hosts," "the foundations of the thresholds were moved at the  
voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke;"[424]  
and thus, above all, when the law was given, "Mount Sinai was  
altogether on smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and  
the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole  
mount quaked greatly."[425]  
  
All due preparation having been made, the Seven Bowls are now poured  
out in rapid and uninterrupted succession. As in the case of the Seals  
and of the Trumpets, they are divided into two groups of four and  
three; and those of the first group may be taken together:--  
  
 And I heard a great voice out of the temple, saying to the seven  
 angels, Go ye, and pour out the seven bowls of the wrath of God  
 into the earth. And the first went, and poured out his bowl into  
 the earth; and it became a noisome and grievous sore upon the men  
 which had the mark of the beast, and which worshipped his image.  
 And the second poured out his bowl into the sea; and it became  
 blood as of a dead man, and every living soul died, even the  
 things that were in the sea. And the third poured out his bowl  
 into the rivers and the fountains of the waters; and it became  
 blood. And I heard the angel of the waters saying, Righteous art  
 Thou which art and which wast, Thou holy one, because Thou didst  
 thus judge: for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets,  
 and blood hast Thou given them to drink: they are worthy. And I  
 heard the altar saying, Yea, O Lord, God, the Almighty, true and  
 righteous are Thy judgments. And the fourth poured out his bowl  
 upon the sun; and it was given unto it to scorch men with fire.  
 And men were scorched with great heat: and they blasphemed the  
 name of the God which hath the power over these plagues; and they  
 repented not to give Him glory (xvi. 1-9).  
  
Upon the particulars of these plagues it is unnecessary to dwell. No  
attempt to determine the special meaning of the objects thus visited  
by the wrath of God--the land, the sea, the rivers and fountains of  
the waters, and the sun--has yet been, or is ever perhaps likely to  
be, successful; and the general effect alone appears to be important.  
The chief point claiming attention is the singular closeness of the  
parallelism between them and the Trumpet plagues, a parallelism which  
extends also to the fifth, sixth, and seventh members of the series.  
Close, however, as it is, there is also a marked climax in the later  
plagues, corresponding to the fact that they are "the last," and that  
in them "the wrath of God is finished."[426] Thus the first Trumpet  
affects only the third part of the earth, and the trees, and all green  
grass: the first Bowl affects \_men\_.[427] Under the second Trumpet the  
"third part" of the sea becomes blood, and the third part of the  
creatures which are in the sea die, and the third part of the ships  
are destroyed: under the second Bowl, the "third part" of the sea is  
exchanged for the whole; the blood assumes its most offensive form,  
\_blood as of a dead man\_; and not the third part only, but \_every  
living soul died, even the things that were in the sea\_."[428] Under  
the third Trumpet the great star falls only upon the "third part" of  
the rivers and fountains, and they become wormwood: under the third  
Bowl all the waters are visited by the plague, and they become  
blood.[429] Lastly, under the fourth Trumpet only the "third part" of  
sun and moon and stars is smitten: under the fourth Bowl the whole sun  
is affected, and it is \_given unto it to scorch men with fire\_.[430]  
With this climactic character of the Bowls as compared with the  
Trumpets may also be connected a striking addition made to the details  
of the third Bowl, to which in the Trumpet series there is nothing to  
correspond. \_The angel of the waters\_, not an angel to whom the  
smiting of the waters had been entrusted, but the waters themselves  
speaking through their angel, and \_the altar\_, that is, the brazen  
altar of chap. vi. 9, respond to the judgments executed. They  
recognise the true and righteous character of the Almighty, and they  
welcome this manifestation of Himself to men.  
  
Another feature of these Bowls will at once strike the reader,--their  
correspondence to some of the plagues of Egypt: for in the first we  
see a repetition, as it were, of that sixth plague by which Pharaoh  
and his people were visited, when Moses sprinkled ashes of the furnace  
towards heaven, and they became "a boil breaking forth with blains  
upon man and beast,"[431] and in the second and third a repetition of  
the first plague, when Moses lifted up his rod and smote the waters  
that were in the river, "and all the waters that were in the river  
were turned to blood."[432] The fourth Bowl reminds us of the terror  
of the appearance of the Son of man in chap. i. 16, when "His  
countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength."  
  
One other characteristic of these plagues ought to be noticed. It  
comes to view no doubt only under the fourth, yet, as we shall  
immediately see, it is not to be confined to it. The plagues had no  
softening or converting power. On the contrary, as at chap. ix. 20,  
21, the impiety of the worshippers of the beast was only aggravated by  
their sufferings; and, instead of turning to Him who had power over  
the plagues, they blasphemed His name.  
  
From the first group of Bowls we turn to the second, embracing the  
last three in the series of seven:--  
  
 And the fifth poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast; and  
 his kingdom was darkened; and they gnawed their tongues for pain,  
 and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and  
 their sores; and they repented not of their works (xvi. 10, 11).  
  
The transition from the realm of nature to the spiritual world,  
already marked at the introduction of the fifth Seal and of the fifth  
Trumpet, is here again observable; but, as in the case of the sixth  
Trumpet, the spiritual world alluded to is that of the prince of  
darkness. With darkness he is smitten. That there is a reference to  
the darkness which, at the word of Moses, fell upon the land of Egypt  
when visited by its plagues can hardly be doubted, for the darkness of  
that plague was not ordinary darkness; it was "a darkness that might  
be felt."[433] More than darkness, however, is alluded to. We are told  
of \_their pains and of their sores\_. But pains and sores are not an  
effect produced by darkness. They can, therefore, be only those of the  
first Bowl, a conclusion confirmed by the use of the word "plagues"  
instead of plague. The inference to be drawn from this is important,  
for we thus learn that the effects of any earlier Bowl are not  
exhausted before the contents of one following are discharged. Each  
Bowl rather adds fresh punishment to that of its predecessors, and all  
of them go on accumulating their terrors to the end. Nothing could  
more clearly show how impossible it is to interpret such plagues  
literally, and how mistaken is any effort to apply them to the  
particular events of history.  
  
The sixth Bowl follows:--  
  
 And the sixth poured out his bowl upon the great river, the river  
 Euphrates, and the water thereof was dried up, that the way might  
 be made ready for the kings that come from the sun-rising. And I  
 saw coming 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, as it were frogs: for they are spirits of devils,  
 working signs, which go forth unto the kings of the whole  
 inhabited earth, to gather them together unto the war of the great  
 day of God, the Almighty. (Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is  
 he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked,  
 and they see his shame.) And they gathered them together into the  
 place which is called in Hebrew Har-Magedon (xvi. 12-16).  
  
Probably no part of the Apocalypse has received more varied  
interpretation than the first statement of this Bowl. Who are these  
\_kings that come from the sun-rising\_ is the point to be determined;  
and the answer usually given is, that they are part of the  
anti-christian host, part of those afterwards spoken of as \_the kings  
of the whole inhabited earth\_, before whom God dries up the Euphrates  
in order that they may pursue an uninterrupted march to the spot on  
which they are to be overwhelmed with a final and complete  
destruction. Something may certainly be said on behalf of such a view;  
yet it is exposed to serious objections.  
  
1. We have already at chap. ix. 14, at the sounding of the sixth  
Trumpet, been made acquainted with the river Euphrates; and, so far  
from being a hindrance to the progress of Christ's enemies, it is  
rather the symbol of their overflowing and destructive might. 2. We  
have also met at chap. vii. 2 with the expression "from the  
sun-rising," and it is there applied to the quarter from which the  
angel comes by whom the people of God are sealed. In a book so  
carefully written as the Apocalypse, it is not easy to think of  
anti-christian foes coming from a quarter described in the same terms.  
3. These kings "from the sun-rising" are not said to be a part of "the  
kings of the whole inhabited earth" immediately afterwards referred  
to. They are rather distinguished from them. 4. The "preparing of the  
way" connects itself with the thought of Him whose way was prepared by  
the coming of the Baptist. 5. The type of drying up the waters of a  
river takes us back, alike in the historical and prophetic writings of  
the Old Testament, to the means by which the Almighty secures the  
deliverance of His people, not the destruction of His enemies. Thus  
the waters of the Red Sea were dried up, not for the overthrow of the  
Egyptians, but for the safety of Israel, and the bed of the river  
Jordan was dried up for a similar purpose. Thus, too, the prophet  
Isaiah speaks: "And the Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the  
Egyptian sea, and with His scorching wind shall He shake His hand over  
the river, and shall smite it into seven streams, and cause men to  
march over dryshod. And there shall be an highway for the remnant of  
His people, which shall return, from Assyria; like as there was for  
Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt."[434]  
Again the same prophet celebrates the great deeds of the arm of the  
Lord in the following words: "Art thou not it which dried up the sea,  
the waters of the great deep; that made the depths of the sea a way  
for the redeemed to pass over?"[435] And, once more, to a similar  
effect the prophet Zechariah: "I will bring them again also out of the  
land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria.... And He shall pass  
through the sea of affliction, and shall smite the waves of the sea,  
and all the depths of the Nile shall dry up.... And I will strengthen  
them in the Lord; and they shall walk up and down in His name, saith  
the Lord."[436] It is unnecessary to say more. In these "kings from  
the sun-rising" we have an emblem of the remnant of the Israel of God  
as they return from all the places whither they have been led captive,  
and as God makes their way plain before them.  
  
Nor is this all. In the fate of these foes a striking incident of Old  
Testament history is repeated, in order that they may be led to the  
destruction which awaits them. When Micaiah warned Ahab of his  
approaching fate, and told him of the lying spirit by which his own  
prophets were urging him to the battle, he said, "I saw the Lord  
sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him on  
His right hand and on His left. And the Lord said, Who shall entice  
Ahab that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one said on this  
manner; and another said on that manner. And there came forth a  
spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will entice him. And  
the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and  
be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And He said, Thou  
shalt entice him, and shalt prevail also; go forth and do so."[437] In  
that incident of Ahab's reign is found the type of the three lying  
spirits or demons which, like frogs, unclean, noisy, and loquacious,  
go forth from the three great enemies of the Church, the dragon, the  
first beast, and the second beas

t, now first called \_the false  
prophet\_, that they may entice the "kings of the whole inhabited  
earth" to their overthrow. And they succeed. All unknowing of what is  
before them, proud of their strength, and flushed with hope of  
victory, these kings listen to the demons and gather themselves  
together \_unto the war of the great day of God, the Almighty\_. It is a  
supreme moment in the history of the Church and of the world; and,  
before he names the battlefield which shall, in its very name, be  
prophetic of the fate of the wicked, the Seer pauses to behold the  
assembled armies. Upon the one side is a little flock, but they are  
all "kings," and before them is He by whom, like David before the host  
of Israel and over against the Philistines, the battle shall be fought  
and the victory won. On the other side are the hosts of earth in all  
their multitudes, gathered together by the deceitful promise of  
success. The Seer hears the voice of the Captain of salvation, \_Behold  
I come as a thief\_, to break up and to destroy. He hears further the  
promise of blessing to all who are faithful to the Redeemer's cause:  
and then, with mind at rest as to the result, he names the place where  
the final battle is to be fought, \_Har-Magedon\_.  
  
Why Har-Magedon? There was, we have every reason to believe, no such  
place. The name is symbolical. It is a compound word derived from the  
Hebrew, and signifying the mountain of Megiddo. We are thus again  
taken back to Old Testament history, in which the great plain of  
Megiddo, the most extensive in Palestine, plays on more than one  
occasion a notable part. In particular, that plain was famous for two  
great slaughters, that of the Canaanitish host by Barak, celebrated in  
the song of Deborah,[438] and that in which King Josiah fell.[439] The  
former is probably alluded to, for the enemies of Israel were there  
completely routed. For a similar though still more terrible  
destruction the hosts of evil are assembled at Har-Magedon. The Seer  
thinks it enough to assemble them, and to name the place. He does not  
need to go further or to describe the victory.  
  
The seventh Bowl now follows:--  
  
 And the seventh poured out his bowl upon the air; and there came  
 forth a great voice out of the temple, from the throne, saying, It  
 is done; and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunders; and  
 there was a great earthquake, such as was not since there were men  
 upon the earth, so great an earthquake, so mighty. And the great  
 city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations  
 fell: and Babylon the great was remembered in the sight of God, to  
 give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath.  
 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And  
 great hail, every stone about the weight of a talent, cometh down  
 out of heaven upon men: and men blasphemed God because of the plague  
 of the hail; for the plague thereof is exceeding great (xvi. 17-21).  
  
The seventh or last Bowl is poured out into the air, here thought of  
as the realm of that prince of this world who is also "the prince of  
the power of the air."[440] All else, land and sea and waters and sun  
and the throne of the beast, has now been smitten so that evil has  
only to suffer its final blow. It has been searched out everywhere;  
and therefore the end may come. That end comes, and is spoken of in  
figures more strongly coloured than those of either the sixth Seal or  
the seventh Trumpet. First of all \_a great voice is heard out of the\_  
(sanctuary of the) \_temple, from the throne, saying, It is done\_,  
God's plan is executed. His last manifestation of Himself in judgment  
has been made. This voice is then accompanied by a more terrible  
shaking of the heavens and the earth than we have as yet been called  
to witness, the earthquake in particular being \_such as was not since  
there were men upon the earth, so great an earthquake, so mighty\_.  
  
Some of the effects of the earthquake are next spoken of. More  
especially, \_The great city was divided into three parts, and the  
cities of the nations fell\_. As to the meaning of "the cities of the  
nations" there can be no doubt. They are the strongholds of the  
world's sin, the places from which ungodliness and impiety have  
ruled. Under the shaking of the earthquake they fall in ruins. The  
first words as to "the great city" must be considered in connexion  
with the words which follow regarding Babylon, and they are more  
difficult to interpret. By some it is contended that the "great city"  
is Jerusalem, by others that it is Babylon. The expression is one  
which the Apocalypse must itself explain, and in seeking the  
explanation we must proceed upon the principle that in this book, as  
much as in any other of the New Testament, the rules of all good  
writing are followed, and that the meaning of the same words is not  
arbitrarily changed. When this rule, accordingly, is observed, we find  
that the epithet is, in chap. xi. 8, distinctly applied to Jerusalem,  
the words "the great city, where also their Lord was crucified"  
leaving no doubt upon the point. But, in chap. xviii. 10, 16, 18, 19,  
21, the same epithet is not less distinctly applied to Babylon. The  
only legitimate conclusion is, that there is a sense in which  
Jerusalem and Babylon are one. This corresponds exactly to what we  
otherwise learn of the light in which the metropolis of Israel  
appeared to St. John. To him as an Apostle of the Lord, and during the  
time that he followed Jesus in the flesh, Jerusalem presented itself  
in a twofold aspect. It was the city of God's solemnities, the centre  
of the old Divine theocracy, the "holy city," the "beloved city."[441]  
But it was also the city of "the Jews," the city which scorned and  
rejected and crucified its rightful King. When in later life he  
beheld, in the picture once exhibited around him and graven upon his  
memory, the type of the future history and fortunes of the Church, the  
two Jerusalems again rose before his view, the one the emblem of all  
that was most precious, the other of all that was most repulsive, in  
the eyes both of God and of spiritually enlightened men. The first of  
these Jerusalems is the true Church of Christ, the faithful remnant,  
the little flock that knew the Good Shepherd's voice and followed Him.  
The second is the degenerate Church, the mass of those who  
misinterpreted the aim and spirit of their calling, and who by their  
worldliness and sin "crucified their Lord afresh, and put Him to an  
open shame." In the latter aspect Jerusalem \_becomes\_ Babylon. As in  
chap. xi. 8 it became "spiritually," that is mystically, "Sodom and  
Egypt," so it becomes also the mystical Babylon, partaker of that  
city's sins, and doomed to its fate. This thought we shall find fully  
expanded in the following chapter. The question may indeed be asked,  
how it comes to pass that, if this representation be correct, we  
should read, immediately after the words now under consideration, that  
\_Babylon the great was remembered in the sight of God, to give unto  
her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath\_. But the  
answer is substantially contained in what has been said. When  
Jerusalem is first thought of as "the great city," it is as the city  
of "the Jews," as the centre and essence of those principles by which  
spiritual is transformed into formal religion, and all sins are  
permitted to hide and multiply under the cloak of a merely outward  
piety. When it is next thought of as Babylon, the conception is  
extended so as to embrace, not a false Judaism only, but a similar  
falseness in the bosom of the universal Church. Just as "the great  
city where also our Lord was crucified" widened in chap. xi. 8 to the  
thought of Sodom and Egypt, so here it widens to the thought of  
Babylon. May it not be added that we have thus in the mention of  
Jerusalem and Babylon a counterpart to the mention in chap. xv. 3 of  
"the song of Moses and the Lamb"? These two expressions, as we have  
seen, comprehend a song of \_universal\_ victory. Thus also the two  
expressions, "the great city" and "Babylon," having one and the same  
idea at their root, comprehend all who in the professing Church of the  
whole world are faithless to Christian truth.  
  
Further effects of the last judgment follow. \_Every island fled away,  
and the mountains were not found.\_ Effects similar, though not so  
terrible, had been connected with the sixth Seal. Mountains and  
islands had then been simply "moved out of their places."[442] Now  
they "flee away." Similar effects will again meet us, but in an  
enhanced degree.[443] As yet, while mountains and islands flee away,  
the earth and the heavens remain. In the last description of the  
judgment of the wicked the heavens and the earth themselves flee away  
from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and no place is  
found for them. The climax in the different accounts of what is  
substantially the same event cannot be mistaken.  
  
The same climax appears in the statement of the next effect, \_the  
great hail, every stone about the weight of a talent\_, that is, fully  
more than fifty pounds. No such weight had been spoken of at the close  
of the seventh Trumpet in chap. xi. 19.  
  
Again, however, there is no repentance and no conversion. Those who  
suffer are the deliberate and determined followers of the beast. As  
under the fourth Bowl, therefore, so under the seventh they rather  
blaspheme God amidst their sufferings, \_because of the plague of the  
hail, for the plague thereof is exceeding great\_.  
  
FOOTNOTES:  
  
[418] Exod. xv. 1.  
  
[419] Isa. lxi. 10.  
  
[420] Ezek. xxviii. 13.  
  
[421] Comp. chap. vi.  
  
[422] Exod. xl. 35.  
  
[423] 1 Kings viii. 11.  
  
[424] Isa. vi. 4.  
  
[425] Exod. xix. 18; Heb. xii. 18.  
  
[426] Chap. xv. 1.  
  
[427] Comp. chap. viii. 7 and xvi. 2.  
  
[428] Comp. chap. viii. 8, 9 and xvi. 3.  
  
[429] Comp. chap. viii. 10, 11 and xvi. 4.  
  
[430] Comp. chap. viii. 12 and xvi. 8.  
  
[431] Exod. ix. 10.  
  
[432] Exod. vii. 20.  
  
[433] Exod. x. 21.  
  
[434] Isa. xi. 15, 16.  
  
[435] Isa. li. 10.  
  
[436] Zech. x. 10-12.  
  
[437] 1 Kings xxii. 19-22.  
  
[438] Judges v.  
  
[439] 2 Chron. xxxv. 22.  
  
[440] Ephes. ii. 2.  
  
[441] Chap. xi. 2; xx. 9.  
  
[442] Chap. vi. 14.  
  
[443] Chap. xx. 11.  
  
  
  
  
 CHAPTER XIII.  
  
 \_THE BEAST AND BABYLON.\_  
  
 REV. xvii.  
  
  
At the close of chap. xvi. we reached the end of the three great  
series of judgments which constitute the chief contents of the  
Revelation of St. John,--the series of the Seals, the Trumpets, and  
the Bowls. It cannot surprise us, however, that at this point other  
visions of judgment are to follow. Already we had reached the end at  
chap. vi. 17, and again at chap. xi. 18; yet on both occasions the  
same general subject was immediately afterwards renewed, and the same  
truths were again presented to us, though in a different aspect and  
with heightened colouring. We are prepared therefore to meet something  
of the same kind now. Yet it is not the whole history of that "little  
season" with which the Apocalypse deals that is brought under our  
notice in fresh and striking vision. One great topic, the greatest  
that has hitherto been spoken of, is selected for fuller  
treatment,--the fall of Babylon. Twice before we have heard of Babylon  
and of her doom,--at chap. xiv. 8, when the second angel of the first  
group gathered around the Lord as He came to judgment exclaimed,  
"Fallen, fallen, is Babylon the great, which hath made all the nations  
to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication;" and again at  
chap. xvi. 19, when under the seventh Bowl we were told that "Babylon  
the great was remembered in the sight of God, to give unto her the cup  
of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath." So much importance,  
however, is attached by the Seer to the fortunes of this city that two  
chapters of his book--the seventeenth and the eighteenth--are devoted  
to the more detailed descriptions of her and of her fate. These two  
chapters form one of the most striking, if at the same time one of the  
most difficult, portions of his book. We have first to listen to the  
language of St. John; and, long as the passage is, it will be  
necessary to take the whole of chap. xvii. at once:--  
  
 And there came one of the seven angels that had the seven bowls,  
 and spake with me, saying, Come hither; I will show thee the  
 judgment of the great harlot that sitteth upon many waters: with  
 whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and they that  
 dwell in the earth were made drunken with the wine of her  
 fornication. And he carried me away in the Spirit into a  
 wilderness: and I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet-coloured  
 beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten  
 horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked  
 with gold and precious stone and pearls, having in her hand a  
 golden cup full of abominations, even the unclean things of her  
 fornication, and upon her forehead a name written, Mystery,  
 Babylon the great, the mother of the harlots and of the  
 abominations of the earth. And I saw the woman drunken with the  
 blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus:  
 and when I saw her, I marvelled with a great marvelling. 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. The beast that thou  
 sawest was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss:  
 and he goeth into perdition. And they that dwell on the earth  
 shall marvel, they whose name hath not been written in the book of  
 life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast,  
 how that he was, and is not, and shall be present. Here is the  
 mind that hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on  
 which the woman sitteth. And they are seven kings: the five are  
 fallen, the one is the other is not yet come; and when he cometh,  
 he must continue a little while. And the beast that was, and is  
 not, is himself also an eighth, and is of the seven; and he goeth  
 into perdition. And the ten horns that thou sawest are ten kings,  
 which have received no kingdom as yet; but they receive authority  
 as kings with the beast for one hour. These have one mind, and  
 they give their power and authority unto the beast. These shall  
 war against the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for He is  
 Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they also shall overcome  
 that are with Him called, and chosen, and faithful. And he saith  
 unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the harlot sitteth,  
 are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. And the ten  
 horns which thou sawest, and the beast, these shall hate the  
 harlot, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her  
 flesh, and shall burn her utterly with fire. For God did put in  
 their hearts to do His mind, and to come to one mind, and to give  
 their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God should be  
 accomplished. And the woman whom thou sawest is the great city,  
 which reigneth over the kings of the earth (xvii.).  
  
The main questions connected with the interpretation of this chapter  
are, What are we to understand by the beast spoken of, and what by  
Babylon? The Seer is summoned by one of the angels that had the seven  
Bowls to behold a spectacle which fills him with \_a great marvelling\_.  
Thus summoned, he obeys; and he is immediately carried away into a  
wilderness, where he sees \_a woman sitting upon a scarlet-coloured  
beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns\_.  
  
1. What is this beast, and what in particular is his relation to the  
beast of chap. xiii.?  
  
At first sight the points of difference appear to be neither few nor  
unimportant. The order of the heads and of the horns is different, the  
horns taking precedence of the heads in the earlier, the heads of the  
horns in the later, of the two.[444] The first is said to have had  
upon "his heads" names of blasphemy; the second is "full of" such  
names.[445] There are diadems on the horns of the former, but not of  
the latter.[446] Of the first we are told that he comes up "out of the  
sea," of the second that he is about to come up "out of the  
abyss."[447] In addition to these particulars, it will be observed  
that several traits of the first beast are not mentioned in connexion  
with the second. These last points of difference may be easily set  
aside. They create no inconsistency between the descriptions given;  
and we have already had occasion for the remark, that it is the manner  
of the Seer to enlarge in one part of his book his account of an  
object also referred to in another part. His readers are expected to  
combine the different particulars in order to form a complete  
conception of the object.  
  
The more positive points of difference, again, may be simply and  
naturally explained. In chap. xiii. 1 the horns take precedence of the  
heads because the beast is beheld rising up out of the sea, the horns  
in this case appearing before the heads. In the second case, when the  
beast is seen in the wilderness, the order of nature is preserved. The  
distribution of the names of blasphemy is in all probability to be  
accounted for in a similar manner. At the moment when the Seer beholds  
them in chap. xiii. his attention has been arrested by the heads of  
the beast, and he has not yet seen the whole body. When he beholds  
them in chap. xvii., the entire beast is before him, and is "full of"  
such names. The presence of diadems upon the ten horns in the first,  
and their absence in the second, beast depends upon the consideration  
that it is a common method of St. John to dwell upon an object  
presented to him ideally before he treats it historically.[448] We  
know that the ten horns are ten kings or kingdoms[449]; and the diadem  
is the appropriate symbol of royalty. When therefore we think of the  
beast in his ideal or ultimate manifestation in the ten kings of whom  
we are shortly to read, we think of the horns as crowned with diadems;  
and it is thus accordingly that we see the beast in chap. xiii. On the  
other hand, at the point immediately before us "the ten kings have  
received no kingdom as yet;"[450] and the diadems are wanting. The  
application of this principle further explains the difference between  
what are apparently two origins for these beasts,--"the sea" and "the  
abyss." The former is mentioned in chap. xiii., because there we have  
the beast before us in himself, and in the source from which he  
springs. The latter is mentioned in chap. xvii., because the beast has  
now reached a definite period of his history to which the coming up  
out of "the abyss" belongs. The "sea" is his real source; the "abyss"  
has been only his temporary abode. The monster springs out of the sea,  
lives, dies, goes into the abyss, rises from the dead, is roused to  
his last paroxysm of rage, is defeated, and passes into  
perdition.[451] This last is his \_history\_ in chap. xvii., and that  
history is in perfect harmony with what is stated of him in chap.  
xiii.,--that by nature he comes up out of the sea.  
  
While the points of difference between the beasts of chap. xiii. and  
chap. xvii. may thus without difficulty be reconciled, the points of  
agreement are such as to lead directly to the identification of the  
two. Some of these have already come under our notice in speaking of  
the differences. Others are still more striking. Thus the beast of  
chap. xiii. is described as the vicegerent of the dragon[452]; and the  
object of the dragon is to make war upon the remnant of the woman's  
seed.[453] When therefore we find the beast of chap. xvii. engaged in  
the same work,[454] we must either resort to the most unlikely of all  
conclusions--that the dragon has two vicegerents--or we must admit  
that the two beasts are one. Again, the characteristic of a ri

sing  
from the dead is so unexpected and mysterious that it is extremely  
difficult to assign it to two different agencies; yet we formerly saw  
that this characteristic belongs to the beast of chap. xiii., and we  
shall immediately see that it belongs also to that of chap. xvii. Nay  
more, it is to be noticed that both in chap. xiii. and in chap. xvii.  
the marvelling of the world after the beast is connected with his  
resurrection state.[455] This was undoubtedly the case in chap. xiii.;  
and in the present chapter the cause of the world's astonishment is  
not less expressly said to be its beholding in the beast \_how that he  
was, and is not, and shall be present\_.[456] Let us add to what has  
been said that the figures of the Apocalypse are the product of so  
rich and fertile an imagination that, had a difference between the two  
beasts been intended, it would, we may believe, have been more  
distinctly marked; and the conclusion is inevitable that the beast  
before us is that also of the thirteenth chapter.  
  
Turning then to the beast as here represented, we have to note one or  
two particulars regarding him, either new or stated with greater  
fulness and precision than before; while, at the same time, we have  
the explanation of the angel to help us in interpreting the vision.  
  
(1) The beast \_was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the  
abyss: and he goeth into perdition\_. The words are a travesty of what  
we read of the Son of man in chap. i.: "I am the first and the last,  
and the living One; and I became dead: and, behold, I am alive for  
evermore."[457] An antichrist is before us, who has been slaughtered  
unto death, and the stroke of whose death shall be healed.[458] Still  
further we seem entitled to infer that when this beast appears he  
shall have the marks of his death upon him. \_They that dwell on the  
earth shall marvel when they behold the beast, how that he was, and is  
not, and shall be present.\_ The inference is fair that there must be  
something \_visible\_ upon him by which these different states may be  
distinguished. In other words, the beast exhibits marks which show  
that he had both died and passed through death. He is the counterpart  
of "the Lamb standing as though it had been slaughtered."[459]  
  
(2) \_The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.  
And they are seven kings: the five are fallen, the one is, the other  
is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a little while.\_  
Notwithstanding all that has been said to the contrary by numerous and  
able expositors, these words cannot be applied directly to any seven  
emperors of Rome. It may be granted that the Seer had the thought of  
Rome sitting upon its seven hills in his eye as one of the  
manifestations of the beast, but the whole tenor of his language is  
too wide and comprehensive to permit the thought that the beast  
itself is Rome. Besides this, the heads are spoken of as being also  
"mountains;" and we cannot say of any five of the seven hills of Rome  
that they "are fallen," or of any one of them that it is "not yet  
come." Nor could even any five successive kings of Rome be described  
as "fallen," for that word denotes passing away, not simply by death,  
but by violent and conspicuous overthrow;[460] and no series of five  
emperors in other respects suitable to the circumstances can be  
mentioned some of whom at least did not die peaceably in their beds.  
Finally, the word "kings" in the language of prophecy denotes, not  
personal kings, but kingdoms.[461] These seven "mountains" or seven  
"kings," therefore, are the manifestations of the beast in successive  
eras of oppression suffered by the people of God. Egypt, Assyria,  
Babylonia, Persia, and Greece are the first five; and they are  
"fallen"--fallen in the open ruin which they brought upon themselves  
by wickedness. Rome is the sixth, and "it is" in the Apostle's days.  
The seventh will come when Rome, beheld by the Seer as on the brink of  
destruction, has perished, and when its mighty empire has been rent in  
pieces. These pieces will then be the ten horns which occupy the place  
of the seventh head. They will be even more wicked and more oppressive  
to the true followers of Christ than the great single empires which  
preceded them. In them the antichristian might of the beast will  
culminate. They are "ten" in number. They cover the whole "earth."  
That universality of dominion which was always the beast's ideal will  
then become his actual possession. They \_receive authority as kings  
with the beast for one hour\_; and together with him they shall rage  
against the Lamb. Hence--  
  
(3) \_And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also an eighth,  
and is of the seven.\_ The reader will notice that the expression of  
the eighth verse of the chapter "and is about to come up out of the  
abyss," as also another expression of the same verse, "and shall be  
present," are here dropped. We have met with a similar omission in the  
case of the Lord Himself at chap. xi. 17, and the explanation now is  
the same as then. The beast can no more be thought of as "about to  
come up out of the abyss," because he is viewed as come, or as about  
"to be present," because he is present. In other words, the beast has  
attained the highest point of his history and action. He has reached a  
position analogous to that of our Lord after His resurrection and  
exaltation, when all authority was given Him both in heaven and on  
earth, and when He began the dispensation of the Spirit, founding His  
Church, strengthening her for the execution of her mission, and  
perfecting her for her glorious future. In like manner at the time  
here spoken of the beast is at the summit of his evil influence. In  
one sense he is the same beast as he was in Egypt, in Assyria, in  
Babylonia, in Persia, in Greece, and in Rome. In another sense he is  
not the same, for the wickedness of all these earlier stages has been  
concentrated into one. He has "great wrath, knowing that he has but a  
short season."[462] At the last moment he rages with the keen and  
determined energy of despair. Thus he may be spoken of as "an eighth;"  
and thus he is also "of the seven," not one of the seven, but the  
highest, and fiercest, and most cruel embodiment of them all. Thus  
also he is identified with the "Little Horn" of Daniel, which has  
"eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things."[463]  
That Little Horn takes the place of three out of the ten horns which  
are plucked up by the roots; that is, of the eighth, ninth, and tenth  
horns. It is thus itself an eighth; and we have already had occasion  
to notice that in the science of numbers the number eight marks the  
beginning of a new life, with quickened and heightened powers. Thus  
also fresh light is thrown upon the statement which so closely follows  
the description of the beast,--that \_he goeth into perdition\_. As in  
the case of Belshazzar, of Nebuchadnezzar, and of the traitor Judas,  
the instant when he reaches the summit of his guilty ambition is also  
the instant of his fall.  
  
Before proceeding to consider the meaning of the "Babylon" spoken of  
in this chapter, it may be well to recall for a moment the principle  
lying at the bottom of the exposition now given of the "beast." That  
principle is that St. John sees in the world-power, or power of the  
world, the contrast, or travesty, or mocking counterpart of the true  
Christ, of the world's rightful King. The latter lived, died, was  
buried, rose from the grave, and returned to His Father to work with  
quickened energy and to enjoy everlasting glory; the former lived, was  
brought to nought by Christ, was plunged into the abyss, came up out  
of the abyss, reached his highest point of influence, and went into  
perdition. Such is the form in which the Seer's visions take  
possession of his mind; and it will be seen that the mould of thought  
is precisely the same as that of chap. xx. The fact that it is so may  
be regarded as a proof that the interpretation yet to be offered of  
that chapter is correct.  
  
It may be further noticed that the beast's being brought to nought and  
being sent into the abyss takes place under the sixth, or Roman, head.  
We know that this was actually the case, because it was under the  
Roman government that our Lord gained His victory. The history of the  
beast, however, does not close with this defeat. He must rise again;  
and he does this as the seventh head, which is associated with the ten  
horns. In them and "with" them he assumes a greater power than ever,  
gaining all the additional force which is connected with a  
resurrection life. The objection may indeed be made that such an  
exposition is not in correspondence either with the view taken in this  
commentary that the beast is active from the very beginning of the  
Christian era, or with those facts of history which show that, instead  
of falling, Rome continued to exist for a lengthened period after the  
completion of the Redeemer's victory.  
  
But, as to the first of these difficulties, it is not necessary to  
think that the beast rages in his highest and ultimate form from the  
very instant when Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to His Father.  
That was rather the moment of the beast's destruction, the moment  
when, under the sixth head, he "is and is not;" and a certain extent  
of time must be interposed before he rises in his new, or seventh,  
head. The Seer, too, deals largely in climax; and, although in doing  
so he is always occupied with the climactic idea rather than with the  
time needed for its manifestation, the element of time, if our  
attention is called to it, must be allowed its place. Now in the  
development of the beast there is climax. In chap. xi. 7 it is said  
that "the beast that cometh up out of the abyss shall make war with"  
the two faithful witnesses "when they shall have finished their  
testimony," and this finishing of their testimony implies time. Again,  
in chap. xii. 17 the increased wrath of the dragon against the remnant  
of the woman's seed appears to be subsequent to the persecution of the  
woman in the same chapter.[464] No doubt the thought of the increased  
wrath of the dragon is the main point, but it may be quite truly said  
that some time at least is needed for the increase. The view,  
therefore, that the beast rages from the beginning of the Christian  
era, from the moment when he rises after his fall, or, in other words,  
is loosed after having been shut up into the abyss, is not  
inconsistent with the view that his rage goes on augmenting until it  
attains its culminating point.  
  
The answer to the second difficulty is to be found in the consideration  
that to the Seer the whole Christian era appears no more than "a little  
season," in which events must follow closely on one another, so closely  
that the time required for their evolution passes almost entirely, if  
not indeed entirely, out of his field of vision. He has no thought that  
Rome will last for centuries. "The times or the seasons the Father hath  
set within His own authority."[465] The guilt of Rome is so dark and  
frightful that the Seer can fix his mind upon nothing but that overthrow  
which shall be the just punishment of her crimes. She is not to be  
doomed; she is doomed. She is not to perish; she is perishing. Divine  
vengeance has already overtaken her. Her last hour is come; and the ten  
kings who are to follow her are already upon their thrones. Thus these  
kings come into immediate juxtaposition with the beast in that last  
stage of his history which had begun, but had not reached its greatest  
intensity, before Rome is supposed to fall.  
  
2. The second figure of this chapter now meets us; and we have to ask,  
Who is the woman that sits on the beast? or, What is meant by Babylon?  
  
No more important question can be asked in connexion with the  
interpretation of the Apocalypse. The thought of Babylon is evidently  
one by which the writer is moved to a greater than ordinary degree.  
Twice already have we had premonitions of her doom, and that in  
language which shows how deeply it was felt.[466] In the passage  
before us he is awed by the contemplation of her splendour and her  
guilt. And in chap. xviii. he describes the lamentation of the world  
over her fate in language of almost unparalleled sublimity and pathos.  
What is Babylon? We must make up our minds upon the point, or the  
effort to interpret one of the most important parts of the Revelation  
of St. John can result in nothing but defeat.  
  
Very various opinions have been entertained as to the meaning of  
Babylon, of which the most famous are that the word is a name for  
papal Rome, pagan Rome, or a great world-city of the future which  
shall stand to the whole earth in a relation similar to that occupied  
by Rome towards the world of its day. These opinions cannot be  
discussed here; and no more can be attempted than to show, with as  
much brevity as possible, that by Babylon is to be understood the  
degenerate Church, or that principle of degenerate religion which  
allies itself with the world, and more than all else brings dishonour  
upon the name and the cause of Christ.  
  
(1) Babylon is the representative of religious, not civil, degeneracy  
and wickedness. She is a harlot, and her name is associated with the  
most reckless and unrestrained fornication. But fornication and  
adultery are throughout the Old Testament the emblem of religious  
degeneracy, and not of civil misrule. In numerous passages familiar to  
every reader of Scripture both terms are employed to describe the  
departure of Israel from the worship of Jehovah and a holy life to the  
worship of idols and the degrading sensuality by which such worship  
was everywhere accompanied. Nor ought we to imagine that adultery, not  
fornication, is the most suitable expression for religious degeneracy.  
In some important respects the latter is the more suitable of the two.  
It brings out more strongly the ideas of playing the harlot with "many  
lovers"[467] and of sinning for "hire."[468] In this sense then it  
seems proper to understand the charge of fornication brought in so  
many passages of the Apocalypse against Babylon. Not in their civil,  
but in their religious, aspect have the kings of the earth committed  
fornication with her, and they that dwell on the earth been made drunk  
with the wine of her fornication. Her sin has been that of leading men  
astray from the worship of the true God, and of substituting for the  
purity and unworldliness of Christian living the irreligious and  
worldly spirit of the "earth." To this it may be added that, had  
Babylon not been the symbol of religious declension, she could hardly  
have borne upon her forehead the term MYSTERY. St. John could not  
have used a word connected only with religious associations to express  
anything but a religious state awakening the awe, and wonder, and  
perplexity of a religious mind. Babylon, therefore, represents persons  
who are not only sinful, but who have fallen into sin by treachery to  
a high and holy standard formerly acknowledged by them.  
  
(2) We have already had occasion to allude to a fact which must  
immediately receive further notice,--that to the eye of St. John there  
is an aspect of Jerusalem different from that in which she is regarded  
as the holy and beloved city of God. Jerusalem in that aspect and  
Babylon are one. Each is "the great city," and the same epithet could  
not be applied to both were they not to be identified. Not only so.  
The words here used of Babylon lead us directly to what our Lord once  
said of Jerusalem. "Therefore," said Jesus, "behold, I send unto you  
prophets, and wise men, and scribes: some of them shall ye kill and  
crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and  
persecute from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous  
blood shed on the earth, from the blood of Abel the righteous unto the  
blood of Zachariah son of Barachiah, whom ye slew between the  
sanctuary and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall  
come upon this generation."[469] Precisely similar to this is the  
language of the Seer, \_And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of  
the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus\_.  
  
It may indeed be thought impossible that under any circumstances  
whatever St. John could have applied an epithet like that of Babylon,  
steeped in so many associations of lust, and bloodshed, and  
oppression, to the metropolis of Israel, the city of God. But in this  
very book he has illustrated the reverse. He has already spoken of  
Jerusalem as represented by names felt by a pious Jew to be the most  
terrible of the Old Testament,--"Sodom and Egypt."[470] The prophets  
before him had employed language no less severe. "Hear the word of the  
Lord," said Isaiah, addressing the inhabitants of the holy city, "ye  
rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of  
Gomorrah,"[471] and again, "How is the faithful city become an harlot,  
she that was full of judgment! righteousness lodged in her; but now  
murderers;"[472] whilst the degenerate metropolis of Israel is not  
unfrequently painted by Jeremiah and Ezekiel and other prophets in  
colours than which none more dark or repulsive can be conceived.  
  
In forming a conclusion upon this point, it is necessary to bear in  
mind that to the eye of the faithful in Israel, and certainly of St.  
John, there were two Jerusalems, the one true, the other false, to its  
heavenly King; and that in exact proportion to the feelings of  
admiration, love, and devotion with which they turned to the one were  
those of pain, indignation, and alienation with which they turned from  
the other. The latter Jerusalem, the city of "the Jews," is that of  
which the Apocalyptist thinks when he speaks of it as Babylon; and,  
looking upon the city in this aspect as he did, the whole language of  
the Old Testament fully justifies him in applying to it the  
opprobrious name.  
  
(3) The contrast between the new Jerusalem and Babylon leads to the same  
conclusion. We have already more than once had occasion to allude to  
the principle of \_antithesis\_, or contrast, as affording an important  
rule of interpretation in many passages of this book. Nowhere is it more  
distinctly marked or more applicable than in the case before us. The  
contrast has been drawn out by a recent writer in the following words:--  
  
"These prophecies present two broadly contrasted \_women\_, identified  
with two broadly contrasted \_cities\_, one reality being in each case  
doubly represented: as a \_woman\_ and as a \_city\_. The harlot and  
Babylon are one; the bride and the heavenly Jerusalem are one.  
  
"The two women are contrasted in every particular that is mentioned  
about them: the one is pure as purity itself, 'made ready' and fit for  
heaven's unsullied holiness, the other foul as corruption could make  
her, fit only for the fires of destruction.  
  
"The one belongs to the Lamb, who loves her as the bridegroom loves  
the bride; the other is associated with a wild beast, and with the  
kings of the earth, who ultimately hate and destroy her.  
  
"The one is clothed with fine linen, and in another place is said to  
be clothed with the sun and crowned with a coronet of stars: that is,  
robed in Divine righteousness and resplendent with heavenly glory; the  
other is attired in scarlet and gold, in jewels and pearls, gorgeous  
indeed, but with earthly splendour only. The one is represented as a  
chaste virgin, espoused to Christ; the other is mother of harlots and  
abominations of the earth.  
  
"The one is persecuted, pressed hard by the dragon, driven into the  
wilderness, and well-nigh overwhelmed; the other is drunken with  
martyr blood, and \_seated on\_ a beast which has received its power  
from the persecuting dragon.  
  
"The one sojourns in solitude in the wilderness; the other reigns 'in  
the wilderness' over peoples, and nations, and kindreds, and tongues.  
  
"The one goes in with the Lamb to the marriage supper, amid the glad  
hallelujahs; the other is stripped, insulted, torn, and destroyed by  
her guilty paramours.  
  
"We lose sight of the bride amid the effulgence of heavenly

glory and  
joy, and of the harlot amid the gloom and darkness of the smoke that  
'rose up for ever and ever.'"[473]  
  
A contrast presented in so many striking particulars leaves only one  
conclusion possible. The two cities are the counterparts of one  
another. But we know that by the first is represented the bride, the  
Lamb's wife, or the true Church of Christ as, separated from the  
world, she remains faithful to her Lord, is purified from sin, and is  
made meet for that eternal home into which there enters nothing that  
defiles. What can the other be but the representative of a false and  
degenerate Church, of a Church that has yielded to the temptations of  
the world, and has turned back in heart from the trials of the  
wilderness to the flesh-pots of Egypt? Every feature of the  
description answers, although with the heightened colour of ideal  
portraiture, to what such a professing but degenerate Church  
becomes,--the pride, the show, the love of luxury, the subordination  
of the future to the present. Even her very cruelty to the poor saints  
of God is drawn from actual reality, and has been depicted upon many a  
page of history. With the meek and lowly followers of Jesus, whose  
life is a constant protest that the things of time are nothing in  
comparison with those of eternity, none have less sympathy than those  
who have a name to live while they are dead. The world may admire,  
even while it cannot understand, these little ones, these lambs of the  
flock; but to those who seek the life that now is by the help of the  
life that is to come they are a perpetual reproach, and they are felt  
to be so. Therefore they are persecuted in such manner and to such  
degree as the times will tolerate.  
  
One other remark has to be made upon the identification of Jerusalem  
and Babylon by the Seer. It has been said that he has one special  
aspect of the metropolis of Israel in his eye. Yet we are not to  
suppose that he confines himself to that metropolis. As on so many  
other occasions, he starts from what is limited and local only to pass  
in thought to what is unlimited and universal. His Jerusalem, his  
Babylon, is not the literal city. She is "the great harlot that  
sitteth upon many waters;" and "the waters which thou sawest," says  
the angel to the Seer, "are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and  
tongues."[474] The fourfold division guides us, as usual, to the  
thought of dominion over the whole earth. Babylon is not the Jerusalem  
only of "the Jews." She is the great Church of God throughout the  
world when that Church becomes faithless to her true Lord and King.  
  
Babylon then is not pagan Rome. No doubt seven mountains are spoken of  
on which the woman sitteth. But this was not peculiar to Rome. Both  
Babylon and Jerusalem are also said to have been situated upon seven  
hills; and even if we had before us, as we certainly may have, a  
distinct reference to Rome, it would be only because Rome was one of  
the manifestations of the beast, and because the city afforded a  
suitable point of departure for a wider survey. The very closing  
words of the chapter, upon which so much stress is laid by those who  
find the harlot in pagan Rome, negative, instead of justifying, the  
supposition: \_And the woman whom thou sawest is the great city, which  
reigneth over the kings of the earth.\_ Rome never possessed such  
universal dominion as is here referred to. She may illustrate, but she  
cannot exhaust, that subtler, more penetrating, and more widespread  
spirit which is in the Seer's view.  
  
Again, Babylon cannot be papal Rome. As in the last case, there may  
indeed be a most intimate connexion between her and one of the  
manifestations of Babylon. But it is impossible to speak of the papal  
Church as the guide, the counsellor, and the inspirer of  
anti-christian efforts to dethrone the Redeemer, and to substitute the  
world or the devil in His stead. The papal Church has toiled, and  
suffered, and died for Christ. Babylon never did so.  
  
Nor, finally, can we think of Babylon as a great city of the future  
which shall stand to the kings and kingdoms of the earth in a relation  
similar to that in which ancient Rome stood to the kings and kingdoms  
of her day. Wholly apart from the impossibility of our forming any  
clear conception of such a city, the want of the religious or  
spiritual element is fatal to the theory.  
  
One explanation alone seems to meet the conditions of the case.  
Babylon is the world in the Church. In whatever section of the Church,  
or in whatever age of her history, an unspiritual and earthly element  
prevails, there is Babylon.  
  
We have spoken of the two great figures of this chapter separately. We  
have still to speak of their relation to one another, and of the  
manner in which it is brought suddenly and for ever to a close.  
  
This relation appears in the words, \_I saw a woman sitting upon a  
scarlet-coloured beast\_, and in later words of the chapter: \_the beast  
that carrieth her\_. The woman then is not subordinate to the beast,  
but is rather his controller and guide. And this relation is precisely  
what we should expect. The beast is before us in his final stage, in  
that immediately preceding his own destruction. He is no longer in the  
form of Egypt, or Assyria, or Babylonia, or Persia, or Greece, or  
Rome. These six forms of his manifestation have passed away. The  
restrainer has been withdrawn,[475] and the beast has stepped forth in  
the plenitude of his power. He has been revealed as the "ten horns"  
which occupy the place of the seventh head; and these ten horns are  
ten kings who, having now received their kingdoms and with their  
kingdoms their diadems, are the actual manifestation in history of the  
beast as he had been seen in his ideal form in chap. xiii. The beast  
is therefore the spirit of the world, partly in its secularising  
influence, partly in its brute force, in that tyranny and oppression  
which it exercises against the children of God. The woman, again, is  
the spirit of false religion and religious zeal, which had shown  
itself under all previous forms of worldly domination, and which was  
destined to show itself more than ever under the last. To the eye of  
St. John this spirit was not confined to Christian times. The woman,  
considered in herself, is not simply the false Christian Church. She  
is so at the moment when \_we\_ behold her on the field of history. But  
St. John did not believe that saving truth, the truth which unites us  
to Christ, the truth which is "of God," was to be found in  
Christianity alone. It had existed in Judaism. It had existed even in  
Heathenism, for in his Gospel he remembers and quotes the words of our  
Lord in which Jesus says, "And other sheep I have, which are not of  
this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and  
they shall become one flock, one Shepherd."[476] As then Divine truth,  
the light which never ceases to contend with the darkness, had been  
present in the world under every one of its successive kingdoms, so  
also perversions of that truth had never failed to be present by its  
side. All along the line of past history, in Heathenism as well as in  
Judaism, the ideal bride of Christ had been putting on her ornaments  
to meet the Bridegroom; and not less all along the same line had the  
harlot been arraying herself in purple and scarlet and decking herself  
with gold and precious stones and jewels, that she might tempt men to  
resist the influence of their rightful King. The harlot had been  
always thus superior to the beast. The beast had only the powers of  
this world at his command; the harlot wielded the powers of another  
and a higher world. The one dealt only with the seen and temporal, the  
other with the unseen and eternal, the one with material forces, the  
other with those spiritual forces which reach the profoundest depths  
of the human heart and give rise to the greatest movements of human  
history. The woman is therefore superior to the beast. She inspires  
and animates him. The beast only lends her the material strength  
needed for the execution of her plans. In the war, accordingly, which  
is carried on by the ten kings who have \_one mind, and who give their  
power and authority unto the beast\_, in the war which the beast and  
they, with their combined power, wage \_for one hour\_ against the Lamb,  
it would be a great mistake to suppose that the woman, although she is  
not mentioned, takes no part and exerts no influence. She is really  
there, the prime mover in all its horrors. The "one mind" comes from  
her. The beast can do nothing of himself. The ten kings who are the  
form in which he appears are not less weak and helpless. They have the  
outward power, but they cannot regulate it. They want the skill, the  
subtlety, the wisdom, which are found only in the spiritual domain.  
But the great harlot, who at this point of history is the perversion  
of \_Christian\_ truth, is with them; and they depend on her. Such is  
the first part of the relation between the beast and the harlot.  
  
A second, most unexpected and most startling, follows.  
  
We have seen that in the war between the ten kings and the Lamb the  
woman is present. That war ends in disaster to her and to those whom  
she inspires. \_The Lamb shall overcome them: for He is Lord of lords,  
and King of kings.\_ The name is the same as that which we shall  
afterwards meet in chap. xix. 16, though the order of the clauses is  
different. This Lamb, therefore, is here the Conqueror described in  
chap. xix. 11-16; and many particulars of these latter verses take us  
back to the Son of man as He appeared in chap. i., or, in other words,  
to the risen and glorified Redeemer. The thought of the risen Christ  
is thus in the mind of St. John when he speaks of the Lamb who shall  
overcome. The leaders of the Jewish Church had believed that they had  
for ever rid themselves of the Prophet who "tormenteth them that dwell  
on the earth."[477] They had sealed the stone, and set a watch, and  
returned to their homes for joy and merriment. But on the third  
morning there was a great earthquake, and the stone was rolled away  
from the door of the sepulchre; and the Crucified came forth, the  
Conqueror of death and Hades. Then the Lamb overcame. Then He began  
His victorious progress as King of kings and Lord of lords. Then the  
power and the wisdom of the world were alike put to shame. Was not  
this enough? No, for now follow the words which come upon us in a way  
so wholly unexpected: \_And the ten horns which thou sawest, and the  
beast, these shall hate the harlot, and shall make her desolate and  
naked, and shall eat her flesh, and shall burn her utterly with fire.\_  
  
What is the meaning of these words? Surely not that Rome was to be  
attacked and overthrown by the barbaric hordes that burst upon her from  
the North: for, in the first place, the Roman manifestation of the  
world-power had passed away before the ten kings came to their kingdom;  
and, in the second place, when Rome fell, she fell as the beast, not as  
the harlot. Surely also not that a great world-city, concentrating in  
itself all the resources of the world-power, is to be hated and burned  
by its subjects, for we have already seen that this whole notion of a  
great world-city of the end is groundless; and the resources of the  
world-power are always in this book concentrated in the beast, and not  
in the harlot who directs their use. There seems only one method of  
explaining the words, but it is one in perfect consonance with the  
method and purpose of the Apocalypse as a whole. As on many other  
occasions, the fortunes of the Church of Christ are modelled upon the  
fortunes of her Master. With that Master the Church was one. He had  
always identified His people with Himself, in life and death, in time  
and in eternity. Could the beloved disciple do otherwise? He looked  
round upon the suffering Church of his day. He was a "companion with it  
in the tribulation, and kingdom, and patience which are in Jesus."[478]  
He felt all its wounds and shared all its sorrows, just as he felt and  
shared the wounds and sorrows of that Lord who lived in him, and in whom  
he lived. Here, therefore, was the mould in which the fortunes of the  
Church appeared to him. He went back to well-remembered scenes in the  
life of Christ; and he beheld these repeating themselves, in principle  
at least, in the members of His Body.  
  
Now there was one scene of the past--how well does he remember it, for  
he was present at the time!--when the Roman power and a degenerate  
Judaism, the beast and the harlot of the day, combined to make war  
upon the Lamb. For a moment they seemed to succeed, yet only for a  
moment. They nailed the Lamb to the cross; but the Lamb overcame them,  
and rose in triumph from the grave. But the Seer did not pause there.  
He looked a few more years onward, and what did he next behold? That  
wicked partnership was dissolved. These companions in crime had turned  
round upon one another. The harlot had counselled the beast, and the  
beast had given the harlot power, to execute the darkest deed which  
had stained the pages of human history. But the alliance did not last.  
The alienation of the two from each other, restrained for a little by  
co-operation in common crime, burst forth afresh, and deepened with  
each passing year, until it ended in the march of the Roman armies  
into Palestine, their investment of the Jewish capital, and that sack  
and burning of the city which still remain the most awful spectacle of  
bloodshed and of ruin that the world has seen. Even this is not all.  
St. John looks still further into the future, and the tragedy is  
repeated in the darker deeds of the last "hour." There will again be a  
"beast" in the brute power of the ten kings of the world, and a harlot  
in a degenerate Jerusalem, animating and controlling it. The two will  
again direct their united energies against the true Church of Christ,  
the "called, and chosen, and faithful." They may succeed; it will be  
only for a moment. Again the Lamb will overcome them; and in the hour  
of defeat the sinful league between them will be broken, and the  
world-power will hate the harlot, and make her desolate and naked, and  
eat her flesh, and burn her utterly with fire.  
  
This is the prospect set before us in these words, and this the  
consolation of the Church under the trials that await her at the end  
of the age. "When the wicked spring as the grass, and all the workers  
of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever:  
but Thou, O Lord, art on high for evermore. For, lo, Thine enemies, O  
Lord, for, lo, Thine enemies shall perish; all the workers of iniquity  
shall be scattered."[479]  
  
Babylon is fallen, not indeed in a strictly chronological narrative,  
for she will again be spoken of as if she still existed upon earth.  
But for the time her overthrow has been consummated, her destruction  
is complete, and all that is good can only rejoice at the spectacle of  
her fate. Hence the opening verses of the next chapter.  
  
FOOTNOTES:  
  
[444] Comp. chaps. xiii. 1 and xvii. 3, 7.  
  
[445] Comp. chaps. xiii. 1 and xvii. 3.  
  
[446] Comp. chaps. xiii. 1 and xvii. 3, 12.  
  
[447] Comp. chaps. xiii. 1 and xvii. 8.  
  
[448] Comp. pp. 75, 199.  
  
[449] Chap. xvii. 12.  
  
[450] Chap. xvii. 12.  
  
[451] Chap. xvii. 11.  
  
[452] Chap. xiii. 2.  
  
[453] Chap. xii. 17.  
  
[454] Chap. xvii. 14.  
  
[455] Comp. p. 222.  
  
[456] Ver. 8.  
  
[457] Chap. i. 18.  
  
[458] Comp. chap. xiii. 3.  
  
[459] Chap. v. 6.  
  
[460] Comp. chaps. vi. 13; viii. 10; ix. 1; xi. 13; xiv. 8; xvi. 19;  
xviii. 2.  
  
[461] Comp. Dan. vii. 17, 23; Rev. xviii. 3.  
  
[462] Chap. xii. 12.  
  
[463] Dan. vii. 7, 8.  
  
[464] Chap. xii. 13.  
  
[465] Acts i. 7.  
  
[466] Chaps. xiv. 8; xvi. 19.  
  
[467] Jer. iii. 1.  
  
[468] Micah i. 7.  
  
[469] Matt. xxiii. 34-36.  
  
[470] Chap. xi. 8.  
  
[471] Isa. i. 10.  
  
[472] Isa. i. 21.  
  
[473] Guinness, \_The Approaching End of the Age\_, p. 143.  
  
[474] Chap. xvii. 15.  
  
[475] Comp. 2 Thess. ii. 7.  
  
[476] John x. 16.  
  
[477] Comp. chap. xi. 10.  
  
[478] Chap. i. 9.  
  
[479] Ps. xcii. 7-9.  
  
  
  
  
 CHAPTER XIV.  
  
 \_THE FALL OF BABYLON.\_  
  
 REV. xviii.  
  
  
Babylon has fallen. We have now the Divine proclamation of her fate,  
and the lamentation of the world over the doom to which she has been  
consigned:--  
  
 After these things I saw another angel coming down out of heaven,  
 having great authority; and the earth was lightened with his  
 glory. And he cried with a mighty voice, saying, Fallen, fallen is  
 Babylon the great, and is become a habitation of devils, and a  
 hold of every unclean spirit, and a hold of every unclean and  
 hateful bird. For by the wine of the wrath of her fornication all  
 the nations are fallen and the kings of the earth committed  
 fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth waxed rich by  
 the power of her wantonness (xviii. 1-3).  
  
At chap. xvii. 1 we read of one of the angels that had the seven  
Bowls. The angel now introduced is \_another\_, or a second. We shall  
find as we proceed that we have entered upon a new series of seven  
parts, similar to that in chap. xiv., where six angels and their  
actions, three on either side, are grouped around One higher than  
angels, and forming the central figure of the movement.[480] The  
series is a long one, extending from chap. xvii. 1 to chap. xxii. 5,  
the central figure meeting us at chap. xix. 11; and again, as before,  
the fact ought to be carefully noticed, for it has a bearing on the  
interpretation of some of the most difficult sections of this book.  
Meanwhile we have to do with the second angel, whose action extends to  
ver. 20 of the present chapter.  
  
The description given of this angel is proportioned to the importance of  
his message. He has \_great authority\_; the earth is \_lightened with his  
glory\_; the voice with which he cries is \_mighty\_. It could hardly be  
otherwise than that, with such joyful tidings as he bears to men, the  
"glory of the Lord should shine round about him, and a light from heaven  
above the brightness of the sun."[481] The tidings themselves follow,  
taken from the Old Testament accounts of the desolation that was to come  
upon Babylon: "And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the  
Chaldeans' pride, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It  
shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation  
to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall  
shepherds make their flocks to lie down there. But wild beasts of the  
desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful  
creatures; and ostriches shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance  
there. And wolves shall cry in their castles, and jackals in the  
pleasant palaces."[482] In words such as these, though combined  
throughout both the present and following descriptions with expressions  
taken from the ruin of other famous and guilty cities of the Old  
Testament, we have the source whence the powerful and pathetic words of  
this chapter are drawn. The most terrible disasters of bygone times are  
but types of that wreck of all the grandeur of earth which we are now  
invited to behold, while Babylon's sinfulness is referred to that her  
fate may appear to be no more than her appropriate punishment.  
  
At this point we are met by one of those sudden transitions, common in  
the Apocalypse, which so completely negative the idea of chronological  
arrangement. A cry is heard which seems to imply that Babylon has not  
yet fallen:--  
  
 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come forth, My  
 people, out of her, that ye have no fellowship with her sins, and  
 that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached even  
 unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Render unto  
 her even as she rendered, and double unto her the double according  
 to her works: in the cup which she hath mingled mingle unto her  
 double. How much soever she glorified herself, and waxed wanton,  
 so much give her of torment and mourning: for she saith in her  
 heart, I sit a queen, and a

m no widow, and shall in no wise see  
 mourning. Therefore in one day shall her plagues come, death, and  
 mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire:  
 for strong is the Lord God which judged her (xviii. 4-8).  
  
The first words of this voice from heaven deserve peculiar attention:  
\_Come forth, My people, out of her\_; that is, out of Babylon, the  
degenerate Church. We are at once reminded of the striking teaching of  
our Lord in chap. x. of the fourth Gospel, where He compares Himself  
to the "door" of the fold, not the door by which the sheep enter into,  
but by which they come out of, the fold.[483] We are also reminded of  
the blind man of chap. ix. of the same Gospel, whom our Lord "found"  
only after he had been "cast out" of the synagogue.[484] In the midst  
of the blinded theocracy of Israel in the days of Jesus there was a  
faithful, though small, remnant. It had been betrayed by the  
religious guides of the people, who had become "thieves and robbers,"  
whom the true sheep did not know, and to whom they ought not to  
listen. Jesus came to call it out of the theocracy to Himself. Such  
was the spectacle which St. John had witnessed when his Master was in  
the world, and that experience is now repeated. The Church as a whole  
degenerates. Called to prepare men for the Second Coming of the Lord,  
and to teach them to live, not for the present, but the future, she  
becomes herself the victim of the present. She forgets that, in the  
absence of the Bridegroom, her days are days of fasting. She fails to  
realize the fact that until her Lord comes again her state is one of  
widowhood. And, instead of mourning, she sits as a queen, at ease and  
satisfied, proud of her pomp and jewellery. What is all this but a  
recurrence of the old events of history? The Apostle sees the future  
mirrored in the past; and he can only follow in his Master's  
footsteps, and call His Christian remnant out of Babylon.  
  
The words are in the highest degree important for the interpretation  
and understanding of the Apocalypse. We have already found in more  
than one passage distinct traces of this double Church, of the true  
Church within the false, of the few living ones within the Body which  
had a name to live, but was dead. Here the distinction meets us in all  
its sharpness, and fresh light is cast upon passages that may have  
formerly seemed dark. "Many are called," "many" constituting the  
outward Church; but "few are chosen," "few" constituting the real  
Church, the Church which consists of the poor, and meek, and lowly.  
The two parts may keep together for a time, but the union cannot  
last; and the day comes when, as Christ called His sheep out of the  
Jewish, so He will again call His sheep out of the Christian "fold,"  
that they may hear His voice, and follow Him.  
  
Having summoned the true disciples of Jesus out of Babylon, the voice  
from heaven again proclaims in a double form, as \_sins\_ and as  
\_iniquities\_, the guilt of the doomed city, and invites the ministers of  
judgment, according to the \_lex talionis\_, to \_render unto her double\_.  
The command may also be founded upon the law of the theocracy by which  
thieves and violent aggressors of the poor were required to make a  
double repayment to those whom they had injured,[485] or it may rest  
upon the remembrance of such threatenings as those by the prophet  
Jeremiah, "I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double."[486]  
  
Judgment is next supposed to have been executed upon Babylon; and the  
Seer proceeds to describe in language of unexampled eloquence the  
lamentation of the world over the city's fall:--  
  
 And the kings of the earth, who committed fornication and lived  
 wantonly with her, shall weep and wail over her, when they look  
 upon the smoke of her burning, standing afar off for the fear of  
 her torment, saying, Woe, woe, the great city Babylon, the strong  
 city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. And the merchants of  
 the earth weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their  
 merchandise any more: merchandise of gold, and silver, and  
 precious stone, and pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk,  
 and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and every vessel of ivory, and  
 every vessel made of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron,  
 and marble, and cinnamon, and spice, and incense, and ointment,  
 and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat,  
 and cattle, and sheep, and merchandise of horses, and chariots,  
 and slaves, and souls of men. And the fruits which thy soul lusted  
 after are gone from thee, and all things that were dainty and  
 sumptuous are perished from thee, and men shall find them no more  
 at all. The merchants of these things, who were made rich by her,  
 shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and  
 mourning, saying, Woe, woe, the great city, she that was arrayed  
 in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and  
 precious stone, and pearl! for in one hour so great riches is made  
 desolate. And every shipmaster, and every one that saileth  
 anywhither, and mariners, and as many as gain their living by sea,  
 stood afar off, and cried out as they looked upon the smoke of her  
 burning, saying, What city is like the great city? And they cast  
 dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and mourning, saying, Woe,  
 woe, the great city, wherein were made rich all that had their  
 ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is  
 she made desolate. Rejoice with her, thou heaven, and ye saints,  
 and ye apostles, and ye prophets; for God hath judged your  
 judgment on her (xviii. 9-20).  
  
Three classes of persons are introduced to us: Kings, Merchants, and  
Sailors. All are \_of the earth\_; and each class, in its own strain,  
swells the voice of lamentation. The words are largely taken from the  
Old Testament, and more particularly from the description of the  
overthrow of Tyre in Ezekiel (chaps. xxvi., xxvii.). There is even a  
peculiar propriety in this latter reference, for Tyre was known by the  
prophets as another Babylon. In describing the "Burden of Tyre,"  
Isaiah uses in one part of his description the words, "The city of  
confusion" (the meaning of the word Babylon) "is broken down."[487]  
  
It is unnecessary to enter into any examination clause by clause of  
the passage before us. We shall better catch its spirit and be made  
sensible of its effect by attending to a few general observations upon  
the description as a whole.  
  
1. Not without interest may we mark that the classes selected to mourn  
over the burning of the city are three in number. We have thus another  
illustration of the manner in which that number penetrates the  
structure of all the writings of St. John.  
  
2. Emphasis is laid upon the fact that the city is \_burned\_. Her  
destruction by fire has indeed been more than once alluded to. Of the  
beast and the ten horns it had been said that "they shall burn her  
utterly with fire;"[488] and, again, it had been proclaimed by the  
voice from heaven that "she shall be utterly burned with fire."[489]  
We shall not venture to say with any measure of positiveness that the  
type of this "burning" is taken from the burning of Jerusalem by the  
Romans. It may have been taken from the burning of other cities by  
victorious enemies. But this much at least is obvious: that, in  
conjunction with the fact that Babylon is a harlot, destruction by  
fire leads us directly to the thought of the spiritual, and not simply  
the civil, or political, or commercial, character of the city.  
According to the law of Moses, burning appears to have been the  
punishment of fornication only in the case of a priest's daughter:  
"And the daughter of any priest, if she profane herself by playing the  
harlot, she shall be burnt with fire."[490]  
  
3. Whether there is any other allusion to spiritual traffic in the  
lamentations before us it is not easy to say. Of one at least which may  
be quoted in this connexion the interpretation is uncertain. When the  
merchants of the earth weep and mourn over the loss of that merchandise  
which they now miss, they extend it, not only to articles of commerce  
bought and sold in an ordinary market, but to \_souls of men\_. It may be  
that, as often suggested, slavery alone is thought of. Yet it is highly  
improbable that such is the case. Rather may it be supposed to refer to  
that spiritual life which is destroyed by too much occupation with, and  
too engrossing interest in, the world. "The characteristic of this  
\_fornication\_ is the selling themselves for gold, as the Greek word  
signifies. Therefore with such wonderful force and emphasis of  
accumulation is every species of this merchandise mentioned, running up  
all into one head: \_the souls of men\_. Like that in the prophet: 'Their  
land is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their  
treasures; their land also is full of horses, neither is there any end  
of their chariots; their land also is full of idols.' And it must be  
observed that all these things which are so minutely particularized as  
expressive of the meshes of that net by which men's souls are taken have  
also their place in the new Jerusalem, where every jewel is specified by  
name, and the gold of its streets, and the fine linen, and the incense,  
and the wine, and the oil, its white horses also. In both alike must  
they stand for spiritual merchandise of good and evil, the false riches  
and the true."[491]  
  
The conclusion to be drawn is that Babylon is a spiritual city. That,  
as such, she is Jerusalem is further confirmed by the fact that, at  
the close of the chapter, it is said, \_And in her was found the blood  
of prophets, and of saints, and of all that have been slain upon the  
earth.\_ Similar words met us in chap. xvii. 6; and here, as there,  
they unmistakeably remind us of the words already quoted in which our  
Lord describes the great city of the Jews.[492]  
  
4. From all that has been said, it must be obvious that nothing is  
here spoken of Babylon inapplicable to Jerusalem when we think of  
this latter city in the light in which the Seer specially regards it.  
Jerusalem was indeed neither a commercial nor a maritime city, but  
Rome also was no city on the sea. A large part, therefore, of the  
details of St. John's description is not less destitute of force when  
applied, if applied literally, to the latter than to the former. On  
the other hand, these details are more applicable to Jerusalem than to  
Rome, if we remember that Jerusalem supplies, in a way impossible to  
Rome, the groundwork for a delineation of those religious forces which  
are far more wide-spreading in their reach, and far more crushing in  
their power, than the legions of the imperial metropolis.  
  
Babylon then is fallen, and that with a sudden and swift destruction,  
a destruction indeed so sudden and so swift that each of the three  
companies that lament takes particular notice of the fact that \_in one  
hour\_ did her judgment come.[493]  
  
More, however, so important is the subject, has to be said; and we are  
introduced to the action of the third angel of the first group:--  
  
 And a strong angel took up a stone, as it were a great millstone,  
 and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with a mighty fall shall  
 Babylon, the great city, be cast down, and shall be found no more at  
 all. And the voice of harpers, and minstrels, and flute-players, and  
 trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman,  
 of whatsoever craft, shall be found any more at all in thee; and the  
 voice of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; and the  
 voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at  
 all in thee: for with thy sorcery were all the nations deceived. And  
 in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all  
 that have been slain upon the earth (xviii. 21-24).  
  
Yet once again, it would seem, must we think of Babylon as to be  
destroyed rather than as destroyed already. So great is her guiltiness  
that the Seer again and again approaches it, and dwells, though from  
different points of view, upon the thought of her disastrous fate. In  
the present case it is less the method than the effect of her  
destruction that is before his eye, and nothing can be more touching  
than the light in which he presents it. At one moment we behold the city  
in her brightness, her gaiety, her rich and varied life. We hear the  
voice of her harpers, and minstrels, and flute-players, and trumpeters,  
all that can delight the ear accompanying all that can please the eye.  
Her craftsmen of every craft are busy at their work; and each shop in  
the great city resounds with the noise of the hammer, or the shuttle, or  
the other instruments of prosperous industry. The cheering sound of the  
millstone tells that there is food in her humbler dwellings. Her  
merchants, too, are the princes of the earth; innumerable lamps glitter  
in their halls and gardens; and the voice of the bridegroom and the  
bride is the pledge of her well-being and joy. The next moment the proud  
city is cast like a millstone into the sea; and all is silence,  
desolation, and ruin. The resources of language appear as if they had  
been exhausted to supply the description of so great a fall.  
  
 \* \* \* \* \*  
  
We have now reached the close of the longest and most important section  
of the Apocalypse, beginning, as has been already pointed out, with  
chap. vi. It is the fourth in that series of seven of which the book is  
composed; and the main purpose of St. John in writing finds expression  
in it. As the writer of the fourth Gospel describes in the fourth  
section of that book, extending from chap. v. to chap. xii., the  
conflict between the Son of God and "the Jews," so he describes in the  
corresponding section of the Apocalypse the conflict between the  
glorified Son of man as He lives and reigns in His Church and the evil  
of the world. Throughout the conflict we are not once permitted to  
forget that, although Christ and the true members of His Body may be the  
objects of attack, and may even have to retire for security from the  
field, God is on their side, and will never suffer His faithfulness to  
fail or forget His promises. In a threefold series of judgments the  
guilty world and the guilty Church are visited with the terrors of His  
wrath. These three series of judgments, too, go on in an ascending line.  
The climactic character of their contents has already been pointed out,  
and nothing more need be said of it. But it may be worth while to notice  
that the element of climax appears not less in the nature of the  
instruments employed. Comparing the Trumpets with the Seals, the simple  
fact that they are Trumpets indicates a higher, more exciting, more  
terrible unfolding of wrath. The Trumpet is peculiarly the warlike  
instrument, summoning the hosts to battle: "Thou hast heard, O my soul,  
the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war;" "That day is a day of  
wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation,  
a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a  
day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities."[494] That the  
Bowls, again, are still more potent than the Trumpets, appears from the  
language in which they are described, from their mode of introduction,  
and from the vessels made use of for the plagues. They are "the last"  
plagues; in them is "finished" the wrath of God; they are called for by  
a "great voice out of the sanctuary;" and they proceed, not from a  
secular instrument, however warlike, but from a sacred vessel, not from  
one which must be sounded for a length of time before it produces its  
effect, but from one which, inverted in a moment, pours out with a  
sudden gush its terrors upon men. Similar though they thus are, the  
three series of judgments lose what might otherwise be their sameness;  
and the mind is invited to rest upon that most instructive lesson of the  
providence of God, that in proportion to privilege misused is the  
severity with which sin is punished. Throughout all these judgments the  
righteous are kept safe.  
  
It will thus be observed that there is no strict chronological  
succession in the visions of this book. There is succession of a  
certain kind, succession in intensity of punishment. But we cannot  
assign one series of judgments to one period in the history of the  
Church or limit another to another. All the three series may  
continually fulfil themselves wherever persons are found of the  
character and disposition to which they severally apply.  
  
But while these three series constitute the chief substance of the  
fourth, or leading, section of the seven into which the Apocalypse is  
divided, they do not exhaust the subject. The last series, in  
particular--that of the Bowls--has proceeded upon a supposition the  
most startling and pathetic by which the history of the Church is  
marked,--that "they are not all Israel which are of Israel," that  
tares have mingled with the wheat, and that the spirit of Babylon has  
found its way into the heart of the city of God. A phenomenon so  
unexpected and so melancholy stands in need of particular examination,  
and that examination is given in the description of the character and  
fate of Babylon. The remarks already made upon this point need not be  
repeated. It may be enough to remind the reader that in no part of his  
whole book is the Seer more deeply moved, and that in none does he  
rise to strains of more powerful and touching eloquence. Yet what is  
chiefly required of us is to open our minds to the full impression of  
the fact that Babylon does fall, deep in ruin as in guilt, and that  
with her fall the conflict ends.  
  
FOOTNOTES:  
  
[480] Kliefoth seems to have been the first to point this out.  
  
[481] Luke ii. 9; Acts xxvi. 13.  
  
[482] Isa. xiii. 19-22.  
  
[483] John x. 7.  
  
[484] John ix. 35.  
  
[485] Exod. xxii. 4, 7, 9.  
  
[486] Jer. xvi. 18.  
  
[487] Isa. xxiv. 10.  
  
[488] Chap. xvii. 16.  
  
[489] Chap. xviii. 8.  
  
[490] Lev. xxi. 9.  
  
[491] Isaac Williams, \_The Apocalypse, with Notes\_, etc., p. 360.  
  
[492] Matt. xxiii. 35. Comp. p. 291.  
  
[493] Vers. 10, 17, 19.  
  
[494] Jer. iv. 19; Zeph. i. 15, 16.  
  
  
  
  
 CHAPTER XV.  
  
 \_THE PAUSE OF VICTORY AND JUDGMENT OF THE  
 BEAST AND THE FALSE PROPHET.\_  
  
 REV. xix.  
  
  
Those who have followed with attention the course of this commentary can  
hardly fail to have observed its leading conception of the book with  
which it deals. That conception is that the Revelation of St. John  
presents to us in visions the history of the Church moulded upon the  
history of her Lord whilst He tabernacled among men. It is the  
invariable lesson of the New Testament that Christ and His people are  
one. He is the Vine; they are the branches. He is in them; they are in  
Him. With equal uniformity the sacred writers teach us that just as  
Christ suffered during the course of His earthly ministry, so also His  
people suffer. They have to endure the struggle before they enjoy the  
victory, and to bear the cross before they win the crown. But the  
peculiarity of the Apocalypse is, that it carries out this thought much  
more fully than the other New Testament books. St. John does not merely  
see the Church suffer. He sees her suffer in a way precisely as her Lord  
did. He lives in the thought of those words spoken by Jesus to Salome at  
a striking moment of his life with regard to his brother and himself,  
"The cup that I drink ye shall drink; and with the baptism that I am  
baptized withal shall ye be baptized."[495] That very cup is put into  
his hands and into the hands of his brethren, who are "partakers with  
him in the tribulation, and kingdom, and patience which are in  
Jesus;"[496] with that very baptism they are all baptized.  
  
Now we know from the fourth Gospel what the light was in which St.  
John looked back, at a distance of more than half a century, upon the  
life of Je

sus. Nothing therefore was more natural than that, dealing  
only with the great principles at work in God's government of the  
world and guidance of His Church, and seeing these principles embodied  
in visions, the visions should present to him a course of things  
precisely similar to that which had been followed in the case of the  
Forerunner of the Church and the Captain of her salvation.  
  
Turning then to the fourth Gospel, it has long been acknowledged by  
every inquirer of importance that the struggle of Jesus with the  
world, which the Evangelist chiefly intends to relate, ends with the  
close of chap. xii. It is equally undeniable that with the beginning  
of chap. xviii. the struggle breaks out afresh. Between these two  
points lie chaps. xiii. to xvii., five chapters altogether different  
from those that either precede or follow them, marked by a different  
tone, and centring around that institution of the Last Supper in  
which, Judas having now "gone out," the love of Jesus to His disciples  
is poured forth with a tenderness previously unexampled. In these  
chapters we have first a narrative in which the love of Jesus is  
related as it appears in the foot-washing and in the institution of  
the Supper, and then, immediately afterwards, a pause. This  
pause--chaps. xiii. 31-xvii.--together with the narrative preceding  
it, occurs at the close of a struggle substantially finished--"I  
glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou  
hast given Me to do"[497]--and only yet again to burst forth in one  
final and unsuccessful effort against the Prince of life.  
  
It would seem as if we had a similar structure at the point of the  
Apocalypse now reached by us. There is a transition narrative which, so  
far as the thought in it is concerned, may be regarded either as closing  
the fourth or as beginning the fifth section of the book. It is probably  
better to understand it as the latter, because the mould of the Gospel  
is thus better preserved; and, where so much else speaks distinctly of  
that mould, there is no impropriety in giving the benefit of a doubt to  
what is otherwise sufficiently established. Although therefore the fifth  
section of the Apocalypse, the Pause, begins properly with ver. 11 of  
the present chapter, the first ten verses may be taken along with these  
as a preparatory narrative standing to what follows as John xiii. 1-30  
stands to chap. xiii. 31-chap. xvii. The probability, too, that this is  
the light in which we are to look at the passage before us, is rendered  
greater when we notice, first, that there is in the midst of the  
preliminary narrative, and for the first time mention made of a  
"supper," the marriage supper of the Lamb,[498] and, secondly, that at a  
later point in the book there is a final outburst of evil against the  
Church, which, notwithstanding the powerful forces ranged against her,  
is unsuccessful.[499]  
  
What we have \_now\_ to do with is thus not a continuation of the  
struggle. It is a pause in which the fall of Babylon is celebrated, and  
the great enemies of the Church are consigned to their merited fate:--  
  
 After these things I heard as it were a great voice of a great  
 multitude in heaven, saying, Hallelujah; Salvation, and glory, and  
 power, belong to our God: for true and righteous are His  
 judgments: for He hath judged the great harlot, which did corrupt  
 the earth with her fornication, and He hath avenged the blood of  
 His servants at her hand. And a second time they say, Hallelujah.  
 And her smoke goeth up for ever and ever. And the four-and-twenty  
 elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God  
 that sitteth on the throne, saying, Amen; Hallelujah. And a voice  
 came forth from the throne, saying, Give praise to our God, all ye  
 His servants, ye that fear Him, the small and the great. And I  
 heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice  
 of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying,  
 Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth. Let us  
 rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto Him:  
 for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made  
 herself ready. And it was given unto her that she should clothe  
 herself in fine linen, bright and pure: for the fine linen is the  
 righteous acts of the saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed  
 are they which are bidden unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.  
 And he saith unto me, These are true words of God. And I fell down  
 before his feet to worship him. And he saith unto me, See thou do  
 it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren that  
 hold the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of  
 Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (xix. 1-10).  
  
Babylon has fallen; and the world, represented by three classes of its  
inhabitants--kings, merchants, and sailors--has poured out its  
lamentations over her fall. Very different are the feelings of the  
good, and these feelings appear in the narrative before us. \_A great  
multitude\_ is heard \_in heaven\_, not necessarily in the region beyond  
the grave, but in that of the righteous, of the unworldly, of the  
spiritual, whether in time or in eternity. This "multitude" is  
probably to be identified with that of chap. vii. 9. The definite  
article, which would render the identification complete, is indeed  
wanting; but we have already found instances of the same method of  
speech with regard to the one hundred and forty and four thousand of  
chap. xiv. 1, and with regard to the glassy sea of chap. xv. 2. The  
whole ransomed Church of God is therefore included in the expression.  
They sing first; and the burden of their song is \_Hallelujah\_, or  
Praise to God, because He has inflicted upon the harlot the due  
punishment of her sins and crimes. Nor do they sing only once; they  
sing the same ascription of praise \_a second time\_. The meaning is not  
simply that they do this twice, the "second time" having more than its  
numerical force, and being designed to bring out the intensity of  
their feelings and their song.[500] Then the four-and-twenty elders,  
the representatives of the glorified Church, and the four living  
creatures, the representatives of redeemed creation, answer, \_Amen\_,  
and take up the same song: \_Hallelujah\_. All creation, animate and  
inanimate, swells the voice of joy and praise.  
  
Meanwhile the \_smoke of the harlot's torment goeth up for ever and  
ever\_. Again, as once before,[501] we have here no right to fasten our  
thoughts upon immortal spirits of men deceived and led astray. Such may  
be included. If they have identified themselves with the harlot, we need  
not hesitate to say that they are induced. But what is mainly brought  
under our notice is the overthrow, complete and final, of sin itself.  
Babylon has been utterly overthrown, and her punishment shall never be  
forgotten. Her fate shall remain a monument of the righteous judgment of  
God, and shall illustrate unto the ages of the ages the character of Him  
who, for creation's sake, will "by no means clear the guilty."[502]  
  
A voice from heaven is then heard calling upon all the servants of God  
to praise Him; and this is followed by another voice, \_as it were the  
voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the  
voice of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the  
Almighty, reigneth\_. He always indeed really reigned, but now He has  
taken to Himself His great power, and everything acknowledges its King.  
  
Thus a new moment is reached in the history of God's saints. The Lamb  
is come to claim His bride, and \_His wife hath made herself ready\_.  
She has been long betrothed, and has been waiting for the Bridegroom.  
Through storm and calm, through sorrow and joy, through darkness and  
light, she has waited for Him, crying ever and again, "Come quickly."  
At last He comes, and the marriage and the marriage supper are to take  
place. For the first time in the Apocalypse we read of this marriage,  
and for the first time, although the general idea of supping with the  
Lord had been once alluded to,[503] of this marriage supper. The  
figure indeed is far from being new. The writers both of the Old and  
of the New Testament use it with remarkable frequency.[504] But no  
sacred writer appears to have felt more the power and beauty of the  
similitude than St. John. In the first miracle which he records, and  
in which he sees the whole glory of the New Testament dispensation  
mirrored forth, He who changed the water into wine is the Bridegroom  
of His Church[505]; and, when the Baptist passes out of view in the  
presence of Him for whom he had prepared the way, he records the  
swan-like song in which the great prophet terminated his mission in  
order that another and a higher than himself might have sole  
possession of the field: "Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said,  
I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before Him. He that hath the  
bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which  
standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the  
bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled."[506]  
  
Such is the moment that has now arrived, and the bride is ready for  
it. Her raiment is worthy of our notice. It is \_fine linen, bright and  
pure\_; and then it is immediately added, \_for the fine linen is the  
righteous acts of the saints\_. These acts are not the imputed  
righteousness of Christ, although only in Christ are the acts  
performed. They express the moral and religious condition of those who  
constitute the bride. No outward righteousness alone, with which we  
might be clothed as with a garment, is a sufficient preparation for  
future blessedness. An inward change is not less necessary, a personal  
and spiritual meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light.  
Christ must not only be on us as a robe, but in us as a life, if we  
are to have the hope of glory.[507] Let us not be afraid of words like  
these. Rightly viewed, they in no way interfere with our completeness  
in the Beloved alone, or with the fact that not by works of  
righteousness that we have done, but by grace, are we saved through  
faith, and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God.[508] All our  
salvation is of Christ, but the change upon us must be internal as  
well as external. The elect are foreordained to be conformed to the  
image of God's Son[509]; and the Christian condition is expressed in  
the words which say, not only "Ye were justified," but also "ye were  
washed, ye were sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and  
in the Spirit of our God."[510]  
  
Thus "made ready," the bride now enters with the Bridegroom into the  
marriage feast; and, as the whole of her future rises before the view  
of the heavenly visitant who converses with the Seer, he says to him,  
\_Write, Blessed are they which are bidden to the marriage supper of  
the Lamb\_.  
  
Once before St. John had heard a similar, perhaps the same, voice from  
heaven, saying, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from  
henceforth."[511] Then we believed; now we see. The clouds are  
dispelled; the veil is rent asunder; we enter into the palace of the  
great King. There is music, and festivity, and joy. There is neither  
sin nor sorrow, no privilege abused, no cloud upon any countenance, no  
burden upon any heart, no shadow from the future to darken the rapture  
of the present. Here is life, and life abundantly; the peace that  
passeth understanding; the joy unspeakable and glorified; the  
inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading.  
  
In particular, when we think of this marriage supper of the Lamb, we  
cannot but return to that supper in the upper chamber of Jerusalem  
which occupies so strikingly similar a position in the life of Jesus.  
There Jesus said, "Take, eat: this is My body, which is for you;"  
"This cup is the new covenant in My blood: drink ye all of it."[512]  
That was a feast, in which He gave Himself to be for ever the  
nourishment of His Church. And in like manner in the marriage supper  
of the Lamb the Lord who became dead and is alive for evermore is not  
only the Bridegroom, but the substance of the feast. In Him and by Him  
His people lived on earth; in Him and by Him they live for ever.  
  
All this St. John saw. All this, too, he heard confirmed by the  
statement that, wonderful and glorious as was the spectacle, it was  
yet \_true words of God\_. He was overwhelmed, and would have worshipped  
his angelic visitant. But he was interrupted by the declaration on the  
angel's part, \_See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee and  
with thy brethren that hold the testimony of Jesus: worship God\_.  
These fellow-servants are first the prophets, but then also all true  
members of Christ's Body. The last not less than the first hold the  
testimony of Jesus[513]; and because they do so, they too are  
prophets, for prophecy, whether in Old or in New Testament times,  
testifies to Him. In Him all revelation centres. He is the expression  
of the God whom no man hath seen. He is thus the Alpha and the Omega,  
"over all, God blessed for ever."[514]  
  
By so contemplating Him we are prepared for the next following vision:--  
  
 And I saw the heavens opened, and behold a white horse, and He  
 that sat thereon, called Faithful and True; and in righteousness  
 He doth judge and make war. And His eyes are a flame of fire, and  
 upon His head are many diadems; and He hath a name written, which  
 no man knoweth, but He Himself. And He is arrayed in a garment  
 sprinkled with blood: and His name is called The Word of God. And  
 the armies which are in heaven followed Him upon white horses,  
 clothed in fine linen, white and pure. And out of His mouth  
 proceedeth a sharp sword, that with it He should 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. And He  
 hath on His garment and on His thigh a name written, KING OF  
 KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS (xix. 11-16).  
  
Of the position of this passage in the structure of the Apocalypse we  
have already spoken; and, looked at in that its true light, it may be  
called the Pause of Victory. There is no renewal of the struggle. A  
Warrior is indeed presented to us; but He is a Warrior who has already  
conquered, and who comes forth not so much to subdue His enemies as to  
inflict upon them their final punishment.  
  
\_Heaven\_ is \_open\_, and our attention is first of all directed to a  
rider \_upon a white horse\_. The description given of this rider leaves  
no doubt as to who He is. The "whiteness" of the horse is the emblem  
of a purity that can be connected with the kingdom of God alone. The  
description of the Rider--\_Faithful\_, who will not suffer one word  
that He has promised to fail; \_True\_, not true as opposed to false,  
but real as opposed to shadowy--corresponds only to something  
essentially Divine; while the particulars of His appearance afterwards  
mentioned take us back to the glorified Son of man of chap. i., and to  
other passages of this and other books of the Bible which speak of the  
same glorious Person. There are \_the eyes\_ like \_a flame of fire\_ of  
chap. i. 14 and chap. ii. 18. There are \_upon His head many diadems\_,  
a fact not previously mentioned, but corresponding to the many  
royalties which belong to Him whom all things obey. There is the \_name  
which none but He Himself knoweth\_, for "no one knoweth the Son save  
the Father."[515] There is the \_garment sprinkled with blood\_, of  
which we read in the prophet Isaiah,[516] the blood, not that of the  
Conqueror shed for us, but the blood of His enemies staining His  
raiment as He returns victorious from the field. There is the name  
\_The Word of God\_, with which St. John alone has made us familiar in  
the opening of his Gospel. There are \_the armies which are in heaven,  
following Him upon white horses\_, and \_clothed in fine linen, white  
and pure\_, to which our attention is directed, not for their sake, but  
for His, for He has made them partakers of His victory. There is the  
\_sharp sword proceeding out of His mouth\_ of chap. i. 16 and chap. ii.  
12. There is the \_smiting of the nations\_, of which we have already  
heard in chap. ii. 27 and chap. xii. 5. There is the \_treading of the  
winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God\_, spoken of  
in chap. xiv. 19, 20. Finally, there is \_on His garment and on His  
thigh the name\_ KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. All these traits  
leave no doubt who this Captain of salvation is; and all are noted  
that we may better understand both the glory of His person, and the  
nature of His accomplished work.  
  
One thing therefore alone remains: that the great adversaries of His  
people shall be consigned to their doom; and to this the Seer  
proceeds:--  
  
 And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud  
 voice, saying to all the birds that fly in mid-heaven, Come and be  
 gathered together unto the great supper of God; 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 thereon,  
 and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, and small and great.  
 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies,  
 gathered together to make war against Him that sat upon the  
 horse, and against His army. And the beast was taken, and he that  
 was with him, the false prophet that wrought the signs in his  
 sight, wherewith he deceived them that had received the mark of  
 the beast, and them that worshipped his image. They twain were  
 cast alive into the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone. And  
 the rest were killed with the sword of Him that sat upon the  
 horse, even the sword which came forth out of His mouth: and all  
 the birds were filled with their flesh (xix. 17-21).  
  
The angel beheld at the beginning of this scene is the first of the  
three forming the second group of that series of seven parts of which  
the triumphing Conqueror was the centre. He stood \_in the sun\_, which  
is to be thought of as in the zenith of its daily path, in order that  
he may be seen and heard by all. It is to \_the birds that fly in  
mid-heaven\_ that he calls; that is, to those strong and fierce birds  
of prey, such as the eagle and the vulture, which fly in the highest  
regions of the atmosphere. His cry is that they shall come to the  
great supper of God, that they may feast upon the flesh of all the  
enemies of the Lamb. The idea of such a feast is found in the  
prophecies of Ezekiel; and there can be no doubt, from the many  
accompanying circumstances of similarity between the description of it  
there and here, that St. John has the language of the prophet in his  
eye: "And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord God; Speak unto the  
birds of every sort, and to every beast of the field, Assemble  
yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to My sacrifice  
that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains  
of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood. Ye shall eat the  
flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth,  
of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of  
Bashan. And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye  
be drunken, of My sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. And ye  
shall be filled at My table with horses and chariots, with mighty men,  
and with all men of war, saith the Lord God."[517] Yet, while the  
picture of the prophet is unquestionably before the Seer's mind, it is  
impossible to doubt that we have in this supper a travesty of that  
marriage supper of the Lamb which had been spoken of in the previous  
part of the chapter.[518] In contrast with the joyful banquet at which  
the children of God shall be nourished by Him whose flesh is meat  
indeed and whose blood is drink indeed, the wicked, to whatever rank  
or station they belong, shall themselves be a meal for all foul and  
ravenous

birds. The whole passage reminds us of the spectacle at  
Calvary, as it is set before us in the fourth Gospel, and may be  
accepted as one of the innumerable proofs of the similarity between  
two books--that Gospel and the Apocalypse--at first sight so different  
from each other. On the Cross Jesus is the true Paschal Lamb, not so  
much in the moment of its death as at a subsequent stage, when it was  
prepared for, and eaten at, the paschal meal. In the conduct of the  
Jews on that occasion St. John appears to behold an inverted and  
contorted Passover. The enemies of Jesus had not entered into the  
judgment-hall of Pilate, "lest they should be defiled; but that they  
might eat the passover."[519] They had not eaten it then Amidst the  
tumult and stormy passions of that dreadful morning, when had they an  
opportunity of eating it? St. John does not tell us that they found  
one. Rather is the whole narrative so constructed, so full of close,  
rapid, passionate action, that it is impossible to fix upon any point  
at which we can insert their eating until it was too late to make it  
legal. May it not be that they found no opportunity for eating it?  
They lost their passover. Lost it? Nay; the Evangelist seems to say,  
they found a passover. Go with me to the Cross; mark there their cruel  
mockeries of the Lamb of God; and you shall see the righteous dealings  
of the Almighty as He makes these mockeries take the shape of a  
passover of judgment, a passover of added sin and deepened shame.[520]  
  
The punishment of the wicked, and especially of the three great  
enemies of the Church, now proceeds; and it ought still to be  
carefully observed that we have to do with punishment, not war or  
overthrow in war. It was so at ver. 17, where, after the triumphing  
Conqueror had ridden forth, followed by His armies, there is no  
mention of any battle. There is only the angel's cry to the birds to  
gather themselves together unto the great supper of God. The battle  
had been already fought, and the victory already won. We are now told  
indeed of the gathering together of the beast and the kings of the  
earth and their armies, \_to make war against Him that sat upon the  
horse, and against His army\_. But, whatever may have been their  
design, it is not executed. No actual fighting is spoken of. The  
enemies referred to are at once taken, apparently without fighting,  
and are consigned to the fate which they have brought upon themselves.  
  
Two of the three great enemies of the Lord and of His Church meet this  
fate,--\_the beast\_ and \_the false prophet\_. The first of these is the  
beast so frequently mentioned in previous chapters. More particularly  
it is the beast of chap. xvii., the representative of the  
antichristian world in its last and highest form. The second is not  
less certainly the second beast of chap. xiii., of whom it is said  
that "he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by reason of the signs  
which it was given him to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them  
that dwell upon the earth, that they should make an image to the  
beast."[521] The "signs," the "deception," and the "worship" of the  
beast now spoken of can be no other than those thus referred to.  
  
One point may be noticed further. According to what seems to be the best  
reading of the original Greek, we are told here, not that "the beast was  
taken, and with him the false prophet," but "the beast was taken, and he  
that was with him, the false prophet." In other words, the language of  
St. John is designed to bring out the closeness of connexion between  
these two beasts, the fact that the one is always dependent on the  
other. They are never separated. The first cannot act without the  
second. Hence in all probability the reason why, in treating of the doom  
by which these enemies of the Church are overtaken, a separate paragraph  
is not assigned to each. They are taken together.  
  
A more important question has been raised in connexion with the words  
before us; and it has been urged that they conclusively prove that both  
the beast and the false prophet are persons, not personifications.[522]  
We have already seen that in regard to the "beast" that conclusion is  
hasty.[523] It appears to be not less so in regard to the "false  
prophet." The simple fact that he deceiveth \_them\_--that is, all \_that  
had received the mark of the beast\_--is inconsistent with such an idea,  
unless we ascribe to him a ubiquity that is Divine; or unless we  
suppose, what Scripture gives us no warrant for believing, that there is  
in the realm of evil a personal trinity--the dragon, the beast, and the  
false prophet--corresponding to the Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy  
Spirit. It is much more natural to think that St. John's statements upon  
this point spring from that general method of conception which  
distinguishes him, and by which everything existing in the realm of good  
is thought of as having its counterpart in the realm of evil. The  
question thus raised is wholly independent of any consideration of the  
fate by which the two beasts are overtaken. When principles are viewed  
as persons, they must be spoken of as persons; and it will surely not be  
urged that death and Hades are persons because it is said of them, in  
chap. xx. 14, that they "were cast into the lake of fire."  
  
The beast and the false prophet then are cast together into \_the lake of  
fire that burneth with brimstone\_; and this lake of fire is further  
explained in chap. xx. 14 to be "the second death." It is impossible to  
avoid the questions, How are we to conceive of this "lake of fire"? and,  
What is its effect? Yet, so far as at present concerns us, the answer to  
these questions must be taken from St. John alone. In the first instance  
at least we have nothing to do with the \_general\_ teaching of Scripture  
on what is called the doctrine of "eternal punishment." Our only inquiry  
must be, What impression is the language employed by the Seer in these  
visions intended to convey? Upon this point it would seem as if there  
can be little doubt. To St. John it is no matter of consequence to tell  
us what shall be the condition of the enemies of the Church throughout  
the ages of the future, or whether they shall be preserved everlastingly  
alive in torment and misery and woe. His one aim is to deal with the  
condition of the kingdom of God while it contends with its foes in this  
present scene. His one object is to tell us that these foes shall be  
destroyed for ever, and that the world shall be wholly purged from them.  
No further information is required to comfort us. We may leave them in  
the hands of God.  
  
Looking at the matter in this light, we do not need to ask whether by  
"the lake of fire" we are to understand a lake in which the wicked are  
consumed or one in which they are upheld in undying flames. Either  
interpretation is consistent with the Apostle's course of thought, and  
with the impression which he wishes to produce.  
  
No doubt it may be said that the principle of contrast, of which we  
have so often availed ourselves in interpreting this book, implies  
that, as the righteous shall be upheld amidst the joys of everlasting  
life, so the wicked shall be upheld amidst the torments of everlasting  
death. But it is precisely here that the peculiarity of St. John's  
mode of thought comes in. To him "life" is in the very nature of the  
case everlasting. Were it not so, it would not be life. Only therefore  
in so far as the conception of everlasting torment lies in the idea of  
"death" can it be truly said that the principle of contrast, so deeply  
rooted in St. John's mode of thought, demands the application of  
everlasting torment to the wicked. But the idea of torment  
everlastingly continued does not lie in the idea of "death." Death is  
privation; when inflicted by fire, capacity for torment is speedily  
destroyed; and death itself is cast into the lake of fire. The  
natural conclusion is that the idea of torment belongs to the mode by  
which the death spoken of is inflicted--fire--and that the words with  
which we are dealing may mean no more than this,--that the eternity of  
effect following the overthrow of the beast and the false prophet is  
the leading conception associated with the "fire that burneth with  
brimstone" to which these great enemies of God's people are consigned.  
  
If what has been said be correct, the whole question of the  
everlasting \_suffering\_ of the wicked is left open so far as these  
passages in the Apocalypse are concerned; and St. John's main lesson  
is that when the beast and the false prophet are cast into the lake of  
fire they shall no longer have power to war against the righteous or  
to disturb their peace.  
  
When these two enemies of the Church had thus been destroyed, \_the  
rest were killed with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse, even  
the sword which came forth out of His mouth\_. The persons thus called  
"the rest" are those who stand to the beast and the false prophet in  
the same relation as that in which "the rest of the woman's seed,"  
spoken of in chap. xii. 17, stand to the man-child "caught up unto God  
and unto His throne." The man-child exalted and glorified is the same  
as "He that sat upon the horse," and in that condition a sword  
proceedeth out of His mouth.[524] The Guardian and Protector of His  
own, who has kept their true life safe amidst all outward troubles,  
brings also these troubles to an end. Their enemies are "killed." They  
are not yet cast into the lake of fire, because their hour of judgment  
has not come. By-and-by it will come.[525] Meanwhile not only can  
they harm the righteous no more, but they afford a supper to the  
ravenous birds already spoken of; and the birds are more than  
satisfied: they are gorged with the unholy banquet. \_All the birds  
were filled with their flesh.\_  
  
FOOTNOTES:  
  
[495] Mark x. 39.  
  
[496] Rev. i. 9.  
  
[497] John xvii. 4.  
  
[498] Ver. 9.  
  
[499] Chap. xx. 7.  
  
[500] Comp.  
  
[501] Comp. p. 250.  
  
[502] Exod. xxxiv. 7.  
  
[503] Comp. chap. iii. 20.  
  
[504] Comp. Ps. xiv. 9-15; Isa. liv. 5; Hos. ii. 19; Matt. xxii. 2;  
Eph. v. 32, etc.  
  
[505] John ii. 1-11.  
  
[506] John iii. 28, 29.  
  
[507] Col. i. 27.  
  
[508] Eph. ii. 8.  
  
[509] Rom. viii. 29.  
  
[510] 1 Cor. vi. 11.  
  
[511] Chap. xiv. 13.  
  
[512] Matt. xxvi. 26, 27; 1 Cor. xi. 24, 25.  
  
[513] Comp. chaps. i. 3, 9, vi. 9, xi. 7, xii. 17, xx. 4.  
  
[514] Rom. ix. 5.  
  
[515] Matt. xi. 27.  
  
[516] Isa. lxiii. 3.  
  
[517] Ezek. xxxix. 17-20.  
  
[518] Ver. 9.  
  
[519] John xviii. 28.  
  
[520] The writer has endeavoured to unfold this view of Jesus on the  
Cross in two papers in \_The Expositor\_, first series, vol. vi., pp.  
17, 129.  
  
[521] Chap. xiii. 14.  
  
[522] Burger \_in loc.\_  
  
[523] Comp. p. 297.  
  
[524] Chaps. i. 16; xix. 15.  
  
[525] Chap. xx. 15.  
  
  
  
  
 CHAPTER XVI.  
  
 \_JUDGMENT OF SATAN AND OF THE WICKED.\_  
  
 REV. xx.  
  
  
In now approaching chap. xx., with its yet unsolved difficulties of  
interpretation, it is of essential importance to observe, in the first  
place, the relation of the chapter to what immediately precedes. The  
Seer is not entering upon an entirely new subject. He distinctly  
continues, on the contrary, the prosecution of a theme he had before  
begun. In the previous portion of his book three great enemies of the  
saints of God had been introduced to us,--the dragon or the devil, the  
beast, and the false prophet. These were the main opponents of the  
Lamb, in one way or another stirring up all the efforts that had been  
made against Him by the kings of the earth, their armies, and their  
followers. For a time they had appeared to succeed. They had  
persecuted the saints, had compelled them to flee, had overcome them,  
and killed them. This, however, could not continue; and it was to be  
shown that the final triumph remains with those who have suffered for  
the sake of righteousness. In chap. xix. we have the beginning, but  
not the close, of this triumph. Of the three great enemies only  
two--the beast and the false prophet--perish in that chapter. The  
destruction of the third is reserved for chap. xx., and is effected  
at the tenth verse of the chapter. The verses following then describe  
the judgment of those who had listened to these enemies, but who,  
though defeated, or even killed,[526] or devoured by fire out of  
heaven when in their service,[527] had not yet been consigned to their  
doom. Thereafter nothing remains, in order to complete the triumph of  
Christ and His saints, but that death and Hades shall also be removed  
from the scene and cast into the lake of fire.  
  
These considerations are of themselves sufficient to show that \_the  
overthrow of Satan\_, and not the reign of a thousand years, is the  
main theme of the first ten verses of the chapter. So far is the  
latter from being the culminating point of the whole book, that it is  
not even introduced at the beginning of any new and important section.  
It starts no new series of visions. It comes in in the midst of a  
section devoted to an entirely different matter:--  
  
 And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of  
 the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the  
 dragon, the old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan, and bound  
 him for a thousand years, and cast him into the abyss, and shut  
 it, and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no  
 more, until the thousand years should be finished: after this he  
 must be loosed for a little time. And I saw thrones, and they sat  
 upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls  
 of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for  
 the word of God, and such as worshipped not the beast, neither his  
 image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon  
 their hand; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand  
 years. The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years  
 should be finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and  
 holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: over these  
 the second death hath no authority, but they shall be priests of  
 God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. And  
 when the thousand years are finished, Satan shall be loosed out of  
 his prison, and shall come forth to deceive the nations which are  
 in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them  
 together to the war: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.  
 And they went up over the breadth of the earth, and compassed the  
 camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down  
 out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them  
 was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the  
 beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and  
 night for ever and ever (xx. 1-10).  
  
It is impossible within the limits of a commentary such as the present  
to discuss the different interpretations that have been given to a  
passage so difficult and so much controverted as the above. Nothing  
more can be attempted than to state briefly what seems to be the true  
meaning of the sacred writer, together with the grounds upon which the  
interpretation to be suggested rests.  
  
The fundamental principle of that interpretation, to be kept clearly  
and resolutely in view, is this: that \_the thousand years\_ mentioned  
in the passage express no period of time. They are not a figure for  
the whole Christian era, now extending to nearly nineteen hundred  
years. Nor do they denote a certain space of time, longer or shorter,  
it may be, than the definite number of years spoken of, at the close  
of the present dispensation, and to be in the view of some preceded,  
in the view of others followed, by the second Advent of our Lord. They  
embody an idea; and that idea, whether applied to the subjugation of  
Satan or to the triumph of the saints, is the idea of completeness or  
perfection. Satan is bound for a thousand years; that is, he is  
completely bound. The saints reign for a thousand years; that is, they  
are introduced into a state of perfect and glorious victory. Before  
endeavouring to bring out this thought more fully, several  
preliminary considerations may be noticed.  
  
1. Years may be understood in this sense. In Ezek. xxxix. 9 it is said  
that the inhabitants of the cities of Israel shall prevail against the  
enemies described, and "shall go forth, and shall make fires of the  
weapons and burn them, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and  
the arrows, and the hand-staves, and the spears, and they shall make  
fires of them seven years." No one can suppose that the "seven years"  
here spoken of are to be literally understood, or even that the length  
of time which would be needed to burn the weapons is the thought upon  
which the prophet dwells. His meaning, in correspondence with the use of  
the number seven, can only be that these weapons shall be destroyed with  
a great and complete destruction. Again, in the same chapter, at ver.  
12, after the defeat of "Gog and all his multitude," it is said, "And  
seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may  
cleanse the land." A literal interpretation is here not less impossible  
than in the case of the burning of the weapons; nor can the meaning be  
exhausted by the thought that a long time would be necessary for the  
burying. The number "seven" must have its due force assigned to it, and  
the prophet can only mean that the land should be thoroughly cleansed  
from heathen impurity. The use of the term "years" in the vision before  
us seems to be exactly similar; and the probability that it is so rises  
almost to certainty when we observe that, as proved by the vision of Gog  
and Magog in the subsequent part of the chapter, the prophecy of Ezekiel  
is before the Seer's eye, and that it constitutes the foundation upon  
which his whole delineation rests.  
  
The only difficulty connected with this view is that in the third verse  
of the chapter Satan is said to have been shut into the abyss \_until the  
thousand years should be finished\_, and that in the seventh verse we  
read, \_And when the thousand years are finished, Satan shall be loosed\_.  
But the difficulty is more specious than real. Let us familiarise  
ourselves with the thought that the thousand years may simply express  
completeness, thoroughness, either of defeat or victory; let us remember  
that the Seer had represented the defeat of Satan by the figure of being  
bound for a thousand years; finally, let us notice, as we have yet to  
see more fully, that Satan, although deprived of power over the  
righteous, is still to be the deceiver and ruler of the wicked: and it  
immediately follows that this latter thought could find no more  
appropriate form than in the statement that the deception took place,  
not "until," or "after," the thousand years should be finished. This is  
simply the carrying out of the symbolism already employed. To revert for  
a moment to the symbolism of Ezekiel, let us suppose that, after the  
prophet had described the burning of the weapons for "seven years," he  
had wished to mention also some other step by which the burning was to  
be followed. What more suitable words could he have used than that it  
took place either "after this," or "after the seven years were  
finished"? In point of fact, this is exactly what the prophet does. He  
has occasion to refer to further efforts made to secure the purity of  
the land; and the words employed by him are, "\_After the end of seven  
months\_ shall they search."[528] The one expression is no more than the  
natural consequence of the other.  
  
2. What is the meaning of the last words of the third verse of the  
chapter,--\_He\_ (\_i.e.\_, Satan) \_must be loosed for a little time\_?  
What is this "little time"? The words take us directly to that  
conception of the \_Christian age\_ which is so intimately interwoven  
with the structure of the Apocalypse, and even of the whole New  
Testament,--that it is all "a little time." This is particularly  
apparent in the application of the very same wo

rds to the souls under  
the altar in chap. vi. 11: "And it was said unto them, that they  
should rest yet for a little time, until their fellow-servants also  
and their brethren, which should be killed even as they were, should  
be fulfilled." The "little time" there is undeniably that extending  
from the moment of the vision to the close of the present  
dispensation. But, if it be so there, we are entitled to suppose that  
the very same expression, when used in the passage before us, will be  
used in the same sense; and that, when it is said Satan shall be  
loosed "for a little time," the meaning is that he shall be loosed for  
the whole Christian age. Again, in chap. xii. 12 we read, "The devil  
is gone down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a  
short time." The "short time" here referred to begins with the casting  
down of the devil out of heaven into the earth spoken of in the ninth  
verse of the same chapter. It must therefore include the whole period  
of his action in this world; and the manner in which that period is  
designated corresponds closely with the description of the time during  
which he is said, in chap. xx., to be loosed. Again, in chap. x. 6 the  
angel swears that there shall be "time" no longer, using the same word  
for time that we meet with in the verse now under consideration; so  
that it would appear as if to the author of the Apocalypse the word  
"time" were a kind of technical term by which he was accustomed to  
denote the period of the Church's probation in this world. Lastly,  
this conclusion is powerfully confirmed by the many passages of the  
Apocalypse in which it is clear that the Christian dispensation, from  
its beginning to its end, is looked upon as a "very little while," as  
hastening to its final issue, and as about to be closed by One who  
cometh quickly.[529] The "little time" therefore, of the present  
chapter during which Satan is loosed, and which, when more fully dwelt  
upon, is the time of the war spoken of in vers. 7-9, is the historical  
period of the Christian dispensation, during which Satan is permitted  
to deceive the nations and to lead them against the camp of the saints  
and the beloved city. It is, in short, the time between the first and  
second coming of our Lord. The period so often sought in the thousand  
years of ver. 2 is really to be found in the "little time" of ver. 3.  
  
3. Attention ought to be particularly directed to the condition of the  
saints during the thousand years spoken of. It is described in general  
terms as a \_first resurrection\_. Certain words of our Lord in the  
Gospel of St. John throw important light upon the meaning of this  
expression: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour cometh, and now  
is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they  
that have heard shall live,"[530] and, again, a little later in the  
same discourse, "Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all  
that are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come  
forth."[531] Let us compare these two verses with one another, and  
the presence of the clause "and now is" in the first, taken along with  
its omission in the second, leaves no doubt as to the principle on  
which they are to be interpreted. The first refers to a spiritual, the  
second to a bodily, resurrection. Here then in the words of our Lord  
Himself we have the source whence the idea of the "first resurrection"  
of the Apocalypse is derived. It is not an actual resurrection from  
the grave, although that resurrection is potentially involved in it.  
It is a spiritual resurrection in an hour "that now is;" and the fact  
that this is St. John's meaning is brought out still more clearly by  
the intimation that what he saw was \_souls\_, whose resurrection bodies  
had not yet been given them.[532]  
  
The condition of the saints thought of in this vision is described,  
however, not only generally, but in various particulars, all of which,  
it will be seen, correspond with the apocalyptic idea of it even in a  
present world. \_And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them.\_ But we  
have been already told that "they reign over the earth."[533]  
\_Judgment was given unto them\_, words which seem best understood in  
the sense, so peculiar to St. John, that for believers there is in the  
ordinary sense of the term no judgment. As they have passed through  
death, so also they have passed through judgment.[534] \_They lived  
with Christ.\_ But Christ Himself had said in the Gospel, "Because I  
live, and ye shall live."[535] \_They reigned with Christ.\_ But that is  
only another method of saying that they sat on thrones, with the  
added conception, so often associated with the word in the  
Apocalypse, that their enemies were bruised beneath their feet. \_Over  
these the second death hath no authority.\_ But we have before been  
told of "him that overcometh" that "he shall not be hurt of the second  
death."[536] Finally, \_they shall be priests of God and of Christ\_.  
But it is needless to dwell upon the fact that from the opening of  
this book such has always been spoken of as the position of believers.  
  
Nothing, in short, is said of the saints of God in this picture of  
millennial bliss that does not find a parallel in what the Seer has  
elsewhere written of their present life. On not a few different  
occasions their ideal condition in this world is set forth in as  
glowing terms as is their thousand years' glory and joy.  
  
One expression may indeed startle us. What the Seer beheld is said to  
have been \_the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony  
of Jesus, and for the word of God\_. Is the word "beheaded" to be  
literally understood? Then a very small number of martyrs can be  
thought of. The great majority of those who have died for the faith of  
Jesus have been martyred in other and more dreadful ways. The word is  
the counterpart of "slaughtered" in the vision of the souls under the  
altar.[537] These were the saints of the Old Testament, whose death is  
described by a term characteristic to the Jewish mind of the mode in  
which offerings were presented to God. When the Seer passes to the  
thought of the great Gentile Church, he uses a term more appropriate  
to the Gentile method of terminating human life. "Beheaded" therefore  
expresses the same thing as "slaughtered." Both words refer to  
martyrdom; and both include all faithful ones in the dispensations to  
which they respectively belong, for in the eyes of St. John all the  
disciples of a martyred Lord are martyrs.[538]  
  
4. The meaning of the doom inflicted upon Satan demands our notice.  
And the angel \_laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent, which is the  
devil, and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and cast him  
into the abyss, and shut it, and sealed it over him\_. It is hardly  
possible to read these words, at the same time remembering St. John's  
love of contrast or even travesty, and not to see in them a mocking  
counterpart of the death and burial of Jesus, when the stone was  
rolled to the door of the sepulchre and sealed. If so, it is not  
enough to say that by the infliction of this doom the power of Satan  
was restrained, and his influence lessened. Much more must be implied;  
and the language can only mean that, in one sense or another, Satan  
was rendered powerless and harmless, as unable to act his part as  
though he had been laid in the grave.  
  
5. The use of numbers in the Apocalypse ought to be remembered. These  
numbers are invariably symbolical; and, if the number a thousand is to  
be here interpreted literally, it seems in that respect to stand  
alone. Nor is it a reply to this to say that, though not in the strict  
sense literal, it may signify a period of \_indefinite\_ length. Such an  
interpretation would be not less opposed than the former to the genius  
and spirit of this book. The numbers of the Apocalypse have always a  
\_definite\_ meaning. They express ideas, but the ideas are distinct.  
They may belong to a region of thought different from that with which  
arithmetical numbers are concerned, but within that region we cannot  
change their value without at the same time changing the thought. We  
are not to imagine that numbers, in the allegorical or spiritual use  
made of them by the Jews, might be tossed about at their pleasure or  
shuffled like a pack of cards. They were a language; and the bond  
between them and the ideas that they involved was quite as close as it  
is between the words of ordinary speech and the speaker's thoughts. A  
thousand years cannot mean two, or ten, or twenty, or three hundred  
and sixty-five thousand years according as we please. If they are a  
measure of time, the measure must be fixed; and we ought to be able to  
explain the principle leading us to attach to the number one thousand  
a value different from that which it naturally possesses.  
  
6. The teaching of Scripture elsewhere upon this subject has to be  
considered. Upon this point it is unnecessary to say much, for the  
difference between that teaching and any view commonly taken of the  
thousand years' reign is acknowledged. It ought to be observed, however,  
that this difference is not merely negative, as if the rest of the New  
Testament simply failed to fill in certain details of events more  
largely described in the Apocalypse, but upon the whole substantially  
the same. The difference is also positive, and in some respects  
irreconcilable with what we are taught by the other sacred writers. The  
New Testament, unless this passage be an exception, always brings the  
\_Parousia\_ and the general judgment into the closest possible connexion.  
It nowhere interposes a lengthened period between the resurrection of  
believers and that of unbelievers. It knows only of one, and that a  
general, resurrection; and the passages, such as 1 Cor. xv. 23, 24, and  
1 Thess. iv. 16, 17, usually quoted to support another conclusion, fail  
when correctly interpreted to do so. When our Lord comes again, He at  
once perfects the happiness of His saints and makes all His enemies His  
footstool.[539] One text alone may be quoted upon this point. While the  
"first resurrection" is assigned to a date a thousand or even thousands  
of years before the end, it is several times repeated in the discourse  
of Jesus in the sixth chapter of St. John that the resurrection of  
believers takes place at the "last day."[540]  
  
7. One other consideration may be kept in view. It would appear that  
about the time of the Advent of our Lord there was a widely extended  
opinion among the Jews, traces of which are also to be found among the  
Gentiles, that a golden age of a thousand years' duration might be  
anticipated in the future as a happy close to all the sins and miseries  
of the world.[541] Here, it is sometimes urged, is the source of the  
apocalyptic figure of this chapter, which thus becomes only one of the  
wild chiliastic expectations of the time. But, even if it be allowed  
that St. John drew the particular figure employed by him from a general  
belief of his age, it by no means follows that he accepted the literal  
interpretation of that belief as the reality and substance of prophetic  
hope. In many a passage of his book he has undeniably spiritualised  
hopes of Israel founded on the language of the Old Testament in its  
outward form. He might easily do the same with what he recognised as a  
belief not less widely spread and not less deeply seated in both the  
Jewish and Gentile portions of the Church. To use the language of the  
late Archdeacon Lee, "a world-wide belief such as this naturally  
supplied St. John with symbols and with language wherein to clothe his  
revelation of the fortunes of the Church, just as he has employed for  
the same purpose the details of the theocracy, or the imagery of war, or  
the phenomena and the convulsions of nature."[542] In all such cases the  
determination of the point at issue really rests upon our view of the  
\_general\_ tone of the writing in which the difficulty occurs, and on our  
perception of what will give the unity and harmony to his words for  
which every intelligent writer is entitled to expect credit at his  
reader's hands. This conclusion is in the present instance strengthened  
by the fact that St. John did not confine himself to the traditional  
belief he is said to have adopted. So far from doing so, he occupies  
himself chiefly with a picture of that overthrow of Satan which seems to  
have been no part of the belief, and the mould of which is taken from  
entirely different sources.  
  
Putting together the different considerations now adduced, we can have  
but little difficulty in understanding either the binding of Satan or  
the reign of the saints for a thousand years. The vision describes no  
period of blessedness to be enjoyed by the Church at the close of the  
present dispensation. Alike negatively and positively we have simply an  
ideal picture of results effected by the Redeemer for His people, when  
for them He lived, and suffered, and died, and rose again. Thus He bound  
Satan for them; He cast him into the abyss; He shut him in; He sealed  
the abyss over him,--so that against \_them\_ he can effect nothing. He is  
a bruised and conquered foe. He may war against them, afflict them,  
persecute them, kill them, but their true life is beyond his reach.  
Already they live a resurrection and ascended life, for it is a life hid  
with Christ in God, a life in that "heaven" from which the devil has  
been finally and for ever expelled. They rest upon, they live in, a  
risen and glorified Redeemer; and, whatever be the age, or country, or  
circumstances in which their lot is cast, they sit with their Lord in  
the heavenly places and share His victory. He has been always  
triumphant, and in His triumph His people even now have part. The glory  
which the Father gave the Son the Son has given them.[543] They cannot  
sin, because they are begotten of God.[544] He that was begotten of God  
keepeth them, and the evil one toucheth them not.[545] This is the reign  
of a thousand years, and it is the portion of every believer who in any  
age of the Church shares the life of his risen and exalted Lord.  
  
Thus also we may comprehend what is meant by the loosing of Satan.  
There is no point in the future at which he is to be loosed. He has  
been already loosed. Hardly was he completely conquered for the saints  
before he was loosed for the world. He was loosed as a great adversary  
who, however he may persecute the children of God, cannot touch their  
inner life, and who can only "deceive the nations,"--the nations that  
have despised and rejected Christ. He has never been really absent  
from the earth. He has gone about continually, "knowing that he hath  
but a short time."[546] But he is unable to hurt those who are kept in  
the hollow of the Lord's hand. No doubt he tries it. That is the  
meaning of the description extending from the seventh to the ninth  
verse of this chapter,--the meaning of the war which Satan carries on  
against the camp of the saints and the beloved city when the thousand  
years are finished. In other words, no sooner was Satan, as regards  
the saints, completely bound than, as regards the world, he was  
loosed; and from that hour, through all the past history of  
Christianity, he has been stirring up the world against the Church. He  
has been summoning the nations that are in the four corners of the  
earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to the war. They war,  
but they do not conquer, until at last fire comes down out of heaven  
and devours them. \_The devil that deceived them is cast into the lake  
of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet;  
and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.\_  
  
The whole picture of the thousand years is in its main features--in  
the binding of Satan, in the security and blessedness of the  
righteous, and in the loosing of Satan for the war--a striking  
parallel to the scenes in chap. xii. of this book. There Michael and  
his angels contended with the devil and his angels; and the latter  
"prevailed not,"[547] but were cast out of heaven into the earth, so  
that the inhabitants of heaven are for ever safe from them. There the  
man-child who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, and from  
the thought of whom it is impossible to separate the thought of those  
who are one with Him, is caught up unto God and unto His throne.  
Finally, there also the dragon, though unable really to hurt the  
saints, "the rest of the woman's seed," makes war upon them, but  
without result. Of this scene the picture which we have been  
considering is at once a repetition and a fuller development; and,  
when we call to mind the peculiarities marking the structure of the  
Apocalypse, we seem in this fact alone to have no slight evidence of  
the correctness of the interpretation now proposed.[548]  
  
The three great enemies of the Church have not only been overcome,  
but judged, and for ever removed from all possibility of troubling  
the righteous more. But the great mass of the wicked have not yet  
been overtaken by a similar fate. The time has now come to show us in  
vision what awaits them also:--  
  
 And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat upon it, from  
 whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found  
 no place for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small,  
 standing before the throne; and books were opened: and another  
 book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were  
 judged out of the things which were written in the books,  
 according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were  
 in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them:  
 and they were judged every man according to their works. And death  
 and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second  
 death, even the lake of fire. And if any was not found written in  
 the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire (xx. 11-15).  
  
Upon various particulars mentioned in this passage it is unnecessary to  
say much. The \_throne\_ beheld by the Seer is \_great\_, at once in  
contrast with the "thrones" of the millennial reign, and as befitting  
the majesty of Him who sits upon it. It is also \_white\_, as emblematic  
of His purity and holiness. The Judge is God, the Father in the Son, the  
Son in the Father; and thus the judgment is searching and complete, and  
is answered by the consciences of those upon whom it is executed. They  
see that the Judge's eye penetrates into the most secret recesses of  
their hearts, and that He is One who has been in the same position, has  
fought the same battle, and has endured the same trials as themselves.  
Thus His sentence finds an echo in their hearts, and they are  
speechless.[549] Thus also judgment becomes really judgment, and not  
merely the infliction of punishment by resistless power.  
  
The effect of the Judge's taking His seat upon His throne was that  
\_from His face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found  
no place for them\_. Yet we are not to understand that after their  
flight there was neither an earth nor a heaven to be found. It is only  
the old earth and the old heaven that are spoken of; and almost  
immediately afterwards the Seer exclaims, "I saw a new heaven and a  
new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed  
away."[550] The change is part of that "restoration of all things" of  
which St. Peter spoke to the multitude gathered together in Solomon's  
porch,[551] of which he then added, "Whereof God spake by the mouth of  
His holy prophets which have been since the world began," and upon  
which he dwelt more fully in his second Epistle when he said, "But the  
day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall  
pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent  
heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up.  
But, according to His promise, we look for new heavens and a new  
earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."[552] In the Epistle to the  
Romans, too, "creation" longs, not for destruction, but for something  
akin to that "liberty of the glory of the chil

dren of God" which they  
shall obtain along with their "adoption, to wit, the redemption of  
their \_body\_."[553] In all these passages it is not the translation of  
God's saints to an immaterial sphere that lies at the bottom of the  
thought. It is rather the idea of change, of the transfiguration, of  
the glorification, of this present scene into a state corresponding  
with that of its redeemed inhabitants, when they shall "not be  
unclothed, but clothed upon,"[554] and shall dwell in "spiritual  
\_bodies\_."[555] To St. John "heaven" is not an abode of bliss in a  
scene of which we can form no clear conception, but the spiritual  
atmosphere in which, alike on this side the grave and on the other,  
the saints live and move. The "dwellers upon earth" are not those who  
simply tread its firm soil and breathe its atmosphere, but those who  
are worldly in their spirit and whose views are bounded by the things  
of time. The kingdom which Christ establishes is the "kingdom of this  
world" in its cleansed and purified condition rather than one to which  
we travel by long and unknown paths. As the Seer looks forward to the  
future there is nothing to show that he thinks of any other residence  
for man than that which the Son consecrated by His tomb in Joseph's  
garden and by the glory of the resurrection morning; and even the new  
Jerusalem comes down out of heaven to be established upon earth.  
  
Many may doubtless think that such a hope is too earthly, too  
material, to be suited to the spiritual nature of the Christian  
dispensation. They fear that it has a tendency to withdraw us from Him  
who is "spirit," and who must be worshipped, if He is to be worshipped  
acceptably, "in spirit and truth."[556] But any such apprehension is  
at variance with the fundamental fact of our Christian faith, the  
incarnation of our Lord, and is little less than the revival of the  
old Manichean heresy that matter is essentially evil. Two errors have  
existed, and may exist, in the Church upon this point. We may strip  
the Gospel of its spiritual element, and may reduce it to a system of  
outward and material forms, or we may strip it of its material  
element, and may resolve it into a vague and shadowy mysticism. Both  
are the errors of extremes, and it would be difficult to say which has  
wrought most havoc in the Church. If the one was disastrous in the  
days of the supremacy of Romanism, the other is hardly less disastrous  
now. To the false and spurious spiritualism which it engenders we owe  
not a few of the most serious misconceptions of the present time with  
regard to the person of Christ, the Church, the Sacraments, and the  
purpose of redemption as a whole.[557]  
  
To return to the main question in connexion with the passage before  
us. Does it present us with the picture of a general judgment or of a  
judgment of the wicked alone? There is much in the passage that leads  
distinctly to the latter conclusion.  
  
1. The whole vision is obviously an enlargement of what we have  
already met under the seventh Trumpet, when it was said that "the time  
of the dead to be judged came."[558] In both visions the persons  
spoken of as "the dead" must be the same; and they are clearly  
distinguished in the earlier vision from those called "Thy servants  
the prophets," the season of whose "reward" was come. With this  
corresponds the fact that in the writings of St. John the words "to  
judge" and "judgment" are always used, not in a neutral sense, but in  
one tending to condemnation. Without some qualifying term the Apostle  
could hardly have applied them to the acquittal of the righteous.  
  
2. The sources whence the "dead" are gathered confirm this conclusion.  
These are three in number: \_the sea\_, \_death\_, and \_Hades\_. Looking  
first at the two last of these, it is plain that "death" cannot in this  
connexion be the neutral grave, for it is "cast into the lake of fire,"  
where the devil, the beast, and the false prophet are. Similar remarks  
apply to "Hades," which in chap. vi. 8 is the coadjutor of death, and  
which in the New Testament always appears as a region of gloom, and  
punishment, and opposition to the truth: "And thou, Capernaum, shalt  
thou be exalted unto heaven? thou shalt go down unto Hades;" "And I also  
say unto thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My  
Church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."[559] If  
such be the sense in which we are to understand death and Hades, light  
is thrown upon the manner in which we are to interpret the first of the  
three sources,--"the sea." This cannot be the ocean, because the number  
of those to be given up from its depths at the last day is comparatively  
small; because, as the literal sea, it is in no way suitably associated  
with death and Hades; and because, when we read in chap. xxi. 1, "And  
the sea is no more," it is impossible to think that the word is used in  
any other than a figurative sense. No reason can be imagined why, when  
the earth is renewed, there should be no more that sea which is one  
grand instrument of its present greatness and glory. Besides all this,  
we have hitherto found that in the Apocalypse the "sea" is the emblem of  
the unruly and troubled nations of the earth, and the source from which  
the first beast of chap. xiii. had his origin. In the same sense  
therefore we must understand it here. Like "death" and "Hades," "the  
sea" spoken of can give up none but ungodly dead to the judgment of the  
great day.  
  
3. The "books" mentioned in the passage are clearly books containing  
the record of evil deeds alone. When it is said that "books" were  
opened, and that "another book was opened, which is the book of life,"  
the "books" are distinguished from the "book." It harmonizes with this  
that the book of life is not opened in order to secure deliverance for  
those whose names are inscribed in it, but only to justify the  
sentence passed on any who are cast into the lake of fire.  
  
4. The general teaching of St. John ought not to be lost sight of in  
considering this question. That teaching is that the eternal condition  
of the righteous is fully secured to them even in this life, and that  
in their glorified Head they have already passed through all those  
preparatory stages on their way to everlasting blessedness at the  
thought of which they might otherwise have trembled. In Him they have  
lived, and overcome, and died. In Him they have been raised from the  
dead, and been seated in the heavenly places. All along they have  
followed the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, and everything that befell  
Him has in principle befallen them. We cannot say, in the Johannine  
sense of the word, that Christ has been "judged;" and therefore  
"judgment" cannot be predicated of the members of His Body. To these  
last "judgment," we have already seen, "was given" at the time when  
they entered on their millennial reign; and, with the result of this  
judgment (for that is the true meaning of the original) in their  
hands, it is impossible to think of them as judged again.  
  
The judgment of these verses is therefore a judgment of the wicked;  
and, when it is closed, all Christ's enemies have not only been  
vanquished, but have been banished from the scene where He is to reign  
"before His ancients gloriously."[560] The first part of the final  
triumph has been accomplished.  
  
FOOTNOTES:  
  
[526] Chap. xix. 21.  
  
[527] Chap. xx. 9.  
  
[528] Ezek. xxxix. 14.  
  
[529] Chaps. i. 3, ii. 16, iii. 20, xxii. 20, etc.; 1 Cor. vii. 29;  
Heb. x. 37.  
  
[530] John v. 25.  
  
[531] John v. 28.  
  
[532] Comp. chap. vi. 9.  
  
[533] Chap. v. 10.  
  
[534] Comp. the teaching of our Lord in John xi. 25, 26, and v. 24.  
  
[535] John xiv. 19 (margin of R.V.).  
  
[536] Chap. ii. 11.  
  
[537] Chap. vi. 9.  
  
[538] Comp. p. 102.  
  
[539] Matt. xxv. 31-46; Rom. ii. 5, 7; 1 Thess. iv. 17; 2 Thess. i. 7,  
10.  
  
[540] John vi. 39, 40, 44.  
  
[541] See authorities in Lee (\_Speaker's Commentary\_) on Rev. xx. 2,  
and his excursus on that chapter.  
  
[542] \_Speaker's Commentary\_, \_u.s.\_  
  
[543] John xvii. 22.  
  
[544] 1 John iii. 9.  
  
[545] 1 John v. 18.  
  
[546] Chap. xii. 12.  
  
[547] Comp. the remarkable parallel in John i. 5: "and the darkness  
overcame it not."  
  
[548] It is not to be denied that difficulties attend the interpretation  
of the thousand years suggested in the text. The writer would advert in  
a note to the two which appear to him to be the most formidable.  
  
1. In ver. 3 we read that Satan was cast into the abyss, etc., "that  
he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years should  
be finished." Let it be granted that "the nations" here referred to  
can hardly be understood in any other sense than that common in the  
Apocalypse: the heathen, the ungodly, nations or the wicked in  
general. We then seem to read that there must be a time during which  
Satan does not "deceive the nations," while the explanation given  
above has been that he was no sooner subjugated for the righteous than  
he was let loose to deceive the unrighteous. In his \_Lectures on the  
Revelation of St. John\_ (p. 224, note) the author was disposed to  
plead that the words in question may not have been intended to  
indicate that action on Satan's part was for a time to cease, but  
rather to bring out and express that aspect of Satan by which he is  
specially distinguished in the Apocalypse. In deference to the  
criticism of the Rev. H. W. Reynolds (\_Remarks on Dr. Milligan's  
Interpretation of the Apocalypse\_, pp. 9, 27), he would yield this  
point. Notwithstanding the irregular constructions of the Apocalypse,  
it is at least precarious; and it is better to leave a difficulty  
unsolved, especially in a case where difficulties surround every  
interpretation yet offered, than to propose solutions of the  
sufficiency of which even the proposer is doubtful. It may be asked,  
however, without resorting to the conjecture formerly thrown out,  
whether the words "that he should deceive," even when taken in what is  
said to be their only true sense, are irreconcilable with the view of  
the thousand years advocated in this commentary. That view is that the  
subjugation of Satan for a thousand years means his complete  
subjugation. When, therefore, it is said that he has been so shut up  
as "to deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years should be  
finished," the meaning may simply be that in the \_act of being  
subjected\_ he was deprived alike of authority and opportunity to  
deceive the nations. It lay within the power of the Conqueror to grant  
or not to grant him fresh liberty to do so. The "strong man" was then  
bound, and "his goods were spoiled." He was completely subjected to  
Christ. When, therefore, we are told of the thousand years during  
which he was to deceive the nations no more, this language is only the  
continuation of the figure used in the second verse of the chapter;  
and what the Seer intends to express is, that during the process of  
his subjection, and until he should be again loosed by Him who had  
subjected him, he could do nothing. Satan, in short, must be  
\_permitted\_ to come up out of the abyss either in his own person or by  
his agents before he can disturb the earth (comp. chap. ix. 2); and it  
is the purpose of God that he shall not have power to disturb it  
until, having been really "brought to nought" by Christ (comp. Heb.  
ii. 14), he shall go forth to his evil work among the nations as one  
who, whatever may be the increase of his wrath (comp. chap. xii. 12),  
has yet been overcome by another far mightier than himself.  
  
2. The second difficulty demanding notice is presented by the words of  
ver. 5, "The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years  
should be finished." Who are these called "the rest of the dead," and  
in what sense did they "live"? The term "the rest," applied to  
persons, occurs in the following passages of the Apocalypse in  
addition to that before us: chaps. ii. 24, ix. 20, xi. 13, xii. 17,  
xix. 21. In every one of these cases it refers to the remaining  
portion of a class mentioned, but not exhausted; and it cannot be  
extended to any class beyond them. Here, however, no class has been  
spoken of except \_the righteous\_, or rather the "souls" of the  
righteous, described by various particulars both of their character  
and their state. "The rest" of the dead must therefore belong to that  
class, and to it alone. They cannot be the general body of mankind,  
both good and bad, with the exception of those previously mentioned.  
Again, what is meant when it is said that the rest of the dead  
"lived"? The same word had occurred in the immediately preceding  
verse, and it must now be understood in the same sense. "If," says  
Dean Alford, who has been quoted with great confidence against the  
present writer (Reynolds, \_u.s.\_, p. 23), "in 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" (on Rev. xx. 4-6). Now that is exactly what is  
here maintained. The "lived" of ver. 4 is spiritual; the "lived" of  
ver. 5 is also spiritual. The "rest of the dead" then are the Old  
Testament saints of chap. vi. 9, who, by the completion of the Lord's  
redeeming work, were brought up to the level of the New Testament  
Church (comp. p. 101). The meaning of chap. xx. 5 may thus be said to  
be that, the New Testament Church having had \_first\_ bestowed upon it  
a complete redemption, the same white robes were afterwards given to  
the Old Testament Church, the succession being again one of thought  
rather than time. In this way \_all\_ the members of Christ's body are  
marked out as having been "dead" before they lived, thus identifying  
them with their Lord in chap. i. 18; the position of the words at the  
close of ver. 5, "this is the first resurrection," is rendered more  
natural by their thus following what is wholly a description of the  
condition of the blessed, instead of having a sentence interposed of  
an entirely different character; and, finally, to say nothing of the  
contextual considerations already referred to, the full Johannine  
force of the word "lived" is preserved.  
  
These answers to the two chief difficulties associated with the  
interpretation here suggested of the thousand years may not be  
satisfactory to all; but it is submitted that they go far at least to  
meet them, and that in themselves they are neither unfair nor  
strained. Against one thing only must the author of this commentary  
enter his most decided protest,--the allegation that the  
interpretation here offered is gained by dispensing with textual  
criticism (?) and by sacrificing grammar to an idea. If there be one  
ground more than another upon which it rests, it is upon the strictest  
principles of historical interpretation. It ought only to be  
remembered that the idiosyncrasies of an author are as much a part of  
such interpretation as the literal meaning of his words; and that to  
that interpretation, if honestly and thoroughly conducted, the most  
deeply ingrained prejudices will in due time be compelled to submit.  
  
[549] Comp. Matt. xxii. 12.  
  
[550] Chap. xxi. 1.  
  
[551] Acts iii. 21.  
  
[552] 2 Pet. iii. 10, 13.  
  
[553] Rom. viii. 21-23.  
  
[554] 2 Cor. v. 4.  
  
[555] Comp. 1 Cor. xv. 44.  
  
[556] John iv. 24.  
  
[557] In connexion with the point here spoken of, reference may be  
made to an interesting and instructive paper by Canon Dale Stewart,  
Rector of Coulsdon, in \_The Churchman\_ for December, 1887.  
  
[558] Chap. xi. 18.  
  
[559] Matt. xi. 23, xvi. 18.  
  
[560] Isa. xxiv. 23.  
  
  
  
  
 CHAPTER XVII.  
  
 \_THE NEW JERUSALEM.\_  
  
 REV. xxi. 1-xxii. 5.  
  
  
The first part of the final triumph of the Lamb has been accomplished,  
but the second has still to be unfolded. We are introduced to it by  
one of those preparatory or transition passages which have already  
frequently met us in the Apocalypse, and which connect themselves both  
with what precedes and with what follows:--  
  
 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and  
 the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more. And I saw  
 the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,  
 made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great  
 voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is  
 with men, and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His  
 peoples, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God: and  
 He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be  
 no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any  
 more: the first things are passed away. And He that sitteth on the  
 throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And He saith, Write:  
 for these words are faithful and true. And He said unto me, They  
 are come to pass. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and  
 the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of  
 the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit these  
 things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son. But for the  
 fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and  
 fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their  
 part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone:  
 which is the second death (xxi. 1-8).  
  
These words, like many others that have already met us, throw light  
upon the principles on which the Apocalypse is composed. They show in  
the clearest possible manner that down to the very end of the book  
chronological considerations must be put out of view. Chronology  
cannot be thought of when we find, on the one hand, allusions to the  
new Jerusalem which are only amplified and extended in the next vision  
of the chapter, or when we find, on the other hand, a description of  
the exclusion from the new Jerusalem of certain classes that have  
already been consigned to "the second death." By the first-mentioned  
allusions the passage connects itself with what is yet to come, by the  
second with what has gone before. For the same reason it is  
unnecessary to dwell upon the passage at any length. It contains  
either nothing new, or nothing that will not again meet us in greater  
fulness of detail. One or two brief remarks alone seem called for.  
  
The Seer beholds \_a new heaven and a new earth\_. Two words in the New  
Testament are translated "new," but there is a difference between  
them. The one contemplates the object spoken of under the aspect of  
something that has been recently brought into existence, the other  
under a fresh aspect given to what had previously existed, but been  
outworn.[561] The latter word is employed here, as it is also employed  
in the phrases a "new garment," that is, a garment not threadbare,  
like an old one; "new wine-skins," that is, skins not shrivelled and  
dried; a "new tomb," that is, not one recently hewn out of the rock,  
but one which had never been used as the last resting-place of the  
dead. The fact, therefore, that the heavens and the earth here spoken  
of are "new," does not imply that they are now first brought into  
being. They may be the old heavens and the old earth; but they have a  
new aspect, a new character, adapted to a new end. Of the sense in  
which the word "sea" is to be understood we have already spoken.[562]  
Another expression in the passage deserves notice. In saying that the  
time is come when \_the tabernacle of the Lord is with men, and He  
shall dwell with them\_, it is added, \_and they shall be His peoples\_.  
We are familiar with the Scripture use of the word "people" to denote  
the true Israel of God, and not less with the use of the word  
"peoples" to denote the nations of the earth alienated from Him. But  
here the word "peoples" is used instead of "people" for God's  
children; and the usage can only spring from this: that the Seer has  
entirely abandoned the idea that Israel accordi

ng to the flesh can  
have the word "people" applied to it, and that all believers, to  
whatever race they belong, occupy the same ground in Christ, and are  
possessed of the same privileges. The "peoples" are the counterpart of  
the "many diadems" of chap. xix. 12.  
  
 And there came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls,  
 who were laden with the seven last plagues; and he spake with me,  
 saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the wife of the  
 Lamb. And he carried me away in the spirit to a mountain great and  
 high, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of  
 heaven from God, having the glory of God: her light was like unto  
 a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone, clear as  
 crystal, having a wall great and high, having twelve gates, and at  
 the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the  
 names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. On the east  
 were three gates, and on the north three gates, and on the south  
 three gates, and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city  
 had twelve foundations, and on them twelve names of the twelve  
 apostles of the Lamb. And he that spake with me had for a measure  
 a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the  
 wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length  
 thereof is as great as the breadth: and he measured the city with  
 the reed, twelve thousand furlongs: the length and the breadth and  
 the height thereof are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, a  
 hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a  
 man, that is, of an angel. And the building of the wall thereof  
 was jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto pure glass. The  
 foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner  
 of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second,  
 sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth,  
 sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth,  
 beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh,  
 jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve  
 pearls; each one of the several gates was of one pearl: and the  
 street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.  
 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God the Almighty, is the  
 temple thereof, and the Lamb. And the city hath no need of the  
 sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it: for the glory of God  
 did lighten it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb. And the nations  
 shall walk amidst the light thereof: and the kings of the earth do  
 bring their glory into it. And the gates thereof shall in no wise  
 be shut by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall  
 bring the glory and the honour of the nations into it. And there  
 shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that maketh  
 an abomination and a lie: but only they which are written in the  
 Lamb's book of life. And he showed me a river of water of life,  
 bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the  
 Lamb, in the midst of the street thereof. And on this side of the  
 river and on that was the tree of life, bearing twelve manner of  
 fruits, yielding its fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree  
 were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no curse  
 any more: and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein;  
 and His servants shall do Him service: and they shall see His  
 face; and His name shall be on their foreheads. And there shall be  
 night no more; and they need no light of lamp, neither light of  
 sun; for the Lord God shall give them light: and they shall reign  
 for ever and ever (xxi. 9-xxii. 5).  
  
The vision contained in these verses is shown the Seer by the angel  
forming the third of the second group associated with Him who had  
been described at chap. xix. 11 as the Rider upon the white horse, and  
who at that time rode forth to His final triumph. The first of this  
group of three had appeared at chap. xix. 17, and the second at chap.  
xx. 1. We have now the third; and it is not unimportant to observe  
this, for it helps to throw light upon the artificial structure of  
these chapters, while, at the same time, it connects the vision with  
Christ's victory upon earth rather than with any scene of splendour  
and glory in a region beyond the place of man's present abode. Thus it  
contributes something at least to the belief that there where the  
believer wars he also wears the crown of triumph.  
  
The substance of the vision is a description of the holy city, the new  
Jerusalem, the true Church of God wholly separated from the false  
Church, as she comes down from God, out of heaven, prepared as a bride  
adorned for her husband. Her marriage with the Lamb has taken  
place,--a marriage in which there shall be no unfaithfulness on the  
one side and no reproaches on the other, but in which, as the  
bridegroom rejoices over the bride, the Lord shall for ever rejoice in  
His people, and His people in Him. Then follows, to enhance the  
picture, a detailed account of the true Church under the figure of the  
city which had been already spoken of in the first vision of the  
chapter. The treasures of the Seer's imagination and language are  
exhausted in order that the thought of her beauty and her splendour  
may be suitably impressed upon our minds. Her \_light\_--that is, the  
light which she spreads abroad, for the word used in the original  
indicates that she is herself the luminary--is like that of the sun,  
only that it is of crystalline clearness and purity, \_as it were a  
jasper stone\_, the light of Him who sat upon the throne.[563] She is  
"the light of the world."[564] The city is also surrounded by \_a wall  
great and high\_. She is "a strong city." "Salvation has God appointed  
her for walls and bulwarks."[565] Her walls have \_twelve gates\_, and  
\_at the gates twelve angels\_, those to whom God gives charge over His  
people, to keep them in all their ways[566]; while, as was the case  
with the new Jerusalem beheld by the prophet Ezekiel, \_names were  
written on the gates, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the  
children of Israel\_.[567] These gates are also harmoniously  
distributed, three on each side of the square which the city forms.  
The \_foundations of the city\_, a term under which we are not to think  
of foundations buried in the earth, but rather of courses of stones  
going round the city and rising one above another, are also \_twelve\_;  
and on them are \_twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb\_.  
  
The Seer, however, is not satisfied with this general picture of the  
greatness of the new Jerusalem. Like that in Ezekiel, the city must be  
measured.[568] When this is done, her proportions are found, in spite  
of the absence of all verisimilitude, to be those of a perfect cube.  
As in the Holy of holies of the Tabernacle, the thought of which lies  
at the bottom of the description, \_the length and the breadth and the  
height thereof are equal\_. \_Twelve thousand furlongs\_, or fifteen  
hundred miles, the city stretches along and across the plain, and  
rises into the sky,--twelve, the number of the people of God,  
multiplied by thousands, the heavenly number. The wall is also  
measured--it is difficult to say whether in height or in thickness,  
but most probably the latter--\_a hundred and forty and four cubits\_,  
or twelve multiplied by twelve.  
  
The measuring is completed, and next follows an account of the material  
of which the city was composed. This was gold, the most precious metal,  
in its purest state, \_like unto pure glass\_. \_Precious stones\_ formed,  
rather than ornamented, its twelve foundations. Its gates were of pearl:  
\_each one of the several gates was of one pearl; and the street of the  
city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass\_. In all these respects  
it is evident that the city is thought of as ideally perfect, and not  
according to the realities or possibilities of things.  
  
Nor is this all. The glory of the city is still further illustrated by  
figures bearing more immediately upon its spiritual rather than its  
material aspect. The outward helps needed by men in leading the life  
of God in their present state of imperfection are dispensed with.  
There is \_no temple therein: for the Lord, God, the Almighty, is the  
temple thereof, and the Lamb. The city hath no need of the sun,  
neither of the moon, to shine upon it: for the glory of God lightens\_  
it by day, \_and the lamp thereof\_ by night \_is the Lamb\_. There is in  
it no sin, and every positive element of happiness is provided in  
abundance for the blest inhabitants. \_A river of water of life, bright  
as crystal\_, flows there; \_and on this side of the river and on that  
side is the tree of life\_, not bearing fruit only once a year, but  
\_every month\_, not yielding one only, but \_twelve manner of fruits\_,  
so that all tastes may be gratified, having nothing about it useless  
or liable to decay. The very \_leaves of the tree were for the healing  
of the nations\_, and it is evidently implied that they are always  
green. Finally, \_there shall be no curse any more. The throne of God  
and of the Lamb is therein. His servants do Him service. They see His  
face. His name is in their foreheads.\_ They are priests unto God in  
the service of the heavenly sanctuary. \_They reign for ever and ever.\_  
  
One important question still remains: What aspect of the Church does the  
holy city Jerusalem, thus come down out of heaven from God, represent?  
Is it the Church as she shall be after the Judgment, when her three  
great enemies, together with all who have listened to them, have been  
for ever cast out? Or have we before us an ideal representation of the  
true Church of Christ as she exists now, and before a final separation  
has been made between the righteous and the wicked? Unquestionably the  
first aspect of the passage leads to the former view; and, if there be  
anything like a chronological statement of events in the Apocalypse, no  
other may be possible. But we have already seen that the thought of  
chronology must be banished from this book. The Apocalypse contains  
simply a series of visions intended to exhibit, with all the force of  
that inspiration under which the Seer wrote, certain great truths  
connected with the revelation in humanity of the Eternal Son. It is  
intended, too, to exhibit these in their ideal, and not merely in their  
historical, form. They are indeed to appear in history; but, inasmuch as  
they do not appear there in their ultimate and completed form, we are  
taken beyond the limited field of historical manifestation. We see them  
in their real and essential nature, and as they \_are\_, in themselves,  
whether we think of evil on the one hand, or of good on the other. In  
this treatment of them, however, chronology disappears. Such being the  
case, we are prepared to ask whether the vision of the new Jerusalem  
belongs to the end, or whether it expresses what, under the Christian  
dispensation, is always ideally true.  
  
1. It must be borne in mind that the new Jerusalem, though described  
as a city, is really a figure, not of a place, but of a people. It is  
not the final home of the redeemed. It is the redeemed themselves. It  
is "the bride, the wife of the Lamb."[569] Whatever is said of it is  
said of the true followers of Jesus; and the great question,  
therefore, that has to be considered is, whether St. John's  
description is applicable to them in their present Christian  
condition, or whether it is suitable to them only when they have  
entered upon their state of glorification beyond the grave.  
  
2. The vision is really an echo of Old Testament prophecy. We have  
already seen this in many particulars, and the correspondence might  
easily have been traced in many more. "It is all," says Isaac  
Williams, as he begins his comment upon the particular points of the  
description--"It is all from Ezekiel: 'The hand of the Lord was upon  
me, and brought me in the visions of God, and set me upon a very high  
mountain, by which was as the frame of a city;'[570] 'And the glory of  
the Lord came into the house by the gate toward the east;'[571] The  
Lord entered by the eastern gate; therefore shall it be shut, and  
opened for none but for the Prince.[572] Such was the coming of  
Christ's glory from the east into His Church, as so often alluded to  
before."[573] Other prophets, no doubt, who prophesied of the grace  
that should come unto us, who testified beforehand of the sufferings  
of Christ and the glories that should follow, are to be added to  
Ezekiel, but, whoever they were, it is undeniable that their highest  
and most glowing representations of that future for which they  
longed, and the advent of which they were commissioned to proclaim,  
are reproduced in St. John's description of the new Jerusalem. Of what  
was it, then, that they spoke? Surely it was of the times of the  
Messiah upon earth, of that kingdom of God which He was to establish  
with the beginning, and not with the end, of the Christian  
dispensation. That they may have looked forward to the world beyond  
the grave is possible; but any distinction between the first and  
second coming of our Lord had not yet risen upon their minds. In the  
simple coming of the Hope of Israel into the world they beheld the  
accomplishment of every aspiration and longing of the heart of man.  
And they were right. The distinction which experience taught the New  
Testament writers to draw was not so much between a first and a second  
coming of the King as between a kingdom then \_hidden\_, but afterwards  
\_to be manifested\_ in all its glory.  
  
3. This ideal view of the Messianic age is also constantly brought  
before us in the New Testament. The character, the privileges, and the  
blessings of those who are partakers of the spirit of that time are  
always presented to us as irradiated with a heavenly and perfect glory.  
St. Paul addresses the various churches to which he wrote as,  
notwithstanding all their imperfections, "beloved of God," "sanctified  
in Christ Jesus," "saints and faithful brethren in Christ."[574] Christ  
is "in them," and they are "in Christ."[575] "Christ loved the Church,  
and gave Himself up for it; that He might present the Church to Himself  
a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but  
that it should be holy and without blemish,"[576]--the description  
evidently applying to the present world, where also the Church is  
seated, not in earthly, but in "the heavenly, places" with her  
Lord.[577] Our "citizenship" is declared to be "in heaven;"[578] and we  
are even now "come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God,  
the heavenly Jerusalem, to innumerable hosts of angels, and to the  
general assembly and Church of the first-born, who are enrolled in  
heaven."[579] Our Lord Himself and St. John, following in His steps, are  
even more specific as to the present kingdom and the present glory. "In  
that day," says Jesus to His disciples, "ye shall know that I am in My  
Father, and ye in Me, and I in you,"[580] and again, "And the glory  
which Thou hast given Me I have given unto them; that they may be one,  
even as We are one;"[581] while it is unnecessary to quote the passages  
meeting us everywhere in the writings of the beloved disciple in which  
he speaks of eternal life, and that, too, in the full greatness both of  
its privileges and of its results, as a possession enjoyed by the  
believer in this present world. The whole witness of the New Testament,  
in short, is to an ideal, to a perfect, kingdom of God even now  
established among men, in which sin is conquered, temptation overcome,  
strength substituted for weakness, death so deprived of its sting that  
it is no more death, and the Christian, though for a little put to grief  
in manifold temptations, made "to rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable  
and glorified."[582] From all this the representation of the new  
Jerusalem in the Apocalypse differs in no essential respect. It enters  
more into particulars. It illustrates the general thought by a greater  
variety of detail. But it contains nothing which is not found in  
principle in the other sacred writers, and which is not connected by  
them with the heavenly aspect of the Christian's pilgrimage to his  
eternal home.  
  
4. There are distinct indications in the apocalyptic vision which  
leave no interpretation possible except one,--that the new Jerusalem  
has come, that it has been in the midst of us for more than eighteen  
hundred years, that it is now in the midst of us, and that it shall  
continue to be so wherever its King has those who love and serve Him,  
walk in His light, and share His peace and joy.  
  
(1) Let us look at chap. xx. 9, where we read of "the camp of the  
saints and the beloved city." That city is none other than the new  
Jerusalem, about to be described in the following chapter. It is  
Jerusalem after the elements of the harlot character have been wholly  
expelled, and the call of chap. xviii. 4 has been heard and obeyed,  
"Come forth, My people, out of her." She is inhabited now by none but  
"saints," who, though they have still to war with the world, are  
themselves the "called, and chosen, and faithful." But this "beloved  
city" is spoken of as in the world, and as the object of attack by  
Satan and his hosts before the Judgment.[583]  
  
(2) Let us look at chap. xxi. 24 and xxii. 2: "And the nations shall  
walk by the light thereof; and the kings of the earth do bring their  
glory into it;" "And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of  
the nations." Who are these "nations" and these "kings of the earth"?  
The constant use of the same expressions in other parts of this book,  
where there can be no doubt as to their meaning, compels us to  
understand them of nations and kings beyond the pale of the covenant.  
But if so, the difficulty of realizing the situation at a point of  
time beyond the Judgment appears to be insuperable, and may be well  
illustrated by the effort of Hengstenberg to overcome it. "Nations,"  
says that commentator, "in the usage of the Revelation, are not  
nations generally, but always \_heathen\_ nations in their natural or  
christianized state; compare at chap. xx. 3. That we are to think here  
only of \_converted\_ heathen is as clear as day. No room for conversion  
can be found on the further side of chap. xx. 15, for every one who  
had not been found written in the book of life has already been cast  
into the lake of fire."[584] But the words "or christianized" in this  
comment have no countenance from any other passage in the Apocalypse,  
and in Hengstenberg's note at chap. xx. 3 we are referred to nothing  
but the texts before us. On every other occasion, too, where the word  
"nations" meets us, it means unconverted, not converted, nations; and  
here it can mean nothing else. Were the nations spoken of converted,  
they would be a part of that new Jerusalem which is not the residence  
of God's people, but His people themselves. They would be the light,  
and not such as walk "by the light" of others. They would be the  
healed, and not those who stand in need of "healing." These "nations"  
must be the unconverted, these "kings of the earth" such as have not  
yet acknowledged Jesus to be their King; and nothing of this can be  
found beyond chap. xx. 15.  
  
(3) Let us look at chap. xxi. 27, where we read, "And there shall in  
no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that doeth an  
abomination and a lie." These words distinctly intimate that the time  
for final separation had not yet come. Persons of the wicked character  
described must be supposed to be alive upon the earth after the new  
Jerusalem has appeared.  
  
5. Another consideration on the point under discussion may be noticed,  
which will have weight with those who admit the existence of that  
principle of structure in St. John's writings upon which it rests.  
Alike in the Gospel and in the Apocalypse the Apostle is marked by a  
tendency to return at the close of a

section to what he had said at  
the beginning, and to shut up, as it were, between the two statements  
all he had to say. So here. In chap. i. 3 he introduces his Apocalypse  
with the words, "For the time is at hand." In chap. xxii. 10,  
immediately after closing it, he returns to the thought, "Seal not up  
the words of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand;" that  
is, the whole intervening revelation is enclosed between these two  
statements. All of it precedes the "time" spoken of. The new Jerusalem  
comes before the end.  
  
In the new Jerusalem, therefore, we have essentially a picture, not of  
the future, but of the present; of the ideal condition of Christ's true  
people, of His "little flock" on earth, in every age. The picture may  
not yet be realized in fulness; but every blessing lined in upon its  
canvas is in principle the believer's now, and will be more and more his  
in actual experience as he opens his eyes to see and his heart to  
receive. We have been wrong in transferring the picture of the new  
Jerusalem to the future alone. It belongs also to the past and to the  
present. It is the heritage of the children of God at the very time when  
they are struggling with the world; and the thought of it ought to  
stimulate them to exertion and to console them under suffering.  
  
FOOTNOTES:  
  
[561] Trench, \_Synonyms\_, second series, p. 39.  
  
[562] Comp. pp. 227, 357.  
  
[563] Chap. iv. 3.  
  
[564] Matt. v. 14.  
  
[565] Ps. xxxi. 21; Isa. xxvi. 1.  
  
[566] Ps. xci. 11.  
  
[567] Comp. Ezek. xlviii. 31.  
  
[568] Comp. Ezek. xl. 2, 3.  
  
[569] Chap. xxi. 9.  
  
[570] Ezek. xl. 1, 2.  
  
[571] Ezek. xliii. 2.  
  
[572] Ezek. xliv. 1-3.  
  
[573] \_The Apocalypse\_, p. 438.  
  
[574] Rom. i. 7; 1 Cor. i. 2; Col. i. 2.  
  
[575] Col. i. 27; 1 Cor. i. 30; Phil. iii. 9.  
  
[576] Eph. v. 25-27.  
  
[577] Eph. i. 3.  
  
[578] Phil. iii. 20.  
  
[579] Heb. xii. 22, 23.  
  
[580] John xiv. 20.  
  
[581] John xvii. 22.  
  
[582] 1 Pet. i. 8.  
  
[583] Comp. Foxley, \_Hulsean Lectures\_, Lect. i.  
  
[584] Commentary in \_Clark's Foreign Theological Library\_, \_in loc.\_  
  
  
  
  
 CHAPTER XVIII.  
  
 \_THE EPILOGUE.\_  
  
 REV. xxii. 6-21.  
  
  
The visions of the Seer have closed, and closed with a picture of the  
final and complete triumph of the Church over all her enemies. No more  
glorious representation of what her Lord has done for her could be set  
before us than that contained in the description of the new Jerusalem.  
Nothing further can be said when we know that in the garden of  
Paradise Restored into which she is introduced, in the Holy of holies  
of the Divine Tabernacle planted in the world, she shall eat of the  
fruit of the tree of life, drink of the water of life, and reign for  
ever and ever. Surely as these visions passed before the eye of St.  
John in the lonely isle of Patmos he would be gladdened with the light  
of heaven, and would need no more to strengthen him in the kingdom and  
patience of Jesus Christ. Was it not too much? The Epilogue of the  
book assures us that it was not; and that, although the natural eye of  
man had not seen, nor his ear heard, nor his heart conceived the  
things that had been spoken of, they had been revealed by the Spirit  
of God Himself, not one word of whose promises would fail.  
  
 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 unto His servants the things which must shortly come to pass.  
 And, behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the words  
 of the prophecy of this book.  
  
 And I John am he that heard and saw these things. And when I heard  
 and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which  
 showed me these things. And he saith unto me, See thou do it not:  
 I am a fellow-servant with thee, and with thy brethren the  
 prophets, and with them which keep the words of this book: worship  
 God (xxii. 6-9).  
  
Attention has been already called in this commentary both to that  
characteristic of St. John's style as a writer which leads him, at a  
longer or a shorter interval, to the point from which he started, and  
to the fact that light is thus frequently thrown on the interpretation  
of what he says.[585] Every illustration of such a point is therefore  
not only interesting, but important; and in the words before us it is  
illustrated with more than ordinary clearness.  
  
The person introduced with the words \_He said unto me\_ is not indeed  
named, but there can be little doubt that he is the angel spoken of in  
the Prologue as sent to "signify" the revelation that was to  
follow.[586]  
  
Again, when the Seer is overwhelmed with what he has seen, and may be  
said to have almost feared that it was too wonderful for belief, the  
angel assures him that it was all \_faithful and true\_. A similar  
declaration had been made at chap. xix. 9 by the voice which there  
"came forth from the throne,"[587] and likewise at chap. xxi. 5 by Him  
"that sitteth on the throne." The angel therefore who now speaks, like  
the angel of the Prologue, has the authority of this Divine Being for  
what he says. It is true that in the following words, which seem to  
come from the same speaker, the angel must thus be understood to refer  
to himself in the third person, and not, as we might have expected, in  
the first,--\_The Lord sent His angel\_, not The Lord sent me. But, to  
say nothing of the fact that such a method of address is met with in  
the prophetic style of the Old Testament, it appears to be  
characteristic of St. John in other passages of his writings. More  
particularly we mark it in the narrative in the fourth Gospel of the  
death of Jesus on the Cross: "And he that hath seen hath borne  
witness, and his witness is true: and he knoweth that he saith true,  
that ye may believe."[588]  
  
Again, we read here that \_the Lord sent His angel to show unto His  
servants the things which must shortly come to pass\_; and the  
statement is the same as that of chap. i. 1.  
  
The next words, \_And, behold, I come quickly\_, are probably words of  
our Lord Himself; but the blessing upon him \_that keepeth the words of  
the prophecy of this book\_ again leads the Seer back to the Prologue,  
where a similar blessing is pronounced.[589]  
  
Again, the remembrance of the Prologue is in the Apostle's mind when,  
naming himself, he proceeds, \_I John am he that heard and saw these  
things\_. In precisely the same manner, after the introductory verses  
of the Prologue, he had named himself as the writer of the book: "John  
to the seven Churches;" "I John, your brother."[590] Then he was about  
to write; now that he has written, he is the same John whom the  
Church knew and honoured, and whose consciousness of everything that  
had passed was undimmed and perfect. This going back upon the Prologue  
is also sufficient to prove, if proof be thought necessary, that the  
words "these things" are designed to include, not merely the vision of  
the new Jerusalem, but all the visions of the book.  
  
That the Seer should have fallen down to \_worship before the feet of  
the angel which showed him these things\_ has often caused surprise. He  
had already done so on a previous occasion,[591] and had been reproved  
in words almost exactly similar to those in which he is now addressed:  
\_See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee, and with thy  
brethren the prophets, and with them which keep the words of this  
book: worship God.\_ How could he so soon forget the warning? We need  
not wonder. The thought of the one vision preceding his former mistake  
might easily be swallowed up by the thought of the whole revelation of  
which it was a part; and, as the splendour of all that he had  
witnessed passed once more before his view, he might imagine that the  
angel by whom it was communicated must be worthy of his worship. His  
mistake was corrected as before.  
  
The prophecy is now in the Seer's hands, ideally, though not actually,  
written. He may easily speak of it, therefore, as written, and may  
relate the instructions which he received regarding it. He does this,  
and again it will be seen how closely he follows the lines of his  
Prologue:--  
  
 And he saith unto me, Seal not up the words of the prophecy of  
 this book: for the time is at hand. He that is unrighteous, let  
 him do unrighteousness still: and he that is filthy, let him be  
 made filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him do  
 righteousness still: and he that is holy, let him be made holy  
 still. Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to render  
 to each man according as his work is. I am the Alpha and the  
 Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Blessed  
 are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right to  
 come to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the  
 city. Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the  
 fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one  
 that loveth and maketh a lie (xxii. 10-15).  
  
To the prophet Daniel it had been said, "But thou, O Daniel, shut up  
the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end."[592] The  
hour had not yet come for the full manifestation of that momentous  
future upon which he had been commissioned to dwell. The situation of  
St. John was wholly different, and the hour for winding up the history  
of this dispensation was about to strike. It was not a time then for  
sealing up, but for breaking seals, a time for prophecy, for the  
loudest, clearest, and most urgent proclamation of the truth. "Behold,  
I come quickly," had been a moment before the voice of the great  
Judge. Let the bride for whom He is to come be ready; and, that she  
may the more promptly be so, let her hear with earnest and immediate  
attention \_the words of the prophecy of this book\_.  
  
It is by no means easy to say whether the following words, \_He that is  
unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still: and he that is filthy,  
let him be made filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him do  
righteousness still: and he that is holy, let him be made holy still\_,  
are to be considered as coming from the Apostle or from the angel who  
has been speaking to him. This difficulty is the same as that  
experienced in the fourth Gospel at such passages as chap. iii. 16 and  
31, where it is nearly impossible to tell the point at which in the one  
case the words of Jesus, at which in the other the words of the Baptist,  
end. It would appear as if St. John so sank himself in the person with  
whom he was occupied at the time that he often gave utterance to  
thoughts without being able to distinguish between the other's and his  
own. In the present instance it matters little to whom we directly refer  
the words, whether to St. John, or to the angel, or to Him who speaks by  
the angel. In any case they contain a striking and solemn view of the  
relation between the righteous Judge and His creatures, when that  
relation is looked at in its ultimate, in its final, form. One thing is  
clear: that the first two clauses cannot be regarded as a summons to the  
wicked telling them before the Judgment to go on in their wickedness  
even while the period of their probation lasts. Nor can the second two  
clauses be regarded as an assurance to the good that there is a point in  
the actual experience of life at which their perseverance in goodness is  
secured. The words can only be understood in the light of that idealism  
which is so characteristic alike of the Apocalypse and of the fourth  
Gospel. In both books the world of mankind is presented to us in exactly  
the same light. Men are divided into two great classes: those who are  
prepared to receive the truth and those who are obstinately opposed to  
it; and these classes are spoken of as if they had been formed, not  
merely after, but before, the work of Christ had tried and proved them.  
Not indeed that the salvation to be found in Jesus was not designed to  
be universal, that there was even one member of the human family doomed  
by eternal and irresistible decree to everlasting death, nor, again,  
that men are considered as so essentially identified with the two  
classes to which they respectively belong that they incur no moral  
responsibility in accepting or rejecting the Redeemer of the world. In  
that respect St. John occupied the same ground as his fellow-Apostles.  
Not less than they would he have declared that God willed all men to be  
saved; and not less than they would he have told them that, if they were  
not saved, it was because they "loved the darkness rather than the  
light."[593] Yet, notwithstanding this practical mode in which he would  
have dealt with men, such is his idealism, such his mode of looking at  
things in their ultimate, eternal, unchanging aspect, that he constantly  
presents the two classes as if they were divided from each other by a  
permanent wall of separation, and as if the work of Christ consisted not  
so much in bringing the one class over to the other as in making  
manifest the existing tendencies of each. The light of the one  
brightens, the darkness of the other deepens, as we proceed; but the  
light does not become darkness, and the darkness does not become  
light.[594]  
  
Hence, accordingly, the conversion of Israel or of the heathen finds  
no place in the Apocalypse. The texts supposed to offer such a  
prospect will not bear the interpretation put upon them. It does not  
indeed follow that, according to the teaching of this book, neither  
Israel nor the heathen will be converted. St. John only sees the end  
in the beginning, and deals, not with the everyday practical, but with  
the ideal and everlasting, issues of God's kingdom. Hence, in  
interpreting the words before us, we must be careful to put into them  
the exact shade of meaning which the whole spirit and tone of the  
Apostle's writings prove to have been in his mind when they were  
written. The clauses "He that is unrighteous" and "He that is filthy"  
are to be understood as "He that has loved and chosen unrighteousness  
and filthiness:" the clauses "Let him do unrighteousness still" and  
"Let him be made filthy still" as "Let him sink deeper into the  
unrighteousness and filthiness which he has loved and chosen." A  
principle freely selected by himself is supposed to be in the breast  
of each, and that principle does not remain fixed and stationary. No  
principle does. It unfolds or develops itself according to its own  
nature, rising to greater heights of good if it be good, sinking to  
greater depths of evil if it be evil. Hence also we are not to imagine  
that the words under consideration are applicable only to the end, or  
are the record only of a final judgment. They are applicable to the  
Church and to the world throughout the whole course of their  
respective histories, and it is at this moment as true as it will ever  
be that, in so far as the heart and will of a man are really turned to  
evil or to good, the allegiance he has chosen has the tendency of  
continued progress towards the triumph of the one or of the other.  
  
In connexion with thoughts like these, we see the peculiar propriety of  
that declaration as to Himself and His purposes next made by the  
Redeemer: \_Behold, I come quickly.\_ He comes to wind up the history of  
the present dispensation. \_And My reward is with Me, to render to each  
man according as his work is.\_ He comes to bestow "reward"[595] upon His  
own; and there is no mention of judgment, because for those who are to  
be rewarded judgment is past and gone. \_I am the Alpha and the Omega,  
the first and the last, the beginning and the end\_, the words again  
taking us back to the language of the Prologue,[596] upon which follows  
a blessing for such as \_wash their robes\_, for those otherwise described  
in the Prologue as "loosed from their sins in His blood,"[597] and in  
chap. vii. 14 as having "washed their robes and made them white in the  
blood of the Lamb." These \_have the right to come to the tree of life,  
and they enter in by the gates into the city\_. A different order might  
have been expected, for the tree of life grows within the city, and it  
is the happy inhabitants of the city who eat its fruits. But this is the  
blessed paradox of faith. It is difficult to say which privilege enjoyed  
by the believer comes first, and which comes second. Rather may all that  
he enjoys be looked on as given at once, for the great gift to him is  
Christ Himself, and in Him everything is included. He is the gate of the  
city, and as such the way to the tree of life; He is the tree of life,  
and they who partake of Him have a right to enter into the city and  
dwell there. Why ask, Which comes first? At one moment we may think that  
it is one blessing, at another that it is another. The true description  
of our state is that we are "in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us  
wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:  
that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the  
Lord."[598]  
  
To enhance our estimate of the happiness of those who are within the  
city, there comes next a description of those who are without. They are  
first denoted by the general term \_the dogs\_, that animal, as we learn  
from many passages of Scripture, being to the Jew the emblem of all that  
was wild, unregulated, unclean, and offensive.[599] Then the general  
term is subdivided into various classes; and all of them are \_without\_,  
not put out. They were put out when judgment fell upon them. Now they  
\_are\_ without; and the door once open to them "is shut."[600]  
  
The last words follow:--  
  
 I Jesus have sent Mine angel to testify unto you these things for  
 the Churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright,  
 the morning star.  
  
 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that heareth, let him  
 say, Come. And he that is athirst, let him come. He that will, let  
 him take the water of life freely. I testify unto every man that  
 heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add  
 unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in  
 this book: and if any man 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, which are written in this book. He  
 which testifieth these things saith, Yea: I come quickly. Amen.  
 Come, Lord Jesus.  
  
 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with the saints. Amen (xxii. 16-21).  
  
Once more in these words it will be seen that we return to the  
Prologue, in the opening words of which we read, "The Revelation of  
Jesus Christ, which God gave Him, to show unto His servants; ... and  
He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John."[601] The  
glorified Lord now takes up the same words Himself; and, connecting by  
the name "Jesus" all that He was on earth with all that belongs to His  
condition in heaven, He declares of the whole revelation contained in  
the visions of this book that the angel through whom it was  
communicated had been sent by Him. He Himself had given it--He, even  
Jesus,--Jesus the Saviour of His people from their sins, the Captain  
of their salvation, the Joshua who leads them out of the "wilderness"  
of this world, across the valley of the shadow of death, into that  
Promised Land which Canaan, with its milk and honey, its vines and  
olive trees, its rest after long wanderings, and its peace after hard  
warfare, only faintly pictured to their view. Well is He able to do  
this, for in Him earth meets heaven, and "the angels of God ascend and  
descend upon the Son of man."[602]  
  
First, He is \_the root and the offspring of David\_, not the root out of  
which David springs, as if He would say that He is David's Lord as well  
as David's Son,[603] but the "shoot that comes out of the stock of Jesse  
and the branch out of his roots that bears fruit."[604] He is the "Son,  
who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh,"[605] the  
substance of ancient prophecy, the long-promised and looked-for King.  
Secondly, He is \_the bright, the morni

ng star\_, the star which shines in  
its greatest brilliancy when the darkness is about to disappear, and  
that day is about to break of which "the Sun of righteousness, with  
healing in His wings," shall be the everlasting light,[606] Himself "our  
Star, our Sun." Thus He is connected on the one side with earth, on the  
other with heaven, "Immanuel, God with us,"[607] touched with a feeling  
of our infirmities, mighty to save. "What then shall we say to these  
things? If God is for us, who is against us? He that spared not His own  
Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him  
freely give us all things? Who shall say anything to the charge of God's  
elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that shall condemn? It is  
Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who  
is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who  
shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or  
anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?  
Even as it is written,  
  
For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; We were accounted as  
sheep for the slaughter.  
  
Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that  
loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels,  
nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,  
nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate  
us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."[608]  
  
The Saviour had declared, "Behold, I come quickly," had spoken of the  
"reward" which He would bring with Him, and had used various images to  
set forth the happiness and joy which should be the everlasting  
portion of those for whom He came. These declarations could not fail  
to awaken in the breast of the Church a longing for His coming, and  
this longing now finds expression.  
  
\_The Spirit and the bride say, Come.\_ We are not to think of two  
separate voices: the voice of the Spirit and the voice of the bride. It  
is a characteristic of St. John's style that where there is combined  
action, action, having both an inward and invisible and an outward and  
visible side, he often separates the two agencies by which it is  
produced. Many illustrations of this may be found in his mention of the  
actions of the Father and the Son, but it will be enough to refer to one  
more strictly parallel to that met with here. In chap. xv. of the fourth  
Gospel we find Jesus saying to His disciples, "But when the Advocate is  
come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of  
truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall bear witness of Me;  
and ye also bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the  
beginning."[609] In these words we have not two works of witnessing, the  
first that of the Advocate, the second that of the disciples. We have  
only one,--outwardly that of the disciples, inwardly that of the  
Advocate. In like manner now. The Spirit and the bride do not utter  
separate calls. The Spirit calls in the bride; the bride calls in the  
Spirit. The cry "Come" is therefore that of the spiritually enlightened  
Church as she answers the voice of her Lord and King. Her voice is the  
echo of His. He says, "I come;" she answers, "Come." St. John then adds  
the next clause himself: \_And let him that heareth say, Come\_; that is,  
let him that heareth with the hearing of faith; let him who has made his  
own the glorious prospects opened up in the visions of this book as to  
the Lord's Second Coming add his individual cry to the cry of the  
universal Church. To this the Saviour replies, \_And he that is athirst,  
let him come. He that will, let him take the water of life freely.\_ The  
words appear to be addressed, not to the world, but to the Church. He  
that is "athirst" has already drunk of the living water, but he thirsts  
for deeper draughts from that river the streams whereof make glad the  
city of God. To partake more and more largely of these is the believer's  
longing; and fulness of blessing is within his reach. Let him never say,  
"It is enough." Let him drink and drink again; let him drink "freely,"  
until the water that Christ shall give him becomes in him "a fountain of  
springing water unto eternal life."[610] The statements and replies  
contained in these words are those of the glorified Lord, of the Church  
speaking in the Spirit, and of the individual believer, as they hold  
converse with one another in that moment of highest rapture when evil  
has been extinguished, when the struggle is over, when the victory has  
been gained, and when the Lord of the Church is at the door. He in them  
and they in Him, what can they do but speak to and answer one another in  
strains expressive of mutual longing and affection and joy?  
  
Once more the Seer--for it seems to be he that speaks--turns to the  
book which he has written.  
  
In the Prologue he had said, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they  
that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things which are  
written therein."[611] In the same spirit he now denounces a woe upon  
him who adds to it: \_God shall add unto him the plagues which are  
written in the book\_; nor less upon him who takes from it: \_for God  
shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy  
city, which are written in this book\_. The book has come from Him who  
is the faithful and true Witness of God, and it has been written in  
obedience to His command and under the guidance of His Spirit. St.  
John himself is nothing; Christ is all: and St. John knows that the  
words of his great Master are fulfilled, "He that receiveth you  
receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent  
Me."[612] Therefore may he speak with all authority, for it is not he  
that speaks, but the Holy Spirit.[613]  
  
Yet once again, before the parting salutation, Christ and the Church  
interchange their thoughts. The former speaks first: \_He which  
testifieth these things saith, Yea, I come quickly.\_ It is the sum and  
substance of His message to His suffering people, for they can desire  
or need no more. The "I" is the Lord Himself as He is in glory, not in  
the feebleness of the flesh, not amidst the sins and sorrows of the  
world, not with the cup of trembling and astonishment in His hand, but  
in the unlimited fulness of His Divine power, clothed with the light  
of His heavenly abode, and anointed with the oil of gladness above His  
fellows. Especially is the Church told that this revelation is all she  
needs, because throughout the book she is supposed to be in the midst  
of trials. To the troubled heart the Apocalypse is given; and by such  
a heart is it best understood.  
  
Jesus has spoken; and the Church replies, \_Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.\_  
Amen to all that the Lord has promised; Amen to the thought of sin and  
sorrow banished, of wounded hearts healed, of tears of affliction  
wiped away, of the sting taken from death and victory from the grave,  
of darkness dissipated for ever, of the light of the eternal day.  
Surely it cannot come too soon. "Why is His chariot so long in coming?  
Why tarry the wheels of His chariots?"[614] "Yea, I come quickly.  
Amen. Come, Lord Jesus."  
  
The salutation of the writer to his readers alone remains. It ought to  
be read differently from its form in the authorised English version,  
not "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all," but \_The  
grace of the Lord Jesus be with the saints\_. For the saints the book  
had been written; to them it had been spoken: they alone can keep it.  
Let no man who is not in Christ imagine that the Revelation of St.  
John is addressed to him. Let no man imagine that, if he has not found  
Christ already, he will find Him here. The book will rather perplex  
and puzzle, more probably offend, him. Only in that union with Christ  
which brings with it the hatred of sin and the love of holiness, which  
teaches us that we are "orphans"[615] in a present world, which makes  
us wait for the manifestation of the kingdom of God as they that wait  
for the morning, can we enter into the spirit of the Apocalypse,  
listen to its threatenings without thinking them too severe, or so  
embrace its promises that they shall heighten rather than lower the  
tone of our spiritual life. Here, if anywhere, faith and love are the  
key to knowledge, not knowledge the key to faith and love. It is in  
the very spirit of the book, therefore, not in a spirit hard, or  
narrow, or unsympathetic, that it closes with the words, "The grace of  
the Lord Jesus be with the saints."  
  
 \* \* \* \* \*  
  
We have reached the end of this singular, but at the same time most  
instructive, book of the New Testament. That the principles upon which  
it has been interpreted should be generally accepted were too much to  
hope for. Their acceptance, where they are received, must depend  
mainly upon the consideration that while, as scientific principles,  
they are thoroughly capable of defence, they give unity to the book  
and a meaning worthy of that Divine Spirit by whose influence upon the  
soul of the Apostle it was produced. On no other principles of  
interpretation does it seem possible to effect this; and the writer of  
these pages at least is compelled to think that, if they are rejected,  
there is only one conclusion possible,--that the Apocalypse, however  
interesting as a literary memorial of the early Christian age, must be  
regarded as a merely human production, and not entitled to a place in  
the canon of Scripture. Such a place, however, must in the present  
state of the argument be vindicated for it; and as an inspired book it  
has accordingly been treated here. What the reader, therefore, has to  
consider is whether, though some difficulties may not be completely  
overcome, he can accept in the main the principles upon which, in  
endeavouring to explain the book, the writer has proceeded. These  
principles the reader, whoever he be, undoubtedly applies to  
innumerable passages of Scripture. In so applying them to the prophets  
of the Old Testament, he follows the example of our Lord and His  
Apostles; and much of the New Testament itself equally demands their  
application. There is nothing new in them. All commentators in part  
apply them. They have only been followed out now with more consistency  
and uniformity than usual. Archdeacon Farrar has said that one of the  
two questions in New Testament criticism which have acquired new  
aspects during the last few years is, What is the key to the  
interpretation of the Apocalypse?[616] The question is certainly one  
urgently demanding the Church's answer, and one which will without  
doubt be answered in due time, either in the present or some other  
form. May the Spirit of God guide the Church and her students, and  
that speedily, into all the truth.  
  
FOOTNOTES:  
  
[585] Comp. p. 373.  
  
[586] Chap. i. 1.  
  
[587] Chap. xix. 5.  
  
[588] John xix. 35. Wider questions than can be here discussed would  
be opened up by an inquiry how far the same method of explanation may  
be applied to John xvii. 3.  
  
[589] Chap. i. 3.  
  
[590] Chap. i. 4, 9.  
  
[591] Chap. xix. 10.  
  
[592] Dan. xii. 4; comp. viii. 26.  
  
[593] Comp. John iii. 19.  
  
[594] See a fuller treatment of this important point by the author in  
his \_Lectures on the Revelation of St. John\_, p. 286, etc.  
  
[595] Comp. chap. xi. 18.  
  
[596] Chap. i. 8.  
  
[597] Chap. i. 5.  
  
[598] 1 Cor. i. 30.  
  
[599] Comp. Ps. xxii. 16, 20; Matt. vii. 6; Phil. iii. 2.  
  
[600] Comp. Matt. xxv. 10.  
  
[601] Chap. i. 1.  
  
[602] John i. 51.  
  
[603] Matt. xxii. 45.  
  
[604] Isa. xi. 1.  
  
[605] Rom. i. 3.  
  
[606] Mal. iv. 2.  
  
[607] Matt. i. 23.  
  
[608] Rom. viii. 31-39.  
  
[609] John xv. 26, 27.  
  
[610] John iv. 14.  
  
[611] Chap. i. 3.  
  
[612] Matt. x. 40.  
  
[613] Comp. Mark xiii. 11.  
  
[614] Judges v. 28.  
  
[615] John xiv. 18, R.V. (margin).  
  
[616] \_Expositor\_, July, 1888, p. 58.  
  
  
  
  
Transcriber's Notes:  
  
  
Obvious punctuation and spelling errors have been fixed throughout.  
  
Non-Latin characters have been replaced with the nearest Latin  
equivalent for example [oe] (the oe ligature), was replaced with oe.  
  
Missing footnote anchors have been added where it was possible to  
determine placement.  
  
Inconsistent hyphenation has been left as in the original text.  
  
Page 266: The quote ending (... in the sea\_.") does not have an  
opening quote, left as in the original text.  
  
Footnote 500: This footnote is missing the page number reference to  
compare to, left as in the original text.  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
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