

LIBRARY

OF THE

Theological Seminary,

PRINCETON, N. J.

Case

BS 2845

Shelf

JSA

Book

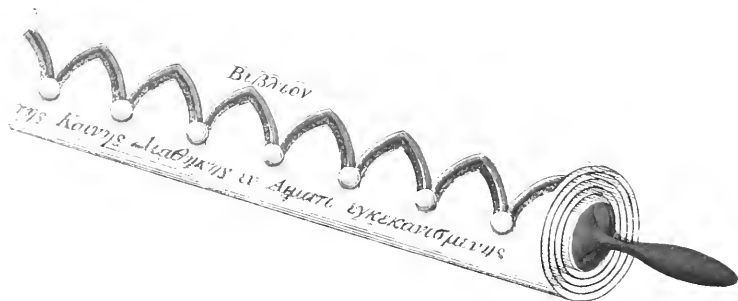
v. 1

NEW YORK :
A. LLOYD, 115 NASSAU STREET.
1865.

RATIONALE APOCALYPTICUM.



IDEAL REPRESENTATION
of the
SEVEN-SEALED BOOK.



*And I saw in the right hand of him that
sate on the throne a Book written within and
without sealed with seven seals.*

Chapter V verse 1.

RATIONALE APOCALYPTICUM :

OR,

A SYSTEMATIC EXPOSITION

OF

THE APOCALYPSE ;

WITH

HISTORICAL PROOFS AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

THREE APPENDICES :

1. ON THE GENUINENESS AND AUTHENTICITY OF THE APOCALYPSE.
2. ON THE DATE OF THE APOCALYPSE.
3. AN ANALYSIS OF SOME OF THE PRINCIPAL MODERN COMMENTARIES FROM MEDE DOWNWARDS, INCLUDING A PARTICULAR EXAMINATION OF MR. ELLIOTT'S "HORÆ APOCALYPTICÆ."

BY THE

REV. ALFRED JENOUR,

AUTHOR OF A NEW TRANSLATION AND EXPOSITION OF ISAIAH.

"DO NOT INTERPRETATIONS BELONG TO GOD?"—GEN. XL. 8.

VOLUME I.

LONDON :

THOMAS HATCHARD, 187, PICCADILLY.

1852.

ALEX. MACINTOSH,
PRINTER,
GREAT NEW-STREET, LONDON

TO HER MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY
VICTORIA,
QUEEN OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND,
DEFENDER OF THE FAITH.

MADAM,

As the visible head of the Protestant Church in England, I dedicate to your Majesty a work which has for one of its principal objects the promotion of Protestant principles, being fully persuaded that Protestantism and Christianity are identical. Believing, as I do, that the title borne by your Majesty, in your official capacity, of "Defender of the Faith," was not given to the Sovereigns of this country by accident, but by one of those inscrutable actings of Divine Providence whereby the Great Ruler of the universe "taketh the wise in their own craftiness," and maketh even "the wrath of man to praise him,"—I cannot but regard the Queen of England as standing forth in the sight of the whole civilized world, and especially at the present moment, as the champion of Christian truth, and the defender

of that "liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." That your Majesty is prepared faithfully to discharge the high trust committed to you, and to defend your people from the secret encroachments and open attacks of the Roman Pontiff, the events of the past year have abundantly proved. The Bishop of Rome, assuming to himself the title of the Vicar of Christ, and Vicegerent of God upon earth, and in these characters acting as the independent ruler of the Church throughout the world, ventured to divide your Majesty's dominions into ecclesiastical districts, and, without consulting your Majesty, or deigning to take the slightest notice of the Church of England and its ministers, nominated bishops of his own to the several sees which, by his sole authority, he had created. How this daring act of aggression was met by your Majesty and the people of England, I need not stop to relate. But permit me, with much deference, to call your Majesty's attention to another answer which was given to this aggression, less direct indeed than the indignant addresses of the English people and the Act of the Legislature, but perhaps still more striking and effective. The answer to which I allude is, THE MOTTO ON THE ROYAL EXCHANGE AND THE GREAT EXHIBITION. Whilst the Bishop of Rome, planting one foot on the land and the other on the sea, claims dominion over the whole earth, and "declares and affirms that it is altogether necessary to salvation that every human

creature should be subject to the Roman Pontiff," the British nation with calm dignity answers his lofty pretensions by a sentence from the Bible, and proclaims to the various representatives of the human race assembled in its capital, "THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S, AND THE FULNESS THEREOF." And what has been the result? Many millions of persons of all grades and classes of society, some from the remotest quarters of the globe, visited that unparalleled exhibition of human art and industry; hundreds of thousands met together under one roof in a vast palace of glass; yet no untoward circumstance occurred; no angry strife disturbed the grandeur of the spectacle; not a jarring word even was there heard; all was harmony, peace, and good-will. Was this of man? No; your Majesty will, I am persuaded, heartily take up the words of the royal Psalmist and say, "It is the Lord's doing; and it is marvellous in our eyes." Yes, Gracious Madam, it *is* marvellous in our eyes, and in the eyes of all nations; and it is His doing "by whom kings reign and princes decree justice;" even He who put it into the heart of the Illustrious Prince your Consort to select that motto which, whilst it gives to God the glory due unto His name, tells the Bishop of Rome that the English people deny his claims, and repudiate his authority.

I need not point out to your Majesty the application of these facts. They speak for themselves, and seem to declare, in language that cannot be mistaken, that the

legislative enactment of the last Parliamentary session had the approval of Him without whom not a sparrow falls to the ground. Let us then continue to act on the same principles : let us, fearless of man, still offer as a nation a calm and dignified, but determined, front to every enemy of our liberties and our religion, whether he present himself in the form of the Atheist, or Deist, or emissary of Rome. Then shall we have nothing to fear. The political horizon may look dark and threatening ; secret traitors within, and open foes without, moved with envy at our greatness, may seek our destruction : but He who has hitherto spread His shield over us will protect us still : the Lord of Hosts will be with us ; the God of Jacob will be our refuge.

May you, Madam, ever repose under the shadow of His wings. May your Majesty and your Illustrious Consort long be permitted to enjoy the many signal blessings the Divine goodness has bestowed upon you, and, when your earthly reign is terminated, may you enter into that kingdom which God has prepared for those that love Him.

Your Majesty will, I trust, pardon the freedom of this address. It is the utterance of the heart.

I am,

MADAM,

Your Majesty's faithful and devoted servant,

ALFRED JENOUR.

P R E F A C E.

THE increased interest felt of late years on the subject of prophecy, is one of the remarkable signs of the times. This increased interest has been especially manifested in the publication of numerous commentaries on the Revelation since the commencement of the present century. Nearly thirty have come under my own observation; and the actual number is probably much greater. It might be supposed, that so much having been written within so short a period on a single book of Scripture, the subject must by this time be more than exhausted, and that no additional light beyond what the many expositions of the Apocalypse already published afford, can be expected at present. This, however, is altogether a mistaken impression. I am disposed to think that the constant publication of new commentaries in rapid succession, one after the other, differing very much in their schemes of interpretation, indicates, not that the subject is exhausted, but rather that much yet remains to be done, and that, in fact, the fundamental principles on which the Apocalyptic visions are constructed, as well as the meaning and application of some of its most important symbolizations, have yet to be brought to light. The characteristic of

truth is, that it commends itself at once to the mind in search of it. And more particularly in such a case as that we are now considering, in which the truth is veiled under hieroglyphical symbols and enigmatical prefigurations, the more difficult the discovery of the true meaning of those symbols and prefigurations, the more certain and indisputable, I imagine, will the solution appear when the right one is discovered. I should say, therefore, that the very fact of the recent appearance of so many commentaries, differing so greatly from each other, proves that the Apocalypse has not yet been fully and satisfactorily explained,—for if it had been, assuredly there would be a greater agreement amongst expositors, at least, as to fundamental principles and leading characteristics. But can we hope, under these circumstances, that it will ever be satisfactorily explained? I think we may. The truth is, we are only just beginning to get a glimpse of daylight. What we now see is but as the streaks of light in the east before the dawn. We have hitherto been groping our way very much in the dark, but the night is, I trust we may say, indeed, “far spent,” and if so, it will not be long ere the full light of day will burst upon us in all its splendour, and those streaks we now behold are the sure harbingers of it. In the meantime, it becomes us to use aright the little glimmering of light we already possess, and to endeavour, under the guidance of the Divine Spirit, to search into the meaning of those sublime and heavenly visions contained in this book.

But leaving these generalities, it is time to give some account of the present work. The reader will naturally ask, In what respects does this commentary differ from

any already in existence? and what is there contained in it that is not to be found in them? In reply to the first inquiry, I would briefly state, that the principal difference between this commentary and any that have preceded it, is that it views the Apocalypse as a *connected whole*, and proposes to explain it according to one consistent system. The generality of commentators seem to assume it almost as an axiom, that the prophetic part of the Revelation begins with the opening of the seals in c. vi., and consequently, that the five preceding chapters are merely introductory. This appears to me to be altogether an erroneous view. The Revelation opens with a specific announcement from its Divine Author of the purpose for which it was given, viz., “to show unto his servants things that must shortly come to pass.” And yet, according to the scheme of the generality of interpreters, a full fourth part of the book is occupied with purely historical matter, having no relation whatever to the future. Can this be so? I think not. It seems to me utterly improbable that after such an announcement at the very outset, for five whole chapters, instead of prophecy we should have mere history. Here, therefore, the present commentary differs from most of its predecessors. I say *most*, because although the general view of the subject is what I have just stated, there are exceptions, and for nearly two hundred years there have been some few commentators who, departing from the beaten track, have assumed with myself that the Epistles to the Churches are as strictly prophetic as any other part of the book. But even as regards those commentaries which in this respect agree with mine, it will, I would hope, be found that the reason-

ableness of the principle is more clearly shown, and the fulfilment of the prophetic announcements contained in the Epistles more fully and in detail developed, than in any preceding commentary. Another point also not noticed, that I am aware of, by any previous commentator, (and to my mind it is a very striking one,) is this, the very remarkable, and in some instances palpable agreement between the predictions involved in the Epistles to the Churches, supposing them to refer to specific eras, and the prefigurations of the after visions. For instance, what can be more striking in this respect than the correspondence between the allusion to Balaam and Balak in the Epistle to the Church in Pergamos, and the beast from the sea, the symbol evidently of a secular empire, and the lamb-like beast from the earth, the symbol no less evidently of an ecclesiastical power, of the thirteenth chapter? Let the reader who may wish to see this idea more fully developed, refer to the commentary on the above-named Epistle. Here then the Apocalyptic student will, I think, find something new, and, I trust, important.

Again, as regards the seven-sealed book, its form and character, and symbolic meaning, the present commentary will be found more full and explicit, and I would fain hope, more satisfactory, than any that have preceded it. To my mind, nothing can be more palpably wrong than the idea commonly entertained that the seven-sealed book is the Revelation itself. How such an opinion ever came to be so generally adopted, and apparently without any questioning of its reasonableness and propriety, is to me amazing. My reasons will be found in the commentary. I would only here observe on this head, how is it possible

the sealed-book should contain the Revelation, seeing that it is not opened, in fact, does not appear upon the scene at all, until after the apostle is supposed to have written the vision of the first three chapters?

In the exposition of the vision of the seventh chapter also, and of the cloud-clad angel of the tenth, of the little book, of the two witnesses, of the two wild beasts, and the name and number of the beast, the reader will, I trust, find particular difficulties solved which have hitherto been without any satisfactory explanation. I may instance specifically, the sweet and bitter taste of the little book, and the name and number of the beast, of the mysteries involved in which no perfectly satisfactory solution, to my mind, has ever yet been proposed. Whether the solutions now offered are altogether satisfactory, the reader must judge.

It was my original intention that the work should be accompanied with a series of pictorial illustrations of all the principal visions, and I had engaged an artist accustomed to such matters for the purpose; but after several unsuccessful attempts to convey my ideas of the things seen on paper, he gave up the task in despair, nor could I meet with any one duly qualified who would undertake it. In fact, I have been driven to the conclusion that the idea I originally entertained is impracticable. Drawings by an inferior artist, or engraved in a style only a little above mediocrity, would be worse than nothing; and to obtain first-rate talent in the designer, and first-rate execution in the engraver, would involve an expence far too great to be incurred in such a case. Were anything of the kind to be attempted, perhaps the best plan would

be to make the illustrations altogether a separate publication. This, indeed, I think might be done with advantage. The difficulty would be to find an artist possessing the requisite qualifications for the task willing to undertake it. The ordinary run of illustrators of periodicals would, I fear, be utterly incompetent. The two drawings which accompany this volume may serve to show what I wished to accomplish, and together with the map will, I hope, be found useful.

As regards the translation, it has been made, on principle, as nearly in accordance with the authorized version as appeared to me to be consistent with perfect accuracy. In this portion of the work there is frequent reference to the translation of Mr. Tregelles, and as his publications are of very recent date, and may, therefore, not be known to the reader, it will be proper to give some account of them. Mr. Tregelles is the author of two works connected with the critical illustration of the Apocalypse. The first, published in 1844, is entitled, "The Book of Revelation in Greek, edited from ancient authorities, with a new English version, and various readings." The object of Mr. Tregelles in this edition of the Revelation is to give the Greek text from *ancient manuscripts only*, without any reference whatever to that of the printed editions, or, as it is commonly called, the *textus receptus*. The other publication alluded to is an English translation made subsequently to the former after the author had obtained access to another very ancient MS., by which he was enabled to correct some previous errors. This latter work is entitled, "The Book of Revelation translated from the Ancient Greek Text." In the introduction the author informs us, that "in this translation there is

not a single word which is not guaranteed by manuscript authority of at least *twelve hundred years old*," and that "by far the greater part is vouched for by MSS. of *fourteen hundred years old*." The ancient MSS. referred to are,—

1. CODEX ALEXANDRINUS, in the British Museum, supposed to belong to the early part of the *fifth century*.

2. Codex Basilianus, at Rome, formerly in the convent of St. Basil; supposed to belong to the *seventh century*.

3. Codex Ephræmi, at Paris. This MS. contains only about two thirds of the Revelation. Its probable date is the early part of the fifth century.

In addition to these, Mr. Tregelles, in making his translation, has also consulted and compared some of the most ancient MSS. of Jerome's Latin version, going still upon this principle, that the more ancient any manuscript (as a general rule) the more likely it is to be correct. In short, his object, as before stated, is to present the English reader with a translation of the Apocalypse founded solely on the authority of MSS. of very great antiquity. I have carefully compared my translation with his, and have marked all the variations which appear to me to be deserving of notice. It is a satisfaction to find that, after all, the number of those of any importance is very small.

Having thus stated the leading characteristics of the present Commentary, I would now commend it to the reader's candid and prayerful consideration. I am far from expecting that it will meet with the general approbation of prophetic students. When a particular theory has long had possession of the mind, it is not easy to bring ourselves to think that it can be wrong. It

requires no ordinary power, indeed, in a writer to gain even the slightest attention to opinions which are opposed to long-established prejudices. Conscious of my deficiency in this respect, I have little hope of convincing those whose minds are pre-occupied by the schemes and sentiments of authors gifted with a brilliancy of thought and eloquence of expression to which I make no pretensions. Nevertheless, I have a strong inward conviction of the truth of the great fundamental principles on which my exposition is founded. If I am right, assuredly those principles will eventually prevail, and the work that contains them will live; if not, I am quite content that both they and it should be consigned to oblivion.

*Rectory, Kittisford, near Wellington, Somerset,
February 9, 1852.*

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

ON THE STRUCTURE OF THE APOCALYPSE.

IN commencing the study of the Revelation it is most important that we should have some idea of the scheme according to which it is written, and a sort of general outline of the historical, chronological, and pictorial chart which is here spread out before us. Without this, we shall never attain to anything like a satisfactory understanding of this Divine Book. We may admire the sublimity of its language, and be struck with the wonderful exactness with which apparently detached portions have been accomplished, but we shall not feel that strong and firm conviction of mind which is produced by the agreement of minute details with previous general statements; or, to express the same thing in another form, which arises from the corroboration of certain leading facts by the particularity of circumstantial evidence.

That the Revelation is composed according to a regular plan, no one, I imagine, will dispute. It is not for a moment to be supposed that the prophecies contained in it were thrown together without order or system. Even

an uninspired man, before he begins to write a history, forms in his mind a general scheme of the plan he intends to adopt; how much more may we be certain that the Divine author of the Apocalypse being about to dictate, if I may venture so to speak, a history of his Church in its connexion with the world, would have in his omniscient mind the whole book, the contents of which He was about to communicate, arranged according to a regular consistent system: a system adapted to the wants and capacities of those for whose benefit it was designed?

* The first thing then we have to do is to ascertain, if possible, what this system is. In other words, we must begin by seeking to get a knowledge of the structure of the book, before we attempt to determine the historical fulfilment of particular parts. It is here that the generality of readers, and, perhaps, of commentators also, err. Eager to take hold of what seems obvious, and, as it were, floating on the surface, they rush at once to seize upon the more prominent points in the prophecy, without taking at all into consideration their relative chronological position. Hence so many discordant and contradictory interpretations. An inevitable result of this indolent and superficial way of reading and expounding, is great and almost incredible discrepancy amongst expositors, and doubt, uncertainty, and dissatisfaction in their readers.

But how, it may be asked, can it be otherwise? Is not this discrepancy of interpretation a necessary consequence of the enigmatical character of the book? I think not. It is the result rather, I should say, of that indolent and superficial method of studying it just described. Let two men read the Revelation first of all without any reference to its historical fulfilment, but

simply in order to ascertain the general bearing and relative chronological position of the several prophecies contained in it, and I am much mistaken if they would not arrive at the same conclusion as to the structure of the book and the arrangement of its component parts. But, if instead of thus contemplating the book abstractedly as a whole with a view to analyze its structure, one man begins with trying to find this particular historical fact in it, and another another, the unavoidable result must be a number of detached, unconnected, and conflicting statements, alike perplexing and disheartening to readers and expositors.

So far from being a collection of isolated prophetic enigmas thrown together at random, as a careless reader might suppose, the Revelation is one of the most orderly and methodical books that was ever written, and will be found upon a careful examination to contain within itself the key to its right interpretation. In confirmation of these remarks I will now give an analysis of its contents, from which the reader will be able to gather the general principles on which my exposition of it proceeds.

Exordium, c. i. 1, 2.

The Apocalypse opens with an announcement of its author, its objects, and mode of communication. Its author is Jesus Christ.

Its object, to make known to the servants of God things about shortly to come to pass.

The mode of communication threefold: the Word of God, the testimony of Jesus Christ, and things seen in vision. The Apostle expressly informs us in the second verse, that the communications made to him were of this threefold character. Let the reader pause upon this

verse, and consider whether the import of it be not what I have just stated. Much depends upon our setting out aright.

Beatification, v. 3.

With a view to encourage the careful study of the book, a blessing is next pronounced upon those who read it.

Inscription and Dedication, v. 4—6.

The book is inscribed and dedicated to Seven Churches in Asia, afterwards mentioned by name (v. 11), to whose custody it is committed, with a solemn benediction in the name of the three persons of the Trinity.

The Word of God, v. 7, 8.

The grand subject of the Revelation, the second coming of the man Christ Jesus, in Divine glory and majesty, to take possession of the world He has redeemed, is here announced, in words spoken to the Apostle. It will be observed that the Apocalypse begins and ends with the advent of the Lord, as if to teach us that as this is the great theme of prophecy, so it should form the chief object of our hope.—(See the Commentary.)

Introductory Vision, v. 9—20.

St. John here informs us of the circumstances under which the Revelation was given. Being in the Island of Patmos, Jesus Christ appeared to him, in a vision, on the Lord's-day, and commanded him to write everything he had seen, or should hereafter see, in a book, and to send a copy to each of the Seven Churches of Asia, which are represented by seven golden candlesticks in the midst of which he walks, as their presiding ministers are by seven stars held in his right-hand.

[These Seven Churches are obviously the representatives of the Church universal, and the addresses to them contain the clearest internal evidence that their religious condition therein described, is symbolical of the condition of the universal Church in successive stages of its existence.—(See Commentary.)]

The Testimony of Jesus Christ, c. ii. iii.

These two chapters contain the addresses to the Seven Churches, which addresses constitute the testimony of Jesus Christ, and are seven times declared to be deserving of the earnest attention of those whose ears being opened by Divine grace, are able to receive and understand the truths revealed in them. They contain, I conceive, an allegorical representation of the prominent features in the condition of the Church, and the leading circumstances in its history, from its commencement to the second advent.

The Things Seen, from c. iv. to c. xxii. 1—5.

Introductory Vision, c. iv. v.

The above testimony was delivered to the Apostle as he remained entranced in Patmos. He was now transported *in vision* into the sky, in order that he might from thence behold the various symbolical prefigurations which he was appointed to record. Previously, however, to their exhibition, he is called upon to contemplate an introductory vision of the Lord in his twofold character of the Creator and Redeemer of the earth.

In the fourth chapter He appears sitting upon a throne of dazzling brightness, surrounded by the representatives of the Church and all created things, and

receives from them adoration and praise, in the character of their eternal omnipotent Creator.

In the fifth chapter He is presented to us in a different form, and sustains another character. A book, or roll, sealed with seven seals, is seen on the right side of the throne, and a proclamation is made by a mighty angel inviting any one who might feel himself worthy to come and take the book and loose its seals. But no one comes forward. No one dares even to lift up his eyes and look upon the book, so awful is its very inscription; so infinitely beyond the reach of any created being the qualifications required in him who should undertake the mighty task of loosing the seals thereof.

At this the Apostle, acting as man's representative, wept. But he is soon comforted. Under the appearance of a Lamb that had been slain, the GOEL comes forward and claims the book, which, being delivered to Him, the ransomed Church and all the heavenly host join in a congratulatory song, declaring his right to loose the seals of the book, and take possession of the redeemed inheritance to which it gives the title.

The intention, then, of the vision contained in these two chapters, seems clearly to be this: To show that the earth having belonged to God, abstractedly considered, by the right of creation, and having been given by Him to man for a possession, who had forfeited it by his disobedience, had returned to its original owner, and could not be restored to man until the conditions contained in the original grant, should be fulfilled; and that seeing that no creature could be found capable of fulfilling those conditions, the Lord of creation himself

undertook the awful task, and “having by himself purged away man’s sin,” now comes forward to claim for him, as his representative, the restoration of the forfeited possession. His claim no one disputes. The title-deed is accordingly given to Him, and He proceeds by loosing the seals to take possession in man’s name of the ransomed world.

The propriety, beauty, and sublimity of this introduction to the prophetical prefigurations which follow, is obvious. The subject of those prefigurations is the gradual restoration of the earth to the possession of man—not man sold under sin, and corrupt—but as redeemed, and renewed “after the image of Him that created him.” And what can be a more suitable introduction to such a subject than the vision of these two chapters (for the vision is but one) thus understood?—(See Commentary.)

*The Things Seen—The opening of the Seven-sealed Book.
The Six first Seals, c. vi.*

The Redeemer of man having received the title-deeds of the forfeited inheritance, proceeds at once to loose the seals thereof, that so He may take possession of that world which He has purchased with his own blood. But the subjugation of the earth to the dominion of Christ, like that of Canaan to the Israelites, is to be gradual: the nations are to be driven out *by little and little*. The loosing of the seals one by one marks this gradual progress.

Upon the opening of the first seal, the Apostle is directed by one of the living creatures to look down upon the earth, and he sees a majestic personage seated upon a white horse, with a bow in his hand, and crowned

with the victor's crown, going forth in the greatness of his strength, conquering and to conquer.

Upon the opening of the second seal, he is directed again to look down upon the earth, and he sees in the opposite quarter a rider upon a fiery red horse, who receives a great sword, and has power given him to take away *the* peace of which the preceding horseman had been the bearer.

When the third and fourth seals are opened, there appear respectively a black and a pale horse, each with its appropriate rider, traversing the earth from different directions, the one coming from the north, the other from the south, bringing with them hunger, disease, and death.

[Now it may be asked, What connexion is there between these horses and their riders, especially the three last, and the subjugation of the world to Christ? To answer this question fully would be to anticipate the Commentary. I can here, therefore, only direct the reader's attention generally to a few leading points.

It will be observed, then, that these horsemen are seen by the Apostle traversing *the earth*, and they are not, therefore, pictorial representations depicted in a book. Also, although they appear in succession upon the opening of each seal, yet they are afterwards contemporaneous, *i. e.*, they are all seen upon the stage at once, and, therefore, they do not prefigure events strictly consecutive, the one beginning only where the other ends, but rather events the chronology of which is, as it were, mixed together, the one running into the other.

Further, these horses and their riders are evidently *personifications*, or *allegories*. That is to say, they represent things, or ideas, or events, the leading circum-

stances in which are embodied and put into a visible form in the distinguishing characteristics of these horsemen. For example, in the first the distinguishing characteristics are, the *white* colour of the horse, the *bow* in the hand of the rider, the *laurel crown* given to him, and the *unlimited* extent of his conquests. Let us determine the import of these characteristics in connexion with the other circumstances of this horseman, and we shall then have an allegory, the meaning of which cannot well be mistaken. And so with the rest.]—(See Commentary.)

Upon the opening of the fifth seal, the scene is altogether changed. Instead of looking upon the Roman earth, the Apostle turns his eyes to the altar of burnt offerings, which, although not expressly mentioned, it is evident from hence stands near the sea of glass between the four-and-twenty elders and the throne, and there, under the altar, he sees, in a corporeal form, the souls of martyrs that *had been* slain.

[This image speaks for itself. The use of the pluperfect tense shows that the martyrdoms in question take place, in part at least, during the time that the four horsemen are traversing the earth.]

Upon the opening of the sixth seal, the Apostle again looked down upon the earth, and beheld all the terrific accompaniments of a general earthquake. The sun and moon were darkened, the stars seemed to fall, and the mountains and hills were moved out of their places.

[The meaning of these things is obvious. A great revolution attended with a violent shaking and concussion of the ruling powers following upon the martyrdoms of the preceding seal, is here portended. The words, "Hide us from the wrath of the Lamb," show who is the prime mover in these events. Yet it should be

observed, that only six seals of the roll are as yet unloosed, the seventh still remains unbroken, and the Lamb, therefore, has not yet taken full possession of the inheritance. It is impossible, therefore, that the events of this seal can relate to the final consummation of all things; or, as it is expressed elsewhere, "the completion of the mystery of God."

[It appears, then, that the results following upon the loosing of these six seals are allegorical living pictures, prefiguring events that were to take place in the interval between the first opening of the book of the New Covenant, and the dethronement of the then ruling powers in the Roman Empire. A comparison of this chapter with chapter xii. 1—5, would lead us to infer that these events would occupy a period of about two hundred and eighty years, and the facts of history confirm the inference.]

144,000 *Jews and an innumerable multitude of
Gentiles are sealed, c. vii.*

After the opening of the sixth seal, four angels are seen holding the four winds of heaven, to prevent their blowing upon the earth until an angel ascending from the east should have sealed the servants of God in their foreheads. The Apostle then hears the number of the sealed proclaimed. A hundred and forty four thousand are sealed from all the tribes of Israel, twelve thousand from each tribe. After which an innumerable mixed multitude from all nations are seen standing before the throne, clothed in white robes and with palms in their hands; and John is told that they are those who have come out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

[The contents of this chapter are manifestly parenthetical and supplementary. For the seventh seal *is not yet opened*, and this of itself is sufficient proof that the vision now seen is not a continuation of the prophetic narrative. It is, therefore, *retrospective*, and the fulfilment must be sought for in events that occurred during the period of the preceding seals.]—(See Commentary.)

The Opening of the Seventh Seal—The Seven Trumpets,
c. viii., ix., x., xi.

The seventh seal is opened, and half an hour's silence succeeds. Seven trumpets are then given to seven angels, and, incense being offered, the angels prepare to sound.

The first sounds, and hail mingled with fire descends upon the earth, and a third part of the trees, &c., are burnt.

The second sounds, and a burning mountain is rolled into the sea, and turns it into blood, &c.

The third sounds, and a star falls from heaven upon the rivers and fountains, and makes them bitter as wormwood, so that many die by drinking of them.

The fourth sounds, and a third part of the sun, and moon, and stars, are smitten and darkened.

A pause in the sounding of the trumpets now takes place, and an angel flying in the midst of heaven is heard proclaiming three distinct woes yet to come upon the inhabitants of the earth on the sounding of the three remaining trumpets.

The fifth angel then sounds, and a star falls from heaven, to whom is given the key of the bottomless pit, which he opens, and locusts issue forth from a dark smoke. These locusts are described as being swift as

horses, courageous and fierce as *lions*, intelligent as *men*, and yet having long hair like *women*. They have also *tails* like *scorpions*, and their power to hurt continues five months.

Another pause now occurs, and we are reminded that two more woes yet remain behind.

After this the sixth angel sounds, and four angels, or messengers from God, the executors of his wrath, which had been long kept bound on the river Euphrates are loosed, that they may slay a third part of the men who remained from the former woes. These angels are a vast army of horsemen, clothed in breastplates of fire and brimstone, and fire and smoke proceed out of their mouths; they have also tails with heads like serpents, through which they eject deadly poison.

And here a pause again ensues, and we are told that these judgments have produced no effect. The members of the professing Church do not repent of their sins.

Another parenthetical and supplementary vision now follows. A mighty angel with all the ensignia of the Lord Jesus about him, having a little book open in his hand, is seen standing upon the earth and the sea over which *he appears to claim dominion*. In this attitude he utters a loud cry, which is responded to by *seven thunders*, and the Apostle being about to write what they had uttered is forbidden to do so. The angel then lifts up his hand to heaven, and declares with a solemn oath that during the sounding of the seventh angel the hidden purposes of God shall be accomplished.

After this the Apostle is commanded by a voice from heaven to go and take the little book out of the hand of the mighty angel. He goes to him accordingly and *demand*s the book, which is given to him; and he is told

to eat it, but at the same time he is warned that although sweet in his mouth it will be bitter in his stomach; and so it proves.

Having eaten the little book, he is told that he must prophesy again, (or, *over again from the beginning*), concerning people, nations, and kings.

A reed is now given to him, and a voice from heaven, (*not the angel standing on the earth and sea, as in the Authorized Version*—see Translation and Commentary,) bids him measure the temple and its worshippers; but not to include in the measurement the outer court, that being given to the Gentiles to be trodden under foot by them for the space of forty-two months.

The speaker further declares, that He will appoint his two witnesses to prophesy, clothed in sackcloth, during the period of twelve hundred and sixty days, corresponding with the forty-two months of the treading down of the holy city. And that at the expiration of this period, *when they have finished* their prophesying in sackcloth, a beast from the bottomless pit, afterwards to be described, and therefore called *the Beast*, shall make war with them, and kill them, and triumph over them; but after three days and a-half they will rise again to life, and ascend up to heaven in the sight of their enemies. At the same time a great earthquake takes place, and a tenth part of the city falls to pieces, and seven thousand *names* of men are slain; the rest, being struck with awe, give glory to God.

Upon this a voice announces the completion of the second woe, and the immediate arrival of the third.

The seventh angel, that is, the angel of the third woe trumpet, accordingly sounds. But no woe follows. On

the contrary, songs of triumph are heard, and the kingdoms of this world are announced to have become the kingdoms of the Lord and his anointed; and the time for the dead to be judged to have arrived, and also for the recompensing of the servants of God. This trumpet, therefore, reaches to the end of the prophetic history, and involves the final consummation of the Divine purposes.

[Now I have brought the contents of these four chapters together, because they are closely connected, and it is only when they are considered as a whole that they can be understood. Regarded as a continuous narrative carrying on the history of the Church in connexion with that of the Roman Empire, the thread of which had been broken off at the close of the sixth chapter, the general import of these symbolical pre-figurations, and their chronological position, is easily determined, and that without any reference to their historical fulfilment. The following will, I think, be found a correct general statement of their meaning.

The half-hour's silence implies a temporary cessation of those violent political and religious convulsions which had shaken the Church and the Roman earth under the sixth seal.

The sounding of the four first trumpets in rapid succession, by which the land, the sea, the rivers, and the heavenly bodies, are by turns affected, and in particular the third part of the sun and moon and stars darkened, portend, according to the invariable use of such symbols, tremendous ravages by hostile armies, the corruption of the sources of religious truth, and the extinction of a third part of the ruling powers of the empire.

The angel flying in the mid-heaven, announcing three woes yet to come, manifestly implies an interval in the prophetic history.

The falling of a star from heaven on the sounding of the fifth trumpet, the smoke from the bottomless pit, the issuing of armed warriors, like locusts from the smoke, with power to torment men, their continuance for five prophetic months (150 years), and their scorpion-like tails with stings, clearly signify, that the extinction of the third part of the empire would be followed, after an interval, by the appearance of an illustrious religious teacher, who, although endued with powers that rightly used would have raised him to a high place in heaven, would abuse his gifts, and bring great spiritual darkness over Christendom, and that this darkness would be accompanied with the pouring forth of innumerable hosts of fierce soldiery, rapid in their movements, relentless and daring, and who would leave behind them a moral poison.

The announcement (c. ix. 12) that one woe is past, &c., implies another interval of some continuance.

The loosing of the four angels from the river Euphrates consisting of an innumerable company of horsemen, obviously implies the repeated attacks of cavalry from the neighbourhood of "the great river," and the stings in the tails of these horsemen show a relationship between them and the locusts of the former trumpet, distinctly declaring that they would leave behind them the same moral poison.

The slaying of a third part of the men by these horsemen points to the destruction of a third part of the Roman world, regarded as now forming one great

Christian republic ;* for the rest of the men are evidently men professing Christianity.

A break in the continuous narrative here again manifestly ensues, and we are carried back to the commencement of the preceding trumpet, or rather to the interval between the fifth and sixth trumpets. I say *manifestly*, because the apostle tells us he saw *another* angel. Now, this word *another* shows that there is reference to some angel or angels previously mentioned, and must relate to the angel seen flying in the mid-heaven. This mighty colossal angel, then, standing upon the earth and the sea, belongs to the period of the fifth and sixth trumpets. Such is unquestionably his chronological position. An attentive consideration of all the attendant circumstances will lead also, I think, to the conclusion that he is a usurper and impostor, and not what he appears to be. The simple fact that the voices of the seven thunders, which are the echo of his roar, were forbidden to be written, may awaken suspicion on this head. To enter further into particulars would be to anticipate the Commentary.

With regard to the eating of the little book, and its results, here also is a plain intimation that the prophecy goes back and begins as it were afresh. The measuring of the temple, the prophesying in sackcloth of the two witnesses, and the treading down of the outer court by Gentiles for 1,260 prophetic days, manifestly foreshow a long period of religious declension, during which the temple of God, *i.e.*, the professing Christian Church, would be filled with multitudes of men heathenish in their character and

* See c. ix. 20, 21.

practice, whilst the number of true worshippers would be few.

The death, resurrection, and ascension of the witnesses, with the attendant circumstances, are matters of detail which it would be out of place to consider here; it is only necessary to observe, with reference to the structure of this part of the Apocalypse, that whoever or whatever the witnesses may be, their death takes place at the *expiration* of the prophetic period of twelve hundred and sixty days, and is attended with a great political convulsion and much bloodshed and slaughter, in which multitudes of nominal Christians are slain: and that these events immediately precede and, in a manner, run into the events of the seventh trumpet. This may be gathered from the announcement in ver. 14: "The second woe is past; behold, the third woe cometh quickly." Now, the second woe was the Euphratean horsemen, described c. ix., and the introduction of this announcement here, and not at the close of that description, shows therefore that the history of the witnesses is partially at least contemporary with that of the two first woe trumpets.

The sounding of the seventh trumpet, following upon this announcement, and the instantaneous outburst from the heavenly choir, celebrating in songs of triumphant joy the establishment of the kingdom of the Lord and His anointed, shows that the interval between the death and resurrection of the witnesses and the final consummation, will be comparatively brief, and consequently that the third woe, which is to fill up that interval, will be of short duration.

These things are clear and palpable; and no interpretation, therefore can be correct which violates the

strongly marked chronological limitations thus derivable from the prophecy itself, however striking apparently the historical facts adduced in its confirmation.]

The Contents of Chapters XII., XIII., and XIV.

The contents of these chapters, like c. vii. and x., xi., are clearly parenthetical and supplementary. The apostle, after having eaten the little book, was told that he must prophesy “back again” (*ἀνωθεν*), concerning nations and kings; and accordingly the vision of the twelfth chapter goes back to the beginning of Christianity. The *woman clothed with the sun* is manifestly the primitive Christian Church; her *travailing*, the early struggles of the Church with its Pagan adversaries; the flight of the woman, shortly after having given birth to the man-child, the disappearance of the true Church from the eyes of the world to make way for a counterfeit.

The rising up of a wild beast from the sea, and at the same time of another from the land, the latter having the horns (the symbol of power) of a lamb, shortly after the star-crowned woman’s flight, portends the rise of two tyrannical persecuting powers, the one civil, the other ecclesiastical, who, during the absence of the Church in the wilderness, are to exercise supreme dominion, and slay the people of God.

The appearance immediately after this of a hundred and forty-four thousand with the Lamb on Mount Zion, having his Father’s name in their foreheads—not the name of the Beast—evidently marks out a small remnant of faithful followers of the Lord Jesus, preserved intact during a period of almost universal corruption; and shows that, whilst the two beasts of the preceding chapter were exercising uncontrolled authority over the Church for the

purpose of exterminating all spiritual worshippers, God would still reserve to Himself an elect people.

The going forth of an angel with the everlasting Gospel to proclaim it to all nations, shows that when the power of the two beasts shall begin to decline, a renewed commission will be given, like that which our Lord gave originally to the apostles, but which had for some time been in abeyance.

Two angels immediately following, the one announcing the fall of Babylon (which city has not hitherto been mentioned by name, but is fully described c. xvii.), the other the destruction of the followers of the beast, show that these events will quickly succeed the republication of the Gospel.

The appearance of One like the Son of Man sitting upon a white cloud, and reaping the harvest of the earth, seems plainly to portend a great in-gathering of souls at this period.

The appearance of another angel at the same time having power over fire, and treading the wine-press of the fierceness of God's wrath, no less plainly indicates the infliction of terrific judgments upon the professing Church.

And here, it will be observed, the parenthetical and supplementary visions end, and the history of the third trumpet woe begins.

The Third Woe, c. xv., xvi.

Another sign, "great and marvellous," now appears in the sky. Seven angels, the ministers of the Divine judgments, are seen having *the seven last plagues*. To these angels there are given seven *bowls*, or *basins* (A.V., *vials*), full of the wrath of God, which they are commanded to go and pour out upon the earth. The

first pours out his vessel upon the *earth*; the second his upon the *sea*; the third his upon the *rivers*; the fourth his upon the *sun*; the fifth his upon the *seat of the Beast*; the sixth his upon the great river *Euphrates*.

These six vessels are poured out rapidly, one after the other, without intermission. A pause now ensues. During the pause, three *unclean spirits like frogs* are seen to issue from the mouth of the *Dragon*, the *Beast*, and of the *False Prophet*, which spread themselves all over the earth, and gather the kings (or kingdoms) of the world together for a great battle, to be fought at a place called in Hebrew *Armageddon*. A caution is at the same time given of the sudden and unexpected coming of Christ, and a blessing pronounced on those who prepare for his coming.

The seventh angel then pours out his vessel into the air. A voice from heaven is heard proclaiming the end of the present dispensation, the completion of the mystery of God; (c. x. 7) thunders and lightnings, and an earthquake such as had never before taken place, follow; the great city is shaken and falls into three parts; Babylon drinks the cup of God's wrath; the islands and mountains flee away and disappear altogether; and hailstones of an enormous size fall upon men, causing them dreadful pain, writhing under which they continue still to blaspheme God.

[Such is the third woe. Without going into the examination of details, it must suffice for the present to direct the reader's attention to a few leading points.

Let it be observed, then,

1st. That this woe is designated *the seven last plagues*; the *seven* angels, therefore, with the seven vials or basins, are the executors of but *one* woe.

2dly. The pouring out of six shallow bowl-like vessels in rapid succession would occupy but a short time, and implies that the first six acts of this woe, so to speak, will occupy comparatively but a short period.

3dly. The sudden cessation of the outpouring of the vials, and the going forth of the frog-like spirits all over the earth, indicates an interval of some considerable duration between the sixth and the seventh vial.

4thly. The seventh vial completes the prophetic history, so far as regards the judgments of God upon the earth, and extends therefore to the arrival of the marriage supper, c. xix., and the binding of Satan, c. xx. The contents of verses 17—21 are, therefore, only *a programme* of this vial, the details being given more fully in chapters xviii. and xix.

5thly. That the commencement of this woe coincides with the death of the witnesses, and is separated by only a short interval from the second woe. Compare c. ix. 12, 20, 21, and c. x. 7, with c. xi. 14.]

The Harlot borne upon a scarlet-coloured Beast; the destruction of Babylon, c. xvii., xviii.

[These two chapters, like several of the preceding, are clearly supplementary. Mention had been made in the former visions of great Babylon (c. xiv. 8, 20; xvi. 19), but no account had been given of her, nor had anything been said to give even a remote idea as to what city or thing might be intended by the name. It was absolutely required, therefore, in order to give any degree of intelligibility to the preceding prophecies, that great Babylon should be more definitely described. And

accordingly we have here the description wanted. Nor is there, perhaps, any part of the Apocalypse more wonderful than this. The minuteness of detail, combined with the comprehensive brevity of this seventeenth chapter, are truly astonishing.

Great Babylon, regarded both as a city and a Church, is depicted in such a manner that her identity with Rome,—Rome Papal, not Rome Pagan,—cannot be mistaken; and her history, varied and complicated as are its circumstances, is read with one glance of the eye.

But Babylon was “to drink of the wine of the fierceness of God’s wrath.” (Chap. xvi. 19.) In this eighteenth chapter we have the meaning of this part of the prophecy also fully developed, and the terrific end of that mysterious Church and city is placed before us in a living, speaking picture, so graphic and powerful that we almost seem to see the great city sinking “like lead in the mighty waters,” and to hear the ministers of her cruelties and frauds lamenting her fall.]

The Marriage Supper, c. xix. 1—10.

[The thread of the prophecy, which had been broken off at the end of chap. xvi. to introduce the description of Babylon, is here again resumed. The marriage supper, involving the coming of the Bridegroom, follows upon the seventh vial. “*After these things, I heard,*” &c., that is, after the earthquake, and thunderings, and lightnings, &c. had passed away; and *after* Babylon had sunk like a millstone—then did heaven resound with hallelujahs, saying, “The marriage of the Lamb is come.” There can be no doubt, then, as to the chronological position of this vision.]

The Great Battle, c. xix. 11—20.

[This portion of the Revelation is again manifestly supplemental. It is, in fact, the development of the prophecy in c. xvi. 14—16. Three unclean spirits are there seen going forth into all the world to gather together the kings of the earth. Here the Beast and the *kings of the earth* and their armies, are seen assembled to fight against Him who sits upon the white horse, whose name is The Word of God. (Ver. 19, 20.) This great conflict, therefore, takes place under the seventh vial, and before the marriage supper the arrival of which is proclaimed in the former part of the chapter. It is the great battle of Armageddon, and is introductory to the glory and blessedness of the millennial period.]

The Millennium—The first Resurrection—The loosing of Satan at the expiration of the thousand years, and the last great gathering against the camp of the saints—The general Resurrection, and the final Judgment—The New Heaven and Earth, the descent of the Holy City, and restoration of all things, c. xx., xxi. 1—5.

[The only points of difficulty in the chronological arrangement of this portion of the Revelation are these two—the period of the placing of the great white throne, and the descent of the New Jerusalem. Whether these events belong to the *commencement* of the millennium, or take place after its expiration, may admit of doubt. At a first glance, most persons would, perhaps, be disposed to take the latter view; but a more attentive consideration will, I think, lead to a different conclusion. At the same time I must candidly admit, that there are difficulties on both sides which the event, as it appears to me, alone can solve.]—(See Commentary.)

The Holy City, New Jerusalem, described, c. xxi. 9—10,
xxii. 5.

[Here we have another and final supplemental portion. Mention had been made (c. xix. 7, and xxi. 2,) of the bride, the Lamb's wife, and of the holy city, but no description had been given of either one or the other, nor were we informed that they both meant the same thing. We now learn that they are identical, and that the New Jerusalem is but another name for the bride of the Lamb. The introduction of this detailed description here, after the prophecy had reached to the final consummation, is in accordance with the rest of the book, and shows the harmony of plan with which it is written.

This is the last of the things seen, and with this vision, therefore, the prophetic history ends. The great Goel, who is still, let it be observed, presented to us in the character of "a Lamb that had been slain," has taken possession of the redeemed earth, and reigns with his people for ever and ever.]

Chap. xxii. 6—21.

[These sixteen verses contain various detached statements, cautions, and directions, closing with the repetition of the announcement made at the beginning concerning the speedy coming of the Lord.]

Such is an outline of the plan according to which the Revelation will, I confidently believe, be found to be composed. The great object of it is to give us information concerning the condition of the Church during the interval between the first and second advent, and thus correct that mistaken idea of the Jewish people which was once entertained also by the apostles themselves, "that the kingdom of God should immediately appear."

(Luke xix. 11 ; Acts i. 6.) The Apocalypse is, in fact, but a full development of the words of St. Peter to the Jews (Acts iii. 19), on the occasion of his healing the lame man at the beautiful gate of the temple, "Repent ye," said he, "and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, and the times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord ; and He shall send Jesus Christ who before was preached unto you : WHOM THE HEAVENS MUST RECEIVE UNTIL THE TIMES OF THE RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS." It is this fact, that the heavens must receive Christ until the time arrives for the restitution of all things, and that then He will come in person to take possession of the purchased inheritance,* that constitutes the groundwork of the Revelation. We are here taught that the interval between the death of Christ and his coming in glory and majesty, to take to himself his great power and reign, will be a period pregnant indeed with sad and distressing events, and full of mystery ; yet that the final result will be a state of unspeakable glory and blessedness. We have here, in fact, a regular, continuous, methodical narrative in the form of an ALLEGORICAL DRAMA, revealing to us the purposes of God concerning the Church and the world to the end of time. And viewed in this light how deeply interesting, how inestimably valuable does it become. Raised by the help of this Divine book to a lofty point far above any which human foresight or sagacity is able to reach, we can look down with calm composure upon the agitations and changes continually taking place in the world beneath us. We see beyond them ; we know that they have an end. Amidst the revolutions of kingdoms, the ravages of war and pestilence, the triumphing of the

* See Ephes. i. 10—14.

wicked, and the oppression and sufferings of the righteous, the man whose mind is thoroughly imbued with the facts and truths revealed in the Apocalypse, keeps his soul in peace. Instructed by that, he learns to look upon those evils which now in various forms afflict the earth and distract the Church as of momentary duration, and preparatory to future good. He knows that the time is not far distant when they shall altogether cease; and that that period of blessedness is fast approaching, when "there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying," and when "the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads, and they shall reign with Him for ever and ever."

The annexed Synopsis is added to assist the reader in determining the chronological position of the several prophecies.

SYNOPTICAL VIEW OF THE GENERAL ARRANGEMENT AND SYNCHRONISMS OF THE REVELATION.

C. I. 1-6.—TITLE, DIVISIONS, AND EXORDIUM.
 C. I. 7, 8.—THE WORD OF GOD. "Behold, He cometh with clouds."
 THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS CHRIST CONCERNING THE CHURCHES.—C. II., III.

1st Period, from 33 to 137. Ephesus. The declining Church.	2d Period, from 68 to 313. Smyrna. The poor and suffering Church.	3d Period, from 313 to about 600. Pergamos. The exalted Church.	4th Period, from 600 to about 1,000. Thyatira. The sacrificing Church.	5th Period, from 1,000 to 1,517. Sardis. The Church a remnant.	6th Period, from 1,517 to present time. Philadelphia. Church of brotherly love.	7th Period. Present and future. Laodicea. The lukewarm, self-applauding Church.
THE THINGS SEEN.						
C. iv., v. Introductory. vi. 1st Seal, White horse; 2d Red; 4th Pale;	5th Martyrs. 6th Religious revolution. Triumph of Christianity.	{ A short pause. ix. Four first trumpets. V. 13. A pause. } viii.		{ 1-11. Fifth trumpet. (First woe.) 12. A second pause. } 13-21. Sixth trumpet. (Second woe.)	{ An elect remnant standing on Mount Zion. The Gospel proclaimed afresh. Babylon's doom. } xiv.	{ C. xv., xvi. The six first vials. (Third woe.) C. xvi. 13-15. A pause. (The harvest of the earth. The vintage. C. xvi. 17-21. The seventh vial (completes the third woe.) C. xix. The great battle. The marriage supper. }
x., xi. Supplemental to chapters viii. and ix. The mighty angel usurping authority over the earth in the name of Christ. Seven thunders. The Church reduced to a small remnant.	The Witnesses slain.					

xii. Commencement of a new series. The Church in travail. (See Epistle to the Church of Smyrna.)

xiii. The wild beast from the sea.

xiv. The wild beast from the land.

xv. Supplemental to c. xii. and xiii. The Harlot and the beast from the bottomless pit. (See Period the 3d, 4th, 5th, and 6th.)

xvi. The Church flees into the wilderness.

xvii. Christianity exalted to the imperial throne. (See Epistle to the Church of Pergamos.)

xviii. Supplemental to c. xiv. The destruction of Babylon.

xix. The Millennium and first resurrection. The general judgment.

The final warning and testimony.
 "HE WHICH TESTIFIETH THESE THINGS SAITH, SURELY I COME QUICKLY. AMEN."

A PRAYER

ON COMMENCING THE STUDY OF THE APOCALYPSE.

BLESSED Lord, who art the way, the truth, and the life, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, give unto Thy servant an enlightened intellect, a humble mind, and a pure heart, that in entering upon the study of this portion of Thy Word I may not lean to my own understanding, but be guided by Thee; and in seeking help from the writings of men, enable me to exercise a right judgment in all things, that I may discern between truth and error, and so attain to the right interpretation of this book, and receive the blessedness promised to those who keep the sayings which are written therein. Amen.

CHAPTER I. 1—3.

The Title, or Inscription.

THE Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show to his servants things which must shortly come to pass ; and having sent by his angel, 2 he signified them * to his servant John : who bore witness † to the Word of God, and the Testimony of Jesus Christ, and as many things as he saw.

3 Blessed is he that reads, and those who hear the words of the prophecy [of this book], ‡ and who observe the things that are written therein ; for the time is near.

The Salutation and Doxology, c. i. 4—6.

JOHN to the seven churches in Asia, grace be unto you, and peace, from the Him § that is, and was, and is to come ; and from the seven Spirits which 5 are before his throne ; and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the First-born from among the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth.

* Gr. ἐσήμανεν. To show by a sign. † Hath testified. Treg.

‡ Gr. της προφητειας. C. xxii. 18, shows how the ellipsis is to be supplied.

§ Gr. ἀπὸ τοῦ ὁ ὄν.

To him that loved us, and hath washed us from
 6 our sins in his blood; and hath made us kings and
 priests to his God and Father; *—to him be glory
 and might for ever and ever. Amen.

The Word of God, v. 7, 8.

“BEHOLD, HE COMETH WITH CLOUDS,† AND EVERY
 EYE SHALL SEE HIM, AND THEY ALSO WHO PIERCED
 HIM; AND ALL THE TRIBES OF THE EARTH SHALL
 WAIL BECAUSE OF HIM. EVEN SO. AMEN.

8 I AM THE ‡ ALPHA AND THE OMEGA, BEGINNING
 AND END,” saith the Lord, “THAT IS, AND THAT WAS,
 AND THAT IS TO COME: THE ALMIGHTY.”

*Introductory Vision; Christ, the great High Priest,
 walking in the midst of the seven golden Candlesticks,
 and holding the seven stars in his right hand, v. 9—20.*

I, John, both your brother and fellow-sharer§ in
 the tribulation, and the kingdom, and the patient
 expectation || of Christ, was in the island which
 is called Patmos, for the sake of the Word of God,
 10 and the testimony of Jesus Christ: I was in the
 Spirit on the Lord’s-day, and I heard behind me
 a loud voice, as [the sound] of a trumpet, saying,
 11 “[I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the

* Gr. τῷ Θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ αὐτοῦ. Not, therefore, as in our translation, “to God and his Father,” for then the article would have been repeated. Compare John xx. 17. Tr. “Unto him that loveth us, and hath freed us from our sins by his own blood, and he hath made for us a kingdom, priests unto Him who is his God and Father,” &c. He observes, “*hath washed*” is the reading of some authorities, but not of the most ancient MSS.

† Gr. μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν.

‡ Gr. τὸ Α.

§ Gr. συγκοινωνός.

|| Gr. ὑπομονῆ. Compare 2 Thess. iii. 5.

Last ; and]* what thou seest write in a book, and send to the seven churches [which are in Asia] ; * to Ephesus, and to Smyrna, and to Pergamos, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and
 12 to Laodicea.” And I turned to look upon the voice which spake with me : and having turned, I saw
 13 seven golden candlesticks, and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like the Son of Man, clothed in a garment reaching down to the feet, and girt
 14 about the paps with a golden girdle ; his head and his hairs were white like white wool, [even] as snow ;
 15 and his eyes were as a flame of fire : and his feet were like fine brass, as if they burned in † a furnace :
 16 and his voice was as the sound of many waters : and he had in his right hand seven stars : and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword : and his countenance was as the sun when it shineth
 17 in its strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he put his right hand upon me,
 18 saying unto me : “ Fear not ; I am the first and the last ; and I am the living one, ‡ although I became dead ; § and, behold, I am alive for evermore : Amen. And I have the keys of hell || and of death.

* The words in brackets are omitted by Tregelles, not being found in the most ancient MSS.

† Tr. *Glowing with fire as in a furnace.*

‡ Gr. *ὁ ζῶν.*

§ Gr. *ἐγενόμην νεκρός*, which means more than *I was dead* : it implies that the party who speaks became voluntarily a dead man, although not of necessity subject to death. Compare John x. 18.

|| Gr. *τῶν ᾄδων*, of *Hades*, the general receptacle of the souls of the dead. But the Greek name is not sufficiently vernacular to justify its being substituted for our word *hell*, although that word, as signifying exclusively the place of torment, does not convey the meaning of the original. *Grave* would perhaps come nearer.

19 Write the things which thou hast seen, and the
 things which are, and the things which are to be
 20 after these: the mystery of the seven stars which
 thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden
 candlesticks. The seven stars are the messengers*
 of the seven churches; and the seven candlesticks
 which thou sawest are the seven churches.

CHAPTERS II., III.

The Testimony of Jesus Christ.

THE EPISTLES TO THE CHURCHES.

TO THE CHURCH OF EPHESUS, v. 1—7.

To the messenger of the church of Ephesus write :
 These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars
 in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the
 2 seven golden candlesticks. I know thy works, and
 thy labour, and thy patient endurance, and that thou
 canst not bear the evil: and that thou hast proved
 those that say they are apostles, and are not, and
 3 hast found them false; and hast borne, and hast
 patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and
 hast not fainted.

4 Nevertheless I have *this* against thee, that thou
 5 hast let go † thy first love. Remember, therefore,

* The Greek ἀγγέλος means generally a messenger of any sort; and not, as our word *angel*, exclusively a heavenly messenger. See Commentary.

† Gr. ἀφήκας.

- from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I come * unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place, if thou
 6 repent not. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.
- 7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. To him that overcometh † will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst ‡ of the paradise of God.

TO THE CHURCH OF SMYRNA, v. 8—11.

- And to the messenger of the church of the Smyrnæans § write: These things saith the first and
 9 the last, that was dead, and is alive: I know thy works, || and tribulation, and poverty (but thou art rich), and the blasphemy of those that say they are Jews, and are not, but the Synagogue of Satan.
- 10 Fear none of those things which thou art about to suffer. Behold, the devil will 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.
- 11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

He that overcometh shall not be hurt by the second death.

* Gr. *ἔρχομαι*, in the present, to denote the speediness with which the threatening would be fulfilled.

† Or, *To him that endeavours to overcome; to him that is striving for the victory.* The Greek is in the present participle, and might be translated, *To him that is overcoming.*

‡ Tr. *in the paradise.*

§ Tr. *the church in Smyrna.*

|| Tregelles omits *thy works.*

TO THE CHURCH OF PERGAMOS, v. 12—18.

And to the messenger of the Church in Pergamos write: These things saith he that hath the sharp
 13 two-edged sword: I know thy works,* and where thou dwellest, where the throne of Satan is, and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in the days in which Antipas was my faithful martyr,† who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there some that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed
 15 to idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also those that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. ‡

16 Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

To him that overcometh I will give to eat of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth but he that receiveth it.

TO THE CHURCH OF THYATIRA, v. 18—29.

And to the messenger of the Church in Thyatira write: These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes as a flame of fire, and his feet like fine brass:

* Tr. *I know where, &c.*

† Tr. *and in those days was Antipas my witness, my faithful one.*

‡ Tr. *in like manner.*

- 19 I know thy works, and thy love, and service, and
 faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last
 20 to be more than the first. But I have a few things
 against thee, because thou sufferest* the woman
 Jezebel, who calleth herself a prophetess, to teach †
 and to seduce my servants to commit fornication,
 21 and to eat things offered to idols. And I gave her
 time, that she might repent of her fornication, and
 she repented not.
- 22 Behold, I cast her into a bed, ‡ and those that
 commit adultery with her into great tribulation,
 23 if they repent not of their works; and I will kill
 her children with death: and all the churches shall
 know that I am he that searcheth the reins and the
 hearts: and I will give to every one of you according
 to your works.
- 24 But to you I say, even the rest in Thyatira,
 as many as have not this doctrine, and who have not
 known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will
 25 put upon you no other burden; but the things ye
 have, hold fast until I come.
- 26 And he that overcometh and keepeth my works
 to the end, I will give him power over the Gentiles;
 27 and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the
 vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers,

* Tr. *notwithstanding, I have this against thee, that thou lettest alone—*

† Tr. *and she teacheth and deceiveth.*

‡ The received text is *κλίνην, a bed*; the Alexandrine MS., however, reads *φυλακὴν, a prison*. This great variation in MSS. of authority leaves us at liberty to make a conjectural emendation. The true reading, I am inclined to think, is *κλιβανόν*. The phrase “to cast into a bed,” or more properly “a couch,” is unusual and inappropriate; nor does the threat itself, thus expressed, convey the idea of anything greatly to be dreaded.

- 28 as I have received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star.
- 29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

TO THE CHURCH OF SARDIS, c. iii. 1—8.

And to the messenger 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 art dead.

- 2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die: for I have not found
3 thy works perfect before God. Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and hast heard, and hold fast,* and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come upon thee as a thief; and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.
- 4 Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy.
- 5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.
- 6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

TO THE CHURCH OF PHILADELPHIA, v. 7—13.

And to the messenger of the church in Philadelphia write: These things saith the Holy One, the

* *Tr. and observe.*

- True,* that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man
 8 openeth. I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: because thou hast a little strength, and hast kept
 9 my word, and hast not denied my name. Behold, I make of the synagogue of Satan those that say they are Jews, and 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.
 10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of the trial which is about to come upon all the world,† to try those
 11 that are upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold fast what thou hast, that none may take thy crown.
 12 He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go forth no more; 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 I will write upon him my new name.
 13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

TO THE CHURCH OF LAODICEA, v. 14—22.

And to the messenger of the church of the Laodiceans ‡ write: These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God:

- 15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot.

* A. V. *he that is holy, he that is true.* † Tr. *the whole world.*

‡ Tr. *in Laodicea.*

- 16 I would thou wert either cold or hot ; so then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spue thee out of my mouth.
- 17 Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing ; and knowest not that thou art the wretched, and miserable, and
- 18 poor, and blind, and naked one ;* I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich ; and white garments, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness may not appear ; and eyesalve, to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see.
- 19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten : be zealous, therefore, and repent.
- 20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock. If any man will hear my voice, and will open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.
- 21 He that overcometh, I will grant to him to sit with me upon my throne, as I also overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.
- 22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

CHAPTER IV.

THE THINGS WHICH THE APOSTLE SAW AFTER THE VISION
OF THE SEVEN GOLDEN CANDLESTICKS.

Christ the Creator receiving the homage of all creatures.

AFTER these things † I looked, and behold a door

* Gr. ὁ θαλάσσιος, κ. τ. λ.

† Gr. μετὰ τὰυτα. Compare this with c. i., ver. 19, and see Commentary.

was opened in the sky :* and the first voice which I had heard as the sound of a trumpet, [I heard] speaking to me, † saying, “Come up hither, and I will show thee the things which are to be after these.” And immediately I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne was placed in the sky, and one was sitting upon the throne ; and he that sat was in appearance like a jasper and a sardine stone ; and there was a rainbow around the throne in appearance like an emerald. And around the throne there were four and twenty thrones ; ‡ and upon the thrones I saw the four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white garments ; and they had upon their heads golden crowns. And out of the throne there were proceeding lightnings, and thunderings, and voices. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. And before the throne there was a sea § of glass, like crystal ; and in the middle space || of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures, ¶ full of eyes, before and behind. And the first living creature was like a lion, and the second living creature was like a calf, and the third living creature had the

* I think this conveys more exactly the idea of the original than the A. V., which is *heaven*.

† A. V. *And the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me.*

‡ The Greek word is the same as in ver. 2.

§ *i.e.*, a large vessel, a *lavacrum*.

|| Gr. *ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ θρόνου καὶ κύκλῳ τοῦ θρόνου.* *i.e.*, *in the midst of the circle which encompassed the throne.*

¶ Gr. ζῶα. The authorized rendering of this word *beasts*, is one of the greatest mistakes our translators have made ; as it confounds things entirely different. The word *θηρίον*, which properly signifies a beast, is always the emblem of a persecuting power.

face like a man, and the fourth living creature was
 8 like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures,
 each one by himself, had six wings about him ; and
 within they were full of eyes : and they have no rest
 day or night, saying, “ Holy, holy, holy, Lord, the
 Almighty God,* who was, and is, and is to come.”
 9 And when the living creatures give † glory and
 honour and thanksgiving to him that sitteth upon
 10 the throne, that liveth for ever and ever, the four
 and twenty elders fall down before him that sitteth
 upon the throne, and worship him that liveth for
 ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the
 11 throne, saying, “ Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive
 the glory, and the honour, and the power, for thou
 hast created all things ; and by thy will they are,
 and were created.”

CHAPTER V.

*The Seven-sealed Book ; none found worthy to open it ;
 Christ, as the Lamb that had been slain, comes forward
 and takes the book ; the four living creatures acknow-
 ledge his right to do so, and all the ransomed Church
 celebrate him as the Redeemer.*

AND I saw in the ‡ right hand of him that sat upon
 the throne a book written within and without, sealed
 2 with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel pro-

* This is the literal rendering of the Greek, and not, as in the A. V.—
 “ Lord God Almighty.”

† The Greek verb is in the future, δώσουσι.

‡ Gr. ἐπὶ τὴν δεξιὰν. The more natural translation of which would be,
 at, or on, the right hand. But in c. xx. 1, we have exactly the same con-

claiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open
 3 the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" And no
 one * in heaven, nor upon earth, nor under the earth,
 was able to open the book, nor to look thereon.
 4 And I wept much because no one was found worthy
 to open and to read the book, nor to look thereon.
 5 And one of the elders saith to me, "Weep not:
 behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of
 David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose
 6 the seven seals thereof." And I looked, and behold
 in the midst of the throne and of the four living
 creatures, and in the midst of the elders, there stood
 a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and
 seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent
 7 forth into all the earth. And he came and took
 the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon
 8 the throne. And when he had taken the book, the
 four living creatures and the four and twenty elders
 fell down before the Lamb, having each of them
 harps, and golden vessels † full of incense, which are
 9 the prayers of the saints. And they sung a new
 song, saying, "Thou art worthy to take the book,
 and to open the seals thereof, for thou wast slain,
 and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, from
 every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation;
 10 and hast made us to our God kings, and priests, and
 we shall reign upon the earth." ‡

struction (the preposition *επι* with an accusative), and there can be no doubt as to the meaning. The chain was *in* the right hand of the angel. We may, therefore, adopt the A. V. here without hesitation, although the other rendering would be more in accordance with the rules of grammar.

* A. V. *man*.

† *φιάλας*, *bowls*, or flat, open vessels, for offering libations.

‡ Tr. "*And thou hast made them unto our God a kingdom and priests;*

11 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many
 angels around the throne, and the living creatures,
 and the elders: and their number was myriads of
 12 myriads, and thousands of thousands; saying with
 a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to
 receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength,
 13 and honour, and glory, and blessing." And every
 creature that is in heaven, and on earth, and under
 the earth, and such as are in the sea, even all things
 that are in them, heard I, saying, "Blessing, and
 honour, and glory, and might, be unto him that
 sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever
 14 and ever." And the four living creatures said,
 "Amen." And the four and twenty elders fell down
 and worshipped * him that liveth for ever and ever.

CHAPTER VI.

The Lamb opens six seals of the book.

AND I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals;
 and I heard one of the four living creatures saying,
 2 as the sound of thunder, † "Come and see." And
 I looked, and behold a white horse: and he that sat
 on him had a bow; and a crown ‡ was given unto
and they reign on the earth. Note.—Thus in the most ancient authorities,
 Greek and Latin; others read "*kings and priests.*" In this instance the
 less ancient authorities appear to give the better reading.

* These last words, *him that liveth, &c.*, are omitted by Tregelles.

† Tr. *as it were with a voice of thunder.*

‡ Gr. *στέφανος*, *a crown of victory*, not the diadem, the crown of
 sovereignty. This, however, the *στέφανος*, was the crown the Roman
 emperors wore in St. John's days.

him : and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.*

3 And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come and see."

4 And there went forth another horse of the colour of fire; † and it was given to him that sat thereon to take away the peace ‡ from the earth, and that they should slay one another : and there was given him a great sword.

5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, "Come and see."

6 And I looked, and behold a black horse, and he that sat on him had a pair of balances § in his hand ; and I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures, saying, "A chœnix || of wheat for a denarius, and three chœnixes of barley for a denarius,

7 and, hurt thou not the wine and the oil." And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature, saying, "Come and see."

8 And I looked, and behold, a pale ¶ horse, and the name of him that sat upon him was Death,** and

* Or, *and that he might conquer ; i.e.*, might go on conquering till all enemies should be subdued.

† Gr. *πυρρός*, *fiery red*.

‡ Gr. *την εἰρήνην*, *the peace*, referring to a time of peace which had previously prevailed.

§ Gr. *ζυγόν*, which some would render *a yoke*; and it undoubtedly has this meaning as well as the other, but the generality of commentators give it the same sense as our translators.

|| Gr. *χόμιξ*. A. V., *measure*. The Vulgate is, *Bilibris tritici denario*, two pounds weight (or a quart) of wheat for a denarius. So Horace, *Cornu ipse bilibrî caulibus instillat*, He pours the oil from a quart measure.—*Sat.* l. ii. 2; l. 61.—See Commentary.

¶ Gr. *χλωρός*, *a palish green*.

** Or, *Pestilence*, or *disease*. The Greek is *Θάνατος*; but this is the word used also at the end of the verse, where it must mean the *cause* or *instrument* of death, not death itself. Nor is there anything unusual in

the grave * followed with him. And power was given to them † to slay [men] over the fourth part of the earth ‡ with the sword, and with hunger, and with pestilence, § and by the wild beasts of the earth.

9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which
10 they held ; and they cried with a loud voice, saying, “ How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on those that dwell upon
11 the earth ? ” And there were given to each of them white robes, and it was said to them, that they should rest yet a little time, until their fellowservants also

this sense of the word. In fact, the Hebrew זָרָה which signifies *pestilence*, is constantly rendered in the Sept., by *θάνατος*. Thus, in Ezekiel xiv. 21, where God's four sore judgments are spoken of, the last of them, the *pestilence*, is throughout expressed by *θάνατος*. So Cyprian calls his treatise on the plague, *De Mortalitate*.

* Or, *Hades*. See c. i. 18.

† Mr. Elliott here adopts the reading of Griesbach, *αὐτοῖς*, *him*, for *αὐτοῖς*, *them* ; but Mills gives no various reading in this place, nor has Griesbach, I imagine, any good authority for the alteration, which is, nevertheless, a very important one, and ought not to have been made but upon the concurrent evidence of several MSS. of the highest authority ; for the interpretation of the preceding horses and their riders depends very much upon whether we read the promise in the singular or plural. If in the singular, then the instruments of destruction, the sword, famine, &c., must all belong to this seal ; but if the pronoun be read in the plural, as I have no doubt it ought to be, then the word, “ and power was given unto *them*,” must refer to the instruments of death described under the former seals, and the words which follow at once fix clearly and definitely their meaning.—(See Comment.) Tregelles says, “ *Given unto him*, is the reading of some authorities, but not the most ancient.”

‡ The A. V. is, “ And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill,” &c., which is the reading of the Alexandrian MS. But the more generally received reading is according to the translation I have given, and is that followed by Mr. Elliott. The Vulgate rendering of this verse is, “ Et data est illi potestas super quatuor partes terræ interficere gladio, fame, et morte, et bestiis terræ.”

§ See note (**) p. 43.

and their brethren who were about to be killed as they had been, should be filled up.

- 12 And I looked when he had opened the sixth seal, and lo, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon
13 became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts down her unripe figs, when
14 shaken by a mighty wind. And the heavens departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island was moved out of its
15 place. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the captains of thousands, and the mighty, and every bondman, and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens and rocks
16 of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall upon us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and
17 from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come, and who can stand?"

CHAPTER VII.

THIS CHAPTER CONTAINS A SUPPLEMENTARY VISION
BETWEEN THE VISION OF THE SIXTH AND SEVENTH SEALS.

A hundred and forty-four thousand are sealed from all the tribes of Israel; a great multitude without number bearing palms stand before the throne; the Apostle is told whence they came, and how they obtained their white robes.

AND after these things,* I saw four angels standing

* Tr. after this.

- upon the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind might not blow upon the earth, nor upon the sea, nor upon any tree.
- 2 And I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God, and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was given
- 3 to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, " Hurt not the earth nor the sea, nor the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God upon their foreheads."
- 4 And I heard the number of the sealed: a hundred and forty-four thousand were sealed, of all the tribes
- 5 of the children of Israel. From the tribe of Judah were sealed twelve thousand :

From the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand :

From the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand :

- 6 From the tribe of Ashur were sealed twelve thousand :

From the tribe of Naphtali were sealed twelve thousand :

From the tribe of Manasseh were sealed twelve thousand :

- 7 From the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand :

From the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand :

From the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand :

- 8 From the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand :

From the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand :

From the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.

- 9 . After this I looked, and lo, a great multitude which no man could number from every nation, and tribes, and people, and tongues, were standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white
- 10 robes and with palms in their hands ; and they cried with a loud voice, saying, “ Salvation unto our God that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.”
- 11 And all the angels stood around the throne, and the elders, and the four living creatures, and fell down before the throne on their faces, and worshipped
- 12 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.”
- 13 And one of the elders spake,* and said unto me : “ These that are clothed with the white robes,
- 14 who are they ? and whence came they ? ” And I said to him, “ Sir, thou knowest.” And he said to me : “ These are they who are come out of the great tribulation ; † and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the
- 15 Lamb : therefore are they before the throne of God ; and they serve him day and night in his temple : and he that sitteth upon the throne shall dwell
- 16 among ‡ them : they shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more ; neither shall the sun light upon
- 17 them, nor any heat : § for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead

* It is difficult to account for the use of the Greek word ἀπεκρίθη in this and many similar instances. No question had been asked, and therefore no answer could be given.

† Gr. ἐκ τῆς θλίψεως τῆς μεγάλης.

‡ Or, literally, *shall tabernacle over them.*

§ Or, *burning thing.*

them to living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.

CHAPTER VIII.

The opening of the Seventh Seal: half-an-hour's silence in heaven: seven angels with trumpets appear: the sounding of the four first trumpets.

- AND when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven as about the space of half-
2 an-hour. And I saw the seven angels that stood before God, and to them were given seven trumpets.
3 And another angel came and stood at the altar having a golden censer, and there was given him much incense, that he might present it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar that
4 was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense went up with the prayers of the saints from
5 the hand of the angel before God. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire from the altar, and cast it to the earth; and there were voices, and
6 thunders, and lightnings, and an earthquake. And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.
7 And the first angel sounded, and there was hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and a third part of the trees were burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.
8 And the second angel sounded, and as it were, a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the

- 9 sea; and the third part of the sea became blood: and the third part of the creatures in the sea which had life* died, and a third part of the ships were destroyed.
- 10 And the third angel sounded, and a great star fell from heaven burning like a torch, and it fell upon a third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains
- 11 of waters. And the name of the star is called Wormwood, and the third part of the waters became as wormwood, and many of the men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.
- 12 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 might be darkened, and the third part of the day might not shine, and the night in like manner.

The announcement of the angel flying in the midst of heaven, v. 13.

AND I BEHELD, AND I HEARD AN ANGEL THAT WAS FLYING IN THE MIDST OF HEAVEN, SAYING, WITH A LOUD VOICE, "WOE, WOE, WOE TO THOSE THAT DWELL UPON THE EARTH, BECAUSE OF THE REMAINING VOICES OF THE TRUMPET OF THE THREE ANGELS, WHICH HAVE YET TO SOUND."

* Gr. τὰ ζῶοντα ψυχάς, lit. *that had souls*.

CHAPTER IX.

The locust woe of five months, ver. 1—11.

AND the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven to the earth, and there was given to him
2 the key of the bottomless pit.* And he opened the bottomless pit, and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and
3 the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit; and out of the smoke there came locusts upon the earth, and there was power given to them, as the scorpions
4 of the earth have power. And it was commanded them, that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only those men who had not the seal of God upon their
5 foreheads. And [a charge] 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 he strikes a man.
6 And in those days men shall seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall
7 flee from them. And the shapes of the locusts were like horses prepared for battle; and upon their heads there were as crowns, like crowns of gold; and their
8 faces were as the faces of men: and they had hair like the hair of women, and their teeth were as the
9 teeth of lions. And they had breastplates as breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses rushing to
10 battle. And they had tails like scorpions, and there

* Or, *of the abyss.*

were stings in their tails. And their power was
 11 to hurt men five months ; and they have a king over
 them : the angel of the bottomless pit,* whose name
 in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon,† but in the Greek
 tongue he hath his name Apollyon.‡

*The termination of the first woe noted: two more woes
 announced, ver. 12.*

THE FIRST WOE HATH PAST AWAY ; BEHOLD, THERE
 COME YET TWO WOES HEREAFTER.

*The sixth angel sounds, and four angels, bound on the
 river Euphrates, are loosed to slay a third part of
 men ; a description of the forces employed in inflicting
 this woe ; its effects upon Christendom, vers.
 13—21.*

And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard one§ voice
 from the four horns of the golden altar before God,
 14 saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet,||
 “ Loose the four angels that have been bound upon the
 15 great river Euphrates.” And the four angels were
 loosed, (the angels) which had been prepared for (or
until) the hour, and day, and month, and year,¶ that
 16 they might slay the third part of the men.** And the
 number of the armies of horse was two myriads of
 17 myriads : and I heard the number of them. And
 also I saw the horses in the vision, and those that
 sat upon them, having breastplates of the colour of

* Or, of the abyss.

† and ‡ Both which names signify the same thing, *the destroyer*.

§ Gr. φωνήν μίαν.

|| Tr. *saying to the sixth angel*, “ Thou who hast the trumpet,” &c.

¶ Gr. οἱ ἡτοιμασμένοι εἰς τὴν ὥραν καὶ ἡμέραν καὶ μῆνα καὶ ἐνιαυτόν.

** *i.e.*, the men who had the mark of the beast.

fire, and purple, and brimstone; and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions, and out of their mouths proceeded fire, and smoke, and brimstone.
 18 By these three were the third part of the men slain by the fire, and the smoke, and the brimstone which
 19 proceeded out of their mouths. For their power is in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails were like serpents, having heads; and with them they do hurt.

Hardening effect of the foregoing woes.

20 And the rest of the men who were not slain in these plagues repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship dæmons,* and images † of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and wood,
 21 which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk. Neither did they repent of their murders, nor of their sorceries, ‡ nor of their fornications, nor of their thefts.

CHAPTER X.

The apostle sees another mighty angel standing upon the sea and upon the land: he roars like a lion and seven thunders send forth a responsive sound, but the apostle is commanded not to write what they utter: the oath of the angel: the apostle is commanded to eat the

* Gr. δαίμονα, a sort of inferior deities, or deified men. See Commentary.

† This is the literal meaning of the Greek word εἰδωλον, which signifies an image of any kind.

‡ Gr. φαρμάκειων, which means the employment of drugs for the purpose of stupifying persons and preventing their perceiving any deception that may be practised upon them.

little book in his hand which, though sweet to the taste, proves bitter to the stomach.

AND I saw another mighty angel descending from heaven, clothed 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 opened: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot upon the earth, and he cried with a loud voice as a lion roareth; and when he had cried, the seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write, and I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, “Seal up the things which the seven thunders have uttered, and write them not.” And the angel whom I saw standing upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand † to heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created 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 the time should not be yet; ‡ but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he should sound § the mystery of God also should be completed, as

* This is the reading of the most ancient MSS., and is adopted by Tregelles. The A. V. omits the definite article. The difference is of some importance. See the Commentary.

† Tr. *right hand*.

‡ Gr. *ὅτι χρόνος οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι*. The A. V. is, *that there should be time no longer*; but the context, I think, shows that the meaning of the declaration is, not that there would no longer be such a thing as time, but that the period for the accomplishment of God's purposes should not be prolonged beyond a certain point.

§ The construction of the Greek in this passage is very involved and difficult: *ὅταν μέλλῃ σαλπίζειν καὶ τελεσθῇ τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ Θεοῦ*. Literally, *when he should be about to sound, and the mystery of God should have been finished*. It would seem as if some word or words were wanting. Or, St. John may here write according to the Hebrew idiom, which

8 he had declared by his servants the prophets. And
 the voice which I heard from heaven (I heard) speak-
 ing with me again, and saying, "Go, take the little
 book which is open in the hand of the angel that is
 9 standing upon the sea and upon the earth." And I
 went to the angel, and said to him, "Give me the
 little book." And he said to me, "Take, and eat it
 up; and it shall make thy bowels * bitter, although
 10 in thy mouth it shall be sweet as honey." And
 I took the little book out of the hand of the angel,
 and ate it up. And it was in my mouth as sweet as
 honey; and when I had eaten it my bowels were
 11 bitter. And it was said unto † me, "Thou must
 prophesy again concerning ‡ people, and nations, and
 tongues, and many kings."

expresses a future result when the verb is preceded by the conjunction *and* in the past tense. Thus, *e.g.*, the literal translation of Gen. vi. 3 would be, "And Jehovah saith, My spirit shall not always strive with man, and his days *have been* a hundred and twenty years." So c. vii. 4 literally translated would be, "For yet seven days and I will cause it to rain upon the earth; and *I have wiped away* every living substance that I have made," &c. Now, supposing St. John to adopt in this instance the Hebrew idiom, as is not improbable, the translation becomes very easy, — *In the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall have sounded, the mystery of God shall be finished.*

* A. V. *belly*. Gr., *κοιλίαν*.

† This is the translation of Tregelles, who reads on the authority of ancient MSS., *και λεγουσι μοι*, which I have no doubt is the true reading, as being in accordance with all the other particulars of the prophecy. See Commentary.

‡ The Greek preposition *ἐπι* answers to the Latin *super*, and often, with a dative, means *about*, or *concerning*, but never *before*. We have *ἐπι πατροκλω*, *of or about Patroclus*; and *ἐπι τινι ειπειν*, *to speak upon or about any one*. (See Donnegan's Lexicon.) Were the meaning, as in our translation, *before* or *in the presence of*, the nouns would be in the genitive. The difference in the sense is of considerable importance. The Vulg. is, *Oporet te iterum prophetare gentibus et populis*, &c. Tregelles, *Thou must prophesy again against peoples, &c.*

CHAPTER XI.

The temple is measured, and the outer court excluded, as being given up to the Gentiles and polluted, and not therefore to be reckoned a part of the temple; two witnesses clothed in sackcloth prophesy twelve hundred and sixty days, at the expiration of which they are slain by the beast that would arise out of the abyss, vers. 1—13.

AND there was given me a reed like a rod; and it was said to me,* Arise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and those that worship
 2 therein: but the court, which is without the temple, cast out, and measure it not, for it is given to the Gentiles; and the holy city shall they tread down
 3 forty and two months. And I will appoint † my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy twelve hundred
 4 and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks that stand

* The A. V. is, "And there was given me a reed like unto a rod, and the angel stood, saying, Rise," &c. But the words "*and the angel stood*" are not found in any of the most ancient MSS., nor in the Vulg. The Greek, according to the MSS. of highest authority, runs thus: *και εδοθη μοι καλαμος ως ραβδος, λεγων.* The Vulg. is, "Et datus est mihi calamus similis virgæ, et dictum est mihi, Surge," &c. There is no good authority, therefore, for making the angel the speaker of these words.—(See Commentary.)

† A. V. *I will give power.* Tr. *I will endow.* But I think the word *δωσω* is here evidently to be taken in the Hebrew sense of *nominating* or *appointing*, as in Gen. ix. 12, 13, where what we translate, *I do make my covenant*, and, *I do set my bow*, is, literally, "I do *give my bow*," &c. So Gen. xvii. 5, "A father of many nations I have made thee," in the Heb. is, "I have *given* thee."

5 before the God * of the earth. And if any one wills
 to hurt them, † fire goes out of their mouth, and
 devours their enemies : and if any wills to hurt them,
 6 so must he be killed. These have power to shut
 heaven, that it may not rain during the days of their
 prophecy : and they have power over the waters
 to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with
 every plague, as often as they will.

7 And when they shall have finished their testimony,
 the wild beast that ariseth out of the bottomless pit ‡
 8 shall make war with them, and overcome them, and
 kill them : and their dead body § shall lie in the broad
 place of the great city, which is called spiritually Sodom
 9 and Egypt, where also our || Lord was crucified. And
 some from ¶ the people, and tribes, and tongues, and
 nations shall see their dead bodies three days and a-half,
 and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.

10 And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over
 them, and shall exult, and send gifts to one another,
 because these two prophets tormented those that
 11 dwell upon the earth. And after the three days and
 a-half the spirit of life from God entered into them,
 and they stood upon their feet : and great fear fell
 12 upon those that saw them. And they heard a great
 voice out of heaven, saying to them : “ Come up

* The Alexandrine MS. reads *κυριου, Lord.*

† Gr. *θέλη ἀδικῆσαι.*

‡ Or, *abyss.* See e. xvii. 8.

§ I adopt here the reading of Tregelles as being that of the most ancient MSS.

|| The Vulgate and some ancient MSS. have *their.* So Tregelles. Notwithstanding, I think *our* preferable. See Commentary.

¶ Gr. *καὶ βλέψουσιν ἐκ τῶν λαῶν.* The word *τινες* seems to be wanting. A. V. *and they of the people, &c.*

hither.” And they ascended up to heaven in the *
 13 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 slain in the
 earthquake seven thousand names of men.† And
 the rest became terrified,‡ and gave glory to the
 God of heaven.

The completion of the second woe declared, and the immediate approach of the third woe announced, ver. 14.

“THE SECOND WOE HATH PAST AWAY; BEHOLD,
 THE THIRD WOE COMETH QUICKLY.”

The seventh trumpet sounds, and is followed by an announcement, that the kingdoms of this world are abolished, and have become the kingdoms of the Lord and his anointed, vers. 15—19.

And the seventh angel sounded, and there were
 loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms § of
 this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and
 of his anointed; and he shall reign for ever and ever.”
 16 And the four and twenty elders who sat before God
 upon their thrones, fell upon their faces, and wor-
 17 shipped God, saying, “We give thee thanks, O Lord the
 almighty God, that art, and wast, and art to come,||

* Gr. ἐν τῇ νεφέλῃ, the *cloud*, i.e., the cloud with which the angel standing upon the earth and sea was clothed, for there is no mention of any other. See Commentary.

† Gr. ὀνόματα ἀνθρώπων χιλιάδες ἑπτὰ. The A. V. is, *of men seven thousand*; so that our translators take no notice of the ὀνόματα.

‡ A. V. *were affrighted*. But *became terrified* is a more literal rendering of the Greek ἐμφοβοὶ ἐγένοντο.

§ Tr. *The sovereignty of the world hath become the sovereignty, &c.*

|| Tr. *The one who is, and who was.*

that thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and dost
18 reign.* And the Gentiles were enraged, and thy wrath
is come, and the time of the dead that they should be
judged, and that thou shouldest give their reward
unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints,
and to those that fear thy name, small and great :
and that thou shouldest destroy those that destroy
the earth.”

19 And the temple of God was opened in heaven,
and there was seen the ark of his covenant in his
temple ; and there were lightnings, and voices, and
thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

* A. V. *hast reigned* ; but this is manifestly ungrammatical¹

CHAPTER I. 1—3.

THE INSCRIPTION, OR TITLE OF THE BOOK.

“ A revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to him to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass,” &c.

THE very title of this book partakes of the Divine and heavenly character of its contents; and whilst it is calculated to awaken the earnest and solemn attention of the reader, may well excite the fears of the commentator. We are reminded that we are about to tread on holy ground, and that it behoves us to enter upon the study of this book with minds solemnized by previous meditation and prayer, and peculiarly freed from the pollutions and distractions of the world. If the reader has begun the perusal of these pages with thoughtless levity, or in the spirit of captious criticism, I would entreat him to pause, and with a heart uplifted to God in prayer, to seek for the illumination and guidance of that Divine Spirit, by whose help alone we can be preserved from error, and attain to the knowledge of truth.

THIS book is A REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST. It has been made a question whether this means simply a revelation of things future given by Christ, or a revelation of Christ himself; that is to say, an especial manifestation of the glory of Christ, a more detailed and

circumstantial account of his everlasting kingdom, than is to be found in any other part of Scripture. I should be inclined to adopt the latter view, were it not that we are expressly told that the purpose for which this revelation was given is “to show us things that must shortly come to pass.” This, then, seems to put the object of the Revelation beyond dispute. At the same time, I think this inscription may be intended to embrace the other idea also, and that in entitling this book, “A revelation of Jesus Christ,” God may have intended to prepare us for those wonderful discoveries concerning him which we afterwards meet with. For in no other part of Scripture shall we find the glory of the Redeemer, and the various offices he sustains, so strikingly set forth. There is no character or office ascribed to Christ in the Scriptures in which he is not presented to us here, and that with a surpassing richness of language and imagery truly astonishing. Whether he be brought before us as the High Priest of his Church, with “his eyes as a flame of fire;” or as the everlasting Creator seated upon his throne; or, as “the Lamb that had been slain;” or as “the Lion of the tribe of Judah;” or, as the universal King, crowned with many diadems, it is with a sublimity of thought and power of language far above the conceptions of man, and altogether divine. Well, therefore, may this book be called, “A revelation of Jesus Christ.”

“*Which God gave unto him,*” &c.—In reading the New Testament we must never lose sight of the two-fold nature of our Lord, and of his mediatorial character as God and man. As God, he is one with the Father; as man, he is one with us; and thus, as the man Christ Jesus, he is the medium of communication between God the Creator, and man the creature. He is the con-

necting link between heaven and earth, and in an incomprehensible manner unites the finite with the infinite; that which is material with that which is spiritual. These considerations resolve the apparent difficulty in the words, *which God gave unto him*, and which at first sight may seem inconsistent with the divinity of our Lord. It was as the *man Christ Jesus* that he received from God this revelation that he might communicate it to his servants. In all this there is nothing of *original inferiority*; nothing of *original dependance*. It was only because he voluntarily *emptied himself* of his glory, and took upon him the form of the creature, and so became a *recipient*, that such language as the above is applicable to the Second Person of the Trinity. (Compare Matt. xxviii. 18; John i. 16, 19; Phil. ii. 5—11.)

“*To show unto his servants,*” &c.—Here there are two things deserving the reader’s attention: viz., the purpose for which the Revelation was given, and the time when the things it foretels are to take place.

Now with reference to the first point, let it be noted, that the Revelation is given to the *servants of God*; to *the Church*, not to the world; and it is given to them for the express purpose of making known to them the future purposes of God, in order that they may not be left in total darkness as to when and how his promises made to the Church will be accomplished. And this purpose the Revelation answers. For, however much difference of opinion there may be as to the interpretation of particular parts, there can be none as to the general view which these prophecies give of the future glory of the Church and the blessedness of the righteous. No one can read this book and not perceive that it foretels much temporary suffering and great eternal

glory : a long and fearful struggle between Christ and Satan, the Church and its enemies ; but as the final result of this struggle, triumph, and blessedness, and rest. And although it may be to a certain extent true, that “the prophecies were not given to make us prophets,”* yet it is obvious, that this statement at the very commencement of the book regarding the purpose for which the Revelation was communicated, is intended to encourage the sober, humble, and patient investigation, even of those prophecies the fulfilment of which is yet future.

With respect to the second point, the question of time involved in the words, “which must shortly come to pass,” this, I think, must unquestionably be taken as referring to the whole period of the prophecy from the beginning to the end. That is to say, “the things which must shortly come to pass,” are not merely the things which must shortly *begin* to happen, but “the things all of which shall shortly be accomplished.” So that the *shortly* belongs, as I have just said, to the whole prophetic period embraced in the Revelation. Nor is it any objection to this view, that nearly two thousand years have passed away, and yet that period is not expired. For precisely the same language is used in regard to the second coming of our Lord (Behold, I come quickly); but we know, notwithstanding, he is not yet come. And as, therefore, that coming which is to take place at the close of the period, is spoken of as near, although still future, much more, surely, may the whole prophetic period itself be regarded as relating to events all of which must “shortly come to pass.”

2. “*Who bare witness to the Word of God,*” &c.—This is an important verse, and demands a careful and

* This was the remark of Sir Isaac Newton.

attentive examination ; for it contains a summary account of the contents of the Apocalypse, and affords, if I mistake not, a clue to the structure, and consequently to the right interpretation, of the whole book. The apostle here tells us that he bore witness to three things, namely, the Word of God, the Testimony of Jesus Christ, and, *the things which he saw*. Now, what can this mean, but that the revelation of which he had spoken in the former verse was communicated to him in these three ways, and that what he was now about to write was a true and faithful relation of what he had seen and what he had heard, *i. e.*, of the words which had been spoken to him by the voice of God, of the Testimony which he had received from Christ personally, and of the things which had been shown to him? I do not see how the apostle's words can be satisfactorily explained in any other way. *The Word of God* and *the Testimony of Jesus Christ* must be taken in connexion with the other clause, *the things seen*, and as these latter form part of the contents of the book, being some of the things which John was commanded to write, so must the two former; and we must consequently look for, and expect to find written in the book, both God's Word and Christ's Testimony, as things altogether distinct and separate from those which in vision were exhibited to the eye of the apostle.*

Nor shall we find much difficulty hereafter in determining what those portions of the book are which

* It is true we meet with the same expressions in ver. 9, where there is no reference to the particular witness of St. John contained in this book; but neither is there any mention there of the things seen; what he speaks of therefore in that place, is simply the Word of God, and the Testimony of Christ generally. He was banished because he persisted in bearing witness to the truth of God's Word.

constitute severally and distinctively these three divisions, the *Word*, the *Testimony*, and the *Visions*. The first is comprised in six verses, two at the beginning, and perhaps four at the end (c. i. 7, 8; xxi. 5—8); the second in the Epistles to the Churches (c. ii., iii.); and the third in the remainder of the book. The grounds on which this arrangement is assumed to exist will appear as we proceed.

3. "*Blessed is he that reads,*" &c.—There is allusion here to the manner in which books in St. John's days were generally read. This was not, as amongst ourselves, in solitude, each person having his own book and reading to himself, but in companies, the dearth and consequent scarcity of books rendering it impossible for all who were fond of reading to enjoy this pleasure alone. Hence, when a new book of great interest was announced, it was customary for a large number of persons to assemble together to hear it read, the reader very frequently being the writer himself.* This then accounts for the language here employed. And we may well imagine the intense interest with which the members of the Churches to whom this book was sent would gather round the reader to hear read the words of their beloved pastor, now an exile on a barren rock, written under such peculiar circumstances. And shall they have less interest to us? Now that nearly eighteen centuries have passed away, and so much that is here written has manifestly been fulfilled, and the time of the end is drawing near, shall we regard this book, on the reading of which so peculiar a blessing is pronounced, with apathetic indifference, and whilst the rest of God's

* ————— Mea nemo

Scripta legat, vulgo recitare timentis.—*Hor. Sat.*, l. I., iv. 22.

Word is read with reverence and attention, pass it by as unworthy of our notice? Shall we, in reading the New Testament, when we come to the Revelation, close the book, and begin again at the Gospel of St. Matthew?

The Salutation and Doxology, c. i. 4—6.

“*John to the seven churches in Asia, grace be unto you, and peace,*” &c.—The first question which naturally arises in the mind on reading this inscription is, why a book intended for the benefit of the universal Church in all ages should be addressed to seven particular churches? It must be obvious, however, to every person acquainted with the phraseology of the Scriptures, that the number seven is used as a number of *completeness*, not of *limitation*. Throughout the Revelation, as indeed everywhere in the Bible, the number seven implies completeness, perfection, universality, and unity. Thus, in this verse the *seven* spirits before the throne are the *ONE* Spirit (Ephes. iv. 4) which pervades the Church, and not seven spirits personally distinct and separate, the number seven being used merely to signify the universality and perfection of the Spirit’s gifts; according to the words of the apostle, “*All these worketh that ONE and the selfsame spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.*” (1 Cor. xii. 11.) So the seals (chap. v.), the trumpets (chap. viii.), the vials (chap. xv.) are *seven*, neither more nor less. There are no other seals, trumpets, or vials mentioned anywhere in this book; all are included in the seven of each. Thus then these seven churches must be regarded as representing the one universal visible Church; not only the entire Church then existing, but the whole visible Church in all ages, which is thus addressed through them; God having so ordered, as I

conceive, the circumstances as well as the names of these seven particular churches, that they should correspond with the circumstances of the universal Church at different periods of its history, as also with the circumstances of individual Christians in different periods of their religious experience. This idea will be fully developed when we come to the consideration of the epistles to the churches ; it is here brought forward merely to show the impossibility, as it seems to me, of giving a satisfactory explanation of this circumstance on any other hypothesis. A difficulty meets us at the very opening of the Apocalypse, and unless we admit that these seven Asiatic churches are a type of the one universal Church, I see not how this difficulty is to be got over. But, I trust, it will be proved to demonstration that these seven churches are, as St. Paul speaks, “an allegory,” and that what was said to them was addressed through them to the Church universal.

“*From the Him that is, and was, and is to come,*” &c.—In this benediction there is a very plain intimation of a trinity of persons in the Godhead. The words, *Him that is, and was, and is to come*, are a periphrasis of the name JEHOVAH, which signifies the eternal, self-existent Being, (see Ex. iii. 14), “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,” “with whom is no variableness, nor shadow of turning.”* The phrase, the *seven spirits*, has been already explained. Respecting the other clauses containing the titles here given to our Lord, it will be found that they describe the threefold office he sustains in the

* Heb. xiii. 8; James i. 17; see also Heb. ix. 14. These passages being compared together show that eternity and immutability are not the exclusive attributes of the Father, but belong equally to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

Church; the first having relation to his ministry as a Prophet, the second to his atonement as a Priest, and the third to his regal authority as a King.

As a Prophet he is THE FAITHFUL WITNESS. He came, as he tells us himself, "to bear witness to the truth." (John xviii. 37; compare also 1 Tim. vi. 13.) And how faithful was the testimony he bore! How plainly and how fearlessly, in spite of "the contradiction of sinners against himself," did he deliver the message committed to him by his heavenly Father! Here is a subject indeed deserving of our deepest attention, and upon which a volume might be written. I can only briefly advert to a few leading points.

Christ then was the faithful witness in that he testified faithfully of the character and condition of man, and of the nature, will, and purposes of God. Man's depravity, and God's holiness; man's guilt, and God's justice and mercy; these were the constant themes of his discourse. Nor did his testimony ever vary. It mattered not who was present, whether the self-righteous Pharisee, or the sceptical Sadducee, he still testified that man is a depraved being under a curse, liable to eternal misery, and that God is "holy, just, and good," "able to destroy both body and soul in hell," yet ready to pardon and "mighty to save." Even his enemies bore witness to his fidelity. "We know," said they, "that thou teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man." How striking a testimony was this, though unintentionally given, of our Lord's faithfulness as a witness, and how remarkable a commentary have we here from the mouth of his adversaries on the words before us! Yes, his whole intercourse with mankind was a continual illustration of his fidelity as a messenger

of the covenant, and the written records of his sayings which we have in the New Testament will be a standing memorial to the end of time that he fulfilled the work which had been given him to do, and that he was to man, as the representative of his heavenly Father, “the faithful and true witness.”

As a Priest, he is THE FIRST-BORN FROM AMONG THE DEAD.* Christ was the first who was raised from the dead to die no more. Hence he is called by St. Paul “the first fruits of those that slept.” (1 Cor. xv. 20.) Not that none had ever been raised from the dead before; he had himself raised many. But he alone of all the dead who have hitherto been restored to life rose from the grave to live for ever. Of him alone it can *as yet* be said that, “being raised from the dead he dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.” And, therefore, is he called the *πρωτότοκος*, the *first-begotten*, or *first-born*—the eldest son, as it were,—from among the dead; not only the first in the order of time, but the first in rank; the greatest, the principal, the most excellent. And thus, as the apostle says, he hath in all things the pre-eminence; being both *the first-born*, the heir of the whole creation (*πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως*), and “the first-born also *from among* the dead” (*ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν*). (Col. i. 15, 18.) And this he is in virtue of his priestly office. He could not have been “the first-born *from among* the dead” had he not himself died and been numbered with the dead. But his death was voluntary. He died, not because he was obliged to die; not because the original curse pronounced on Adam, “Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return,” appertained to him; but because he chose to lay down his life as an atonement

* Gr. Ὁ πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν.

for sin. (John x. 18.) He died, in short, as our High Priest, sprinkling the mercy seat, not with the blood of others, but with his own blood ; and, having made his soul an offering for sin, he rose from the dead that he might appear as our representative in heaven, there to plead the efficacy of his blood on our behalf, and open to us a way of approach to the true Holy of Holies, the heavenly temple, the dwelling-place of God.* Thus it is in reference to his priestly office that he is called “the first-born from among the dead.”

But he is also *the Prince of the kings of the earth.*—Here we clearly have the regal character of our Lord set forth. Nor should we fail to notice how at the very commencement of this Divine book, he who is both the author and great subject of it is thus exhibited to us in this triple capacity of Prophet, Priest, and King. It shows that the Apocalypse is a more experimental and practical book than is commonly supposed, seeing that the very opening of it reminds us of the relation in which we stand to the Redeemer, and of the obligations we are under, and of the duties we owe to him, as the great teacher, mediator, and ruler of the Church.

Is the reader a man in authority? Let him remember that there is One higher than he ; One who is the Ruler of rulers ; the Prince of the kings of the earth ; the man Christ Jesus, at whose name the time will come and is not far off when “every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and of things under the earth ; and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.” (Phil. ii. 10, 11.)

“*To him that loved us, and hath washed us from our*

* See chapters vii., viii., and ix. of the Ep. to the Heb., in which this subject is fully handled.

sins in his blood," &c. Let us here observe the themes on which "the disciple whom Jesus loved" delighted to dwell. "*To him that loved us and hath washed us from our sins!*" How full was St. John's heart when he wrote these words! The faithfulness, the holiness, the majesty and omnipotence of Christ seem to be thrown into the background and absorbed by the transcendent brightness of that one attribute, HIS LOVE. Like St. Paul, he seems to feel that the love of Christ passeth knowledge, and that to be filled with it, is to be filled with the fulness of God. (Ephes. iii. 18.) How little do we any of us know of this love!

"*Hath made us kings and priests,*" &c.—Christ and his people are one. All that he has done for them, all that he still does, as well as all that he is and has, is theirs. According to the words of the apostle, "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." (1 Cor. iii. 21.) Hence they are both *kings and priests*; *kings*, inasmuch as they shall reign with him hereafter, and even now have power through him to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts; and *priests*, in that they offer through him continually the sacrifice of praise, "giving thanks in his name." (Heb. xiii. 15.) Thus also St. Peter, "Ye are a chosen generation, *a royal priesthood.*" (1 Pet. ii. 9.)

The Word of God, c. i. 7, 8.

"BEHOLD HE COMETH WITH CLOUDS," &c.—It is too common both for commentators and readers, impatient to get at once into what they consider distinctly the prophetic part of the book, to pass by these words without even a transient notice. To prevent this, I have had them printed in a larger type than the rest of the text. I con-

sider these words, indeed, deserving of our deepest attention as being the opening of the Apocalypse, spoken immediately by God, and containing the very essence of the whole prophecy. It is the testimony of the Father to the glorious advent of the Son, and was uttered, I conceive, in the hearing of St. John, much in the same manner as on the mount of transfiguration he spoke the words, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased ; hear ye him." (Compare 1 Pet. i. 17.) My reasons for entertaining this opinion are,—

1. The declaration of St. John at the very commencement, that he bore witness to the *word* of God, as well as to the testimony of Jesus Christ and the things which he saw. As to the latter of these, there can be no doubt what they were ; neither can there be any question as to the testimony of Christ, that being obviously contained in the messages to the churches ; but if so, the word of God must be the words before us, as there are no others in the book (excepting c. xxi. 5—9, which, I consider, also to be specifically the word of God, *i.e.*, words spoken either by the Father, or, rather, by the Triune Godhead without distinction of persons) that can be entitled to this distinctive designation.

2. The nature of the announcement is such as to require almost that God should be the speaker and not man. For it declares a fact which man can know only by revelation from God, and yet it declares it in such a manner as seems to imply that the announcement is made in the speaker's own name and on his own authority. "BEHOLD HE COMETH WITH CLOUDS, AND EVERY EYE SHALL SEE HIM." St. John might know this to be true ; he did, in fact, know it to be true ; but is not the decided, authoritative language in which the

great truth is declared more suitable in the mouth of God than of man? Does not the announcement come with tenfold more power if we read it as spoken by a voice from heaven in the hearing of John and merely recorded by him, than if we read it as a statement of his own?

3. The words in the eighth verse appear to put this point beyond doubt. For there can be no question as to the speaker there; and yet if the seventh verse be not connected with the eighth, and both do not belong to the same speaker, it will be difficult to account for the introduction of the latter verse at all. It would, in fact, be altogether out of place, and have no meaning. On the other hand, assuming that both verses belong to the same speaker, then this latter verse will have a most important meaning and bearing, as giving the highest conceivable sanction to the solemn announcement in the preceding. "I, who proclaim the second advent of him who hath washed you from your sins in his own blood, and hath made you unto me kings and priests, even I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending, the eternal, self-existent, Almighty God; and it is I myself that tell you he shall come with the clouds of heaven," &c.

We may then, I think, assume that these words are the testimony of the Father to the second coming of the Redeemer of man. Just as when he was upon earth he testified of him, "This is my beloved Son;" so now that he is in heaven, seated at his own right hand, does he testify of him, that he shall come again in glory and majesty to judge the world.

But how awful is this testimony! "*Every eye shall see him.*" Yes, there shall not be a human being of all the

countless millions that shall have existed from Adam to the end of time, who shall not see the man Christ Jesus who was crucified on Calvary. But not, as then,—

“ A silent lamb before his foes,
 A weary man, and full of woes.
 No; clothed now in new attire,
 With angel hosts, and flames of fire,
 He comes with clouds, and every eye,
 Shall upward look, and see him nigh.”

“*And they also which pierced him ;*” all the nation of the Jews, both those who crucified him, and those who now revile him ; the very men who nailed him to the cross, and those who now call him in contempt the Nazarene, the crucified one, shall SEE him. Oh, awful sight ! How will they dare then to look upon him who shall stand revealed in all the majesty of his Godhead, whom they now look upon with scorn as the most contemptible and hateful of men ! Unsearchable truly are his judgments, and his ways past finding out !

But will the Jews alone behold him with dismay ? No ; “ *all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.*” The great mass of mankind will be unprepared to behold him. When they see him, they shall *wail* because of him. Instead of welcoming him as their Saviour and deliverer, they still desire to hide themselves from him in dismay ; and thus the glorious appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ, instead of being to them the realization and accomplishment of “ a blessed hope,” will be to them the presage and commencement of eternal darkness and despair. Such is the testimony of the Word of God concerning the Second Advent of Christ. Have you, reader, received this testimony, and thus set to your seal that God is true ?

CHAP. i. 9—20.—*Introductory Vision.*

Having in another part of this work entered fully into the consideration of the historical particulars referred to in these verses, I shall not here repeat what is there written.—(See *Appendix A, on the Genuineness, &c. of the Apocalypse.*)

I would observe, however, as before intimated, that the phrases, *the word of God*, and *the testimony of Jesus Christ*, are not to be taken in precisely the same sense here as in ver. 2. There they signify, as being coupled with the things John had seen, the word which God spake, and the testimony which Christ bore, as written in this book; but here, they signify generally, the testimony borne by the apostle himself, as a preacher of the Gospel, to the truth of God's Word, and to the Messiahship of Jesus, for the bearing of which testimony he was now in Patmos.

“*I was in the Spirit,*” &c.—In reading the Revelation, it will be found a great help to the right understanding of it, to realize, as nearly as possible, every circumstance as it occurred exactly as it is related by St. John. We must endeavour, in short, to fancy ourselves present with him, and that we see and hear just what he saw and heard. Let this remark be borne in mind by my readers throughout. Let them try to realize in their own mind's eye whatever they here read.

We must now then imagine ourselves transported to a dreary, rocky island, in the Grecian Archipelago, not very far from the coasts of Asia Minor, where were situated the Seven Churches to whom this book was sent. There we see the beloved apostle, whilst

sitting alone and solitary in a cave, or in a prison-house, suddenly *wrapt in the Spirit*. His soul is so filled with the Spirit's influences, and his mind so absorbed in the contemplation of heavenly things, that he loses all perception of things external, and neither sees nor hears anything that is passing around him. Yet he has not lost his self-consciousness. Although thus dead to external impressions, he retains his self-possession, and perception, judgment, and memory, and all the powers of the understanding, are still in full exercise.

We should observe also, that it was on THE LORD'S-DAY when this occurred—not on the Jewish Sabbath, but on the *Lord's-day*. The day, *i. e.*, on which Christ rose from the dead, and which, I think, we may from hence infer was the day kept holy by Christians in lieu of the Jewish Sabbath, as being the day on which the Lord, the Redeemer, ceased from his work, as the Sabbath was the day on which the Lord, the Creator, ceased from his; and as being an earnest and pledge also of that rest which remains for the people of God. For the apostle uses the phrase the *Lord's-day*, not as though it were a new one, or a mode of expression peculiar to himself, but as one in common use, and which would, therefore, be well understood by all Christians.

Being, then, thus entranced, suddenly the apostle hears behind him a voice like the sound of a trumpet, loud, clear, and startling. A voice such as he had never heard before, and manifestly superhuman. The words which this voice utters, show at once who is the speaker. They are such words as no created being could speak in his own person without being guilty of blasphemy. "I am the Alpha and the Omega,"* said the voice,

* Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek Alphabet. The use of them in such a connexion, rather than of the two correspond-

“ the first and the last.” That is, “ I am the originating and final cause of all things ; I contain and uphold all things ; and as by the letters of the alphabet, every sound, and every thought, and every idea is expressed, so am I the repository of all knowledge, wisdom, and truth, all the treasures of which are hid in me.”

Hearing this voice, the apostle turns round to the quarter from whence it comes, and he sees seven golden candlesticks, and one like the Son of Man in the habiliments of the high priest, walking in the midst of them. His head and his hairs *white as snow* indicate his immaculate purity ; his eyes, as *a flame of fire*, show that he knows all things, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart ; his feet, shining like *fine brass burnt in a furnace*, may signify that although he shall “ tread down the wicked, and trample them in his fury,” yet will he not be defiled by their pollutions, but as fine brass melted in a furnace takes no tarnish from exposure to the atmosphere, but retains its polish and its brightness undiminished by those causes which act upon metals of inferior lustre,* so will Christ walk in the midst of polluting things, and tread all his enemies under his feet, and yet contract no defilement therefrom ; none of their wickedness shall cleave to him.—(Compare Micah iv. 13.)

His voice, not as before, like a trumpet, loud, sudden, and startling, but *as the sound of many waters*, seems

ing Hebrew letters, is a not obscure intimation that the privileges of the Jews were about to be transferred, if they were not already transferred, to the Gentiles.

* The brass of the ancients was a metal far superior to ours, and sometimes exceeded even gold in value. Thus Josephus speaks of the gates of Corinthian brass in the temple at Jerusalem as excelling those that were gilded with gold and silver : “ But there was one gate without the holy house of Corinthian brass, which greatly excelled those that were only covered over with silver and gold.”—*Wars of the Jews*, B. v., c. 5, § 3.

to imply that now that he speaks in the character of the High Priest of his Church, he speaks in a tone of melodious harmony, like the rolling of mighty masses of water heard at a distance, and which though grand and even awful, has in it something sublime and soothing, and is agreeable and refreshing to the mind.* The *two-edged sword going out of his mouth*, shows that he sustains the character of a prophet as well as of a priest. For this two-edged sword is his Word, that Word which the apostle tells us is "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit." (Heb. iv. 12.) *His countenance shining as the sun in his strength*, symbolizes his Divine glory, which cannot be looked upon by man in his present state of degradation and pollution, just as the human natural eye cannot endure the dazzling brightness of the noon-day sun.

Such, then, was the sublime and awful vision which now presented itself to the entranced eye of the apostle. But the glory of it was too great for him to bear. "*When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.*" He could just glance at the glorious object before him, but no more; he dared not even for a moment look steadfastly upon it; and not only so, but the mere glimpse which he had caught overpowered him, and he fell senseless to the ground. Ah, my reader, and was it indeed so? Did he who had leaned on the bosom of Christ, and had talked familiarly with him as a friend, did this very man, the disciple whom Jesus loved, did he now fall down at his Master's feet as dead? And what then shall we do, when he shall appear in his glorious

* The same figure is employed in describing the song of the triumphant Church, c. xix. 6.

majesty, with his mighty angels, and in flaming fire? “Alas! who shall live when God doeth this!” “Seeing we look for such things, what manner of persons ought we to be?” (2 Pet. iii. 11.)

But let us proceed with the subject before us. We now behold the apostle lying prostrate upon the ground, deprived of consciousness and sensation. The Lord approaches, and laying his right hand upon him, restores him to himself, and cheers him with words of encouragement and comfort. St. John now awakened out of the state of stupefaction into which he had been thrown, is able to look without terror upon the person who speaks to him, and to listen calmly to his words.

But how is this? What has caused this change in the apostle’s feelings? It is evident that the vision of glory has now passed away. Christ no longer presents himself with those awful accompaniments of the Divine majesty clothed in which he had just before appeared, but in his ordinary form, so that St. John can look upon him without terror.—Just as in the transfiguration, after the three apostles who were with him in the mount had fallen to the ground, awe-struck by the Divine voice which came out of the cloud proclaiming him to be the Son of God, “Jesus came,” we are told, “and touched them, and said, ‘Arise, and be not afraid.’ And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only,” who had now resumed his ordinary appearance.—So, in the present instance, after the Lord had touched the apostle, and by virtue of that touch he had recovered his consciousness, the vision of glory was passed away—the hairs white as snow, the eyes as a flame of fire, the sharp sword proceeding out of

his mouth, together with the seven golden candlesticks and the seven stars, had disappeared, and Jesus presented himself to the mind's eye of the apostle in his usual form.

The words, however, which he spoke showed that, although he had laid aside the outward manifestations of his Godhead, he was the same self-existent, unchangeable, omnipotent Being whose glory St. John had just beheld. "Fear not," said he, "I am the first and the last, and I am the living One, although I became dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore. Amen. And I have the keys of hell and of death."

The most remarkable words here, and on which alone I shall offer any comment, are those in the third clause, "*I am the living One, although I became dead.*" Nothing can express more strongly than these words the *self-existence* of our Lord. Although he made himself subject to death in the person of the man Christ Jesus, he is nevertheless *the living One*, He who has life in himself, and is able to give life to whomsoever he will. As he says himself in another place, "As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will." (John v. 21.) And again, "I lay down my life that I might take it again; no man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself." (Heb. x. 17.) What other commentary can we require on the words before us, "I am the living One, although I became dead?"

"Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things that are to be after these, the mystery (or, HIDDEN MEANING) of the seven stars," &c.
—Ver. 19, 20.

I must request the reader's especial attention to these

two verses. They will be found, if I am not mistaken, to furnish another key wherewith to unlock the secrets of this Divine book. Mr. Elliott, in his “*Horæ Apocalypticæ*,” argues, that what is said in verse 19 incontrovertibly proves that these epistles, or messages, to the churches cannot have a prophetic application, because Christ himself expressly calls them, *the things that are*, which shows that they refer to things present, not things future. As the question is a very important one, I will give his own words :—

“To myself, the view,” (viz., that the messages, or epistles, to the churches are prophetic of seven conditions of the universal Church, following each other in regular succession,) “seems quite untenable. For not a word is said by Christ to indicate any such prospective meaning. On the contrary, in the *twofold* division of the Revelations given by St. John—a division noted by Christ himself, ‘*the things that are,*’ and, ‘*the things that are to happen after them,*’—it seems to me clear that the epistles to the seven churches were meant to constitute the first division, being a description of the state of things in the Church *as they then were*, and that the visions that followed constituted alone and distinctly the visions of the FUTURE. Indeed, the summons itself expressly so defined it: ‘Come up, and I will (now) show thee *the things which must happen hereafter.*’” — Vol. i., p. 73.

But is this statement quite correct? Is it true, as Mr. Elliott asserts, that Christ himself divides the revelation into *two* parts,—the things that are, and the things that are about to happen after them? I think not. I think it will be found, if we will take the trouble to examine accurately the meaning of the words that Christ

makes a *threefold*, not a *twofold*, division of the book. He says, "Write the things *which thou hast seen*, and the things that *are*, and the things which *are to be after these*." Thus we have not only things present and future, but things *past* also noted, and if the things that *are* and the things that are *about to be* refer exclusively and respectively to circumstances and events present and future, then must the things which the apostle had seen of necessity refer to things and events already past. But what were those things? It would seem, since Mr. Elliott takes no notice of them, as if he supposed that they were included in the things that are. But how is this consistent with his own hypothesis? What, then, it will be asked, according to my view, were those things? I think the difficulty admits of an easy solution. The tenses here have reference, not to the time when the *things foretold* were to happen, but to the *order in which they were foretold*. In other words, they refer, not to the events or things predicted, but to the predictions themselves. "The things which thou hast seen," therefore, are the things John had just described: the vision of the Son of man walking in his glory in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, and which had now passed away. "The things which are" are the things now present to his view, and whatever he sees and hears during the time Christ is speaking to him until the scene is again changed; and "the things that are to be after these," are those things which the apostle saw after Christ had ceased speaking to him, and the door had been opened in heaven. So that this charge might be thus paraphrased: "Write the things which thou hast already seen and heard, and the things thou now seest and hearest, and the things which are appointed

thee to see after these!" This, I think, is evidently the natural and obvious meaning of the words. But if so, the argument built upon them *against* the prophetic bearing of the messages to the Churches, falls at once to the ground. The tenses relate not to the order of *events*, but to the order of *prophecies*, and declare nothing either way concerning the time of the fulfilment.

“ *The mystery of the seven stars,*” &c.

The apostle having received this command to write, is next informed of the meaning of the vision he had just seen. The seven stars, he is told, represent the angels, or messengers,* of those seven Churches whose names had been before mentioned, and the seven candlesticks represent the seven Churches themselves. Now, the meaning of the stars and candlesticks being explained, the meaning of the other circumstances of the vision is at once apparent. Christ walking in the midst of the candlesticks, and holding the stars in his right hand, what can it signify but that he is always and everywhere present in his Churches, and that he has all ministers entirely under his direction and control? He holds them, as it were, in his hand, and they are wholly dependent

* It is universally admitted that these angels, or messengers, represent the superintending ministers of each Church respectively, — *i. e.*, the bishops or presidents of the Churches. I call them *messengers* rather than *angels*, because I think the former word conveys more exactly the idea intended. For these bishops, or presidents, were *men*, not what we commonly mean by the word angels; not angelic, but human messengers, appointed by God to convey to their fellow-men his messages of love and mercy—his invitations, promises, and warnings. I do not see any reason, however, why we should confine the application of the symbol to the presiding ministers alone. I think the stars may represent symbolically all ministers as being the “ambassadors of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.”

upon him for everything. And does not this circumstance alone prove that these Churches are the representatives of the universal Church, and, consequently, that the messages addressed to them are addressed to the Church Catholic in all ages to the end of time? For does Christ, or rather did he (for some of them are now no more) walk only in the midst of these seven Asiatic Churches? or does he, or did he, hold the ministers of these Churches alone in his right hand? May we not reasonably assume that the number seven has the same universality of application here as elsewhere, and that as “the seven spirits before the throne” mean the one universal, all-pervading Spirit, so the seven Churches mean the whole Church everywhere and always? And, further, seeing that these seven Churches are addressed *consecutively*, and that each has its distinctly-marked peculiar characteristic, may we not with reason infer that the state of these Churches are symbolical of the state of the Church universal at different periods, and that the various phases which these Churches severally exhibit are intended to be prophetic of the phases of the whole Christian Church, from the beginning to the end of its history? It may be asked, “Why, then, were these seven Churches in particular selected and mentioned by name?” The answer is obvious: because, as before observed, they lay in a circle, and being thus contiguous, they not only rendered the conveyance of the seven copies of the book a comparatively easy task, but afforded the greater facility of communication with each other, so that if any Church in particular should entertain any doubt as to the book’s being St. John’s writing, or as to the genuineness and correctness of its own copy, it might have the opportunity of comparing it with the

others, and thus testing and proving at once its authenticity and accuracy.

CHAPTERS II., III.

THE EPISTLES TO THE CHURCHES, OR, THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS CHRIST CONCERNING THE CHURCHES.

Introductory Remarks.

It has long been a question whether these epistles have a prophetic application or not. Many of the ancient commentators thought they had, and some among the moderns are of this opinion, but the generality of expositors are against the prophetic application.* The grand objection in their minds to such an application appears to be the difficulty, nay, impossibility, as they affirm, of showing that any distinctly-marked successive phases in the history of the professing Church correspond with the states of these Asiatic Churches, as here

* Vitringa, however, one of the ablest and most learned of modern commentators, is decidedly in favour of it; and so also was Mede in his latter years, as appears from the following extract from "Short Observations on the Apocalypse:"—"If we consider their number being seven, which is a number of revolution of *time*, and therefore in this book the *seals* and *trumpets* and *vials* also are seven; or if we consider the choice of the Holy Ghost, in that he taketh neither all, no, nor the most famous Church in the world, as Antioch, &c., and such no doubt had need of instruction as well as those here named;—if these things be well considered, may it not seem that these seven Churches, besides their literal respect, were intended to be as patterns and types OF THE SEVERAL AGES OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH *à principio ad finem*, that so these seven Churches should prophetically sample unto us a sevenfold successive temper and condition of the whole visible Church, according to the several ages thereof, answering to the pattern of the seven Churches here? And

described.* Now, the best way of meeting this objection is to show that such a correspondence *does* exist. If this correspondence can be established on clear historical evidence, then not only does the objection fall to the ground, but the probability that such application was originally intended becomes apparent, and the reasonableness of the opinion is established on an immovable basis. Now, I think this can be done. I think that as the distinguishing characteristics in the states respectively of these seven Churches are clearly marked, so it may be shown that there are phases in different eras of the Church's history no less strongly marked, and those eras corresponding even with astonishing accuracy, both as to time and circumstances, with the states of the seven Churches as here described. To proceed, then, to the proof of this.

Now, with this object in view, I will first state, generally and briefly, what I conceive to be the characteristic feature in the condition of each of these seven Churches; and then, in the same general and brief manner, which I suppose to be the corresponding eras

if this be granted, viz., that they were intended to be so many patterns of so many states of the Church, succeeding in the like order the Churches are named, then surely the first Church (viz., the Ephesian state) must be first, and the last be the last; as for those between, though there be no character to bound them all exactly, yet the mention of false views and the synagogue of Satan, Balaam, Jezebel, &c., in the five middle ones, will argue that they belong to the times of the Beast and Babylon. And for the sixth in special, viz., Philadelphia, we have a good character where to place it, viz., partly about the time the Beast is falling, and partly after his destruction, when the New Jerusalem cometh. For Philadelphia is promised that the synagogue of Satan should bow before her feet, that she should be preserved in the general temptation to come upon the whole world, that upon her should be written the name of the New Jerusalem." — *Works*, p. 905.

* See "Horæ Apoc.," vol. i., p. 4, fourth edition.

in the history of the universal Church. The reader will thus be enabled to judge in some measure whether the theory for which I am contending has any foundation in truth, and will be prepared afterwards to enter with increased interest upon the consideration of that fuller and more circumstantial evidence in its favour, which will be adduced in the commentary upon the messages to each particular Church.

Let me premise that I consider the characteristics of the seven Churches to have reference to two things, viz., locality,* and moral condition. That is to say, I think that there is in these messages a plain intimation of a change in the locality of the Church, as well as in its state, and that in one instance in particular, the message to the Church in Pergamos, the locality is marked with unmistakeable precision.

1. *The Church of Ephesus.*

To begin, then, with the Ephesian Church. The characteristic feature in this Church is expressed in one sentence—"THOU HAST LET GO THY FIRST LOVE." Now there can be no mistaking the meaning here. The characteristic of this Church is manifestly DECLENSION. It had ceased to feel that fervent love for the Lord Jesus Christ and zeal for his glory which had once distinguished it.

As regards locality, Ephesus being the Church first mentioned, may be supposed to represent the place where the Christian Church was founded, that is,

* By *locality* I mean the place where the Church, which is taken as the representative of the universal Church, and through which the message is conveyed to all the other Churches, is supposed to be at the period to which the message refers.

Jerusalem. And these, therefore, are the two main points to be borne in mind in tracing the correspondence between the state of the Ephesian Church and the Church at large. Its seat, *Jerusalem*; its condition, *declining in spirituality and love*.

2. *The Church of the Smyrnæans.*

The characteristics of this Church are *poverty and tribulation*; a low depressed state, accompanied with persecution even to death. Its locality is not defined; but the peculiar manner in which the name is expressed,—not the *Church in Smyrna*,* but, the *Church of the Smyrnæans*, which is a mode of expression used only in speaking of this Church and that of the Laodiceans—may perhaps be intended to intimate that there is no reference in either of these cases to locality, there being nothing in the circumstances of any particular Church to render such reference necessary.

3. *The Church in Pergamos.*

The characteristics of this Church are very strongly marked, and deserve especial attention on account of their peculiarity. There is first its name and its locality. “To the Church in Pergamos write: I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s throne is.” Now Pergamos, let it be observed, means *a lofty place*,

* Smyrna, in Greek, means *myrrh*, which was given to persons who were crucified when hanging upon the cross, to stupify them, and so render them insensible to the agony of their sufferings. It was also used for embalming dead bodies. (See Mark xv. 23; John xix. 19.) I think it, therefore, highly probable that the name of this Church may be significative of the era to which, viewed prophetically, it belongs—namely, the era of martyrs. As if it were called “the Church of those who shall endure much, who shall suffer even to death, for my name’s sake.”

and *Rome* also signifies *a lofty place* ;* and as for the *throne of Satan*, we are expressly told that it is the seven-hilled city, which ruleth over the kings of the earth, the seat of the dragon's power, or Satan personified in the Pagan Roman Empire, and which he afterwards gave to the beast that arose out of the sea.—(Comp. c. xii. 9, xiii., and xvii.)

Next, there is the charge concerning Balaam, Balac, and the Nicolaitanes. Now, Balaam was the apostate prophet of the Lord, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, and for filthy lucre's sake gave counsel to the Gentile king Balac to send Midianitish women among the Israelites to seduce them to idolatry, and thus alienate them from Jehovah. Let the reader mark the parties concerned,—a Gentile king and an apostate prophet, one who knew the truth, and had indeed communications from the Lord, but who, nevertheless, hated and sought the destruction of the people of God.

Who the Nicolaitanes were is not so clear. From what Eusebius says of them it would seem that they were persons who, under the pretence of transcendental spirituality, permitted a community of wives, and the unrestrained intercourse of the sexes ; and thus, whilst ostensibly aiming at superior purity, they were guilty of the grossest licentiousness.† It should be observed, that, whereas the Ephesian Church is commended for its

* Many Greek and Latin words have a Hebrew origin, and I have no doubt that *Roma* is derived from רומ (Rom), *height, loftiness*. The probability is, that REM—us, and ROM—ulus, have the same root.

† Eusebius says, “ They (*i. e.*, the Nicolaitanes) boast that Nicolas, the founder of the sect, was one of the deacons ordained with Stephen.” He then informs us, that “ having a very beautiful woman for his wife, and being accused of jealousy, he offered to allow any one who pleased to marry her.” (Eccles. Hist., b. iii., c. 29.) Hence it has been generally supposed that the Nicolaitanes permitted a community of wives.

hatred of the Nicolaitanes, and their doctrines and practices, the Church in Pergamos is censured for countenancing them by retaining them in its communion.

Such, then, are the grand characteristics of this Church. Its locality *the very throne of Satan*.

Its moral condition, though in many respects commendable, faulty on two grounds.

1st, Its permission of the introduction of idolatrous rites, through the influence of a Gentile king, at the instigation of one occupying the position of a true prophet.

2dly, Its sufferance of doctrines and practices tending to licentiousness.

4. *The Church in Thyatira.*

The characteristics of this Church are no less remarkable than those of Pergamos. Whilst retaining much that is good, it is censured for permitting *a woman*, by name Jezebel, calling herself *a prophetess*, to seduce the people of God by teaching them to commit spiritual adultery, and to eat things offered to idols,—*i. e.*, to join the worship of other deities with the worship of Jehovah, and to give honour to those other deities by presenting to them prayers and offerings. The angel, or presiding minister of this Church, is condemned, let it be observed, not for doing these things himself, but for allowing a self-styled prophetess, named Jezebel, to do them. And who is this woman Jezebel? Can it be supposed for a moment that this name is to be taken literally? Is it probable that there really was such a person in Thyatira? Would the language in the 21st verse,

“I gave her time to repent of her fornication, and she repented not,” be applicable to an individual, a literal Jezebel? Every one must see here the difficulties which adhere to that scheme of interpretation which would take these epistles to the Churches in a strictly literal sense. Jezebel is evidently not a real woman, but a symbolical person; and of whom or what can she be a symbol but of a Church, and that a Church professing to teach other Churches, assuming to herself, in fact, the exclusive right of jurisdiction and exclusive authority on points of doctrine and faith?

Nor should the name of this Church be passed over without notice.* We gather from Acts xvi. 14,† that Thyatira was a city which traded in purple, the most expensive of all dyes, and the emblem of luxury and wealth. (Luke xvi. 19.‡) And may we not, then, infer from hence, that the Church at the period to which this epistle refers would be situated in the midst of worldly splendour, and be in danger of being corrupted by the riches and honours heaped upon it?

Such, then, are the leading features in the condition of the Church in Thyatira; from its locality, exposed to the corrupting influence of wealth and luxury, and deserving of rebuke because it suffers too patiently some particular Church to assume to itself an authority in teaching which belongs to Christ alone.

* *Thyatira* is derived from the Greek word *θύω*, *to sacrifice*, and, as applied to a Church, may signify one remarkable for its numerous and costly sacrifices.

† “A certain woman, named Lydia, a seller of *purple*, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us.”

‡ “There was a certain man which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day.”

5. *The Church in Sardis.*

The characteristics of this Church are soon told. They are comprised in a single sentence: "It had a name to *live*, but it was *dead*." Absolutely dead, not having, as an ecclesiastical body, one spark of spiritual life in it, although still retaining the name and outward appearance of a Christian Church. Still, even in the midst of this universal deadness of the Church in its corporate capacity, there were some few *individuals* who were alive, some few who had not defiled themselves by participating in the idolatrous practices with which they were surrounded. So that the state of the Church in Sardis may be thus summarily described.

Retaining the name and profession of Christianity, but spiritual life, except in the case of a very few individuals, totally extinct.

The name of this Church also seems not to be without its meaning. *Sardis*, in Hebrew, signifies *that which remains, a remnant*. The root also signifies *flesh*, that which is *carnal*, as opposed to spiritual.* And can any two ideas express better the condition of a Church "having a name to live, though dead," and yet, with "a few names *left* in it?"

6. *The Church in Philadelphia.*

The name of this Church signifies *brotherly love*, and would imply, therefore, in its prophetic application, a Church peculiarly distinguished by the brotherly love and affection of its members. Its other characteristics

* This root is שרש, *Sar*, or *Shar*. The English reader may see an exemplification of the meaning of the word in the name given to Isaiah's son, *Shear-jashub*, "a remnant shall return."

are, much weakness in itself, and yet great openings for usefulness; paucity of numbers, but undaunted courage in professing the faith, attended with great spiritual power. "Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it, because thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word."

7. *The Church of the Laodiceans.*

This message is addressed to the Church of the Laodiceans, not *in* Laodicea, implying, I conceive, as in the case of the Smyrnæans, universality of application, without regard to locality. The name is significative,—it means, THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE PEOPLE.

The characteristic features are, self-confidence and self-sufficiency, accompanied with lukewarm indifference and latitudinarian apathy. "I know thy works, that thou art neither hot nor cold. Because thou sayest I am rich and increased in goods," &c.

Such, then, are the leading characteristics of these seven Churches. Let us now see whether we can find seven distinctly-marked eras in the history of the Church at large, possessing any features corresponding with the above.

CORRESPONDING ERAS IN CHURCH HISTORY.

1ST ERA.—*The Ephesian Church state.*

Taking the Ephesian Church as symbolizing the primitive apostolic Church at Jerusalem, the era to which this epistle belongs will comprise a period of about a hundred years; namely, from the first foundation of the Church in A.D. 33, until the final destruction of Jerusalem by Adrian in A.D. 135. That this is

a distinctly-marked era, and that it corresponds in every minute particular with the circumstances of the Ephesian Church, will be shown immediately. I would now simply state that the primitive Church at Jerusalem, which had been looked up to as the mother of all the Churches, began to decline in spirituality and zeal from the times of the apostles until its final extinction as a Hebrew-Christian Church at the period just mentioned. Its candlestick was then *removed out of its place*, and the capital of the Christian world, so to speak, was nowhere to be found. No Church in particular had the pre-eminence, marking thus the commencement of a new era.

2D ERA.—*The Smyrnan Church state.*

Before assigning a date to this era, I would observe, once for all, that I do not think it necessary, in order to establish the truth of my theory, to make each succeeding era begin precisely where the former is supposed to end. It is not to be expected in a case of this kind, where no dates are given in Scripture, that an expositor should be able to fix dates with precision. Indeed, the very circumstances of the case forbid such an expectation. For the changes which took place in the moral condition of the Church, and which I suppose to be prophetically sketched in these epistles, were necessarily gradual, and in their progress almost imperceptible, and consequently it would be quite impossible to draw a clearly-defined line of demarcation between each. They must unavoidably overleap, as it were, each other, and, like the colours of the rainbow, run one into another,—that which comes first shooting forward beyond its own boundary line, and that which comes after extending itself backward into the

period more properly belonging to its predecessor, and thus rendering it impossible, as I have said, to determine a chronological line beyond which neither shall extend. On this principle, then, I now proceed to fix the era of the Smyrnæan Church state.

It will be remembered that the characteristics of this Church are want of *locality*, *poverty*, and *persecution*. I consider, then, that this era commences with the Neronic persecution, A.D. 64, and the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, A.D. 70, and ends with the close of the Dioclesian persecution, A.D. 313. The *minutiæ* of the prophecy will be found to agree, as in the preceding instance, with astonishing accuracy with the details of the history of that period. It may be sufficient here to remind my readers, that the era to which I have assigned this epistle was distinguished by the poverty, sufferings, and triumphs of the Church.

3D ERA.—*The Church's state in Pergamos.*

Assuming that Pergamos symbolizes Rome (*i.e.*, *the lofty place where Satan has his throne*), this era will commence from the establishment of Christianity as the religion of the Roman Empire under Constantine, A.D. 313, and extend to the close of the sixth century. It was during this period that the "mystery of iniquity," as it is called by St. Paul, and which began to work in his days, was more fully developed. That mystery consisted in the amalgamation of Heathenism with Christianity, and well truly does it deserve the name of a *mystery*, a hidden, wonderful thing; something which the sagacity of man could never have anticipated or imagined; for what can be more wonderful than the amalgamation just referred to; the engrafting of the rites and ceremonies,

and even principles of Heathenism upon the religion of Jesus Christ? Yet this amalgamation was effected during the course of the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, and that too, if not with the direct sanction, with the too negligent connivance of some pious men. These things will be abundantly proved hereafter, and the correctness of the application of the characteristic feature in the condition of this Church to the above era be thus incontrovertibly established.*

4TH ERA.—*The Church in Thyatira.*

Supposing the era assigned to the Church in Pergamos to be correct, there can be no doubt respecting this of Thyatira. Let the reader only observe that the metropolis of Christendom is no longer Pergamos, *the high, the lofty* place, but it is *Thyatira*, the rich, the splendid city; the city brilliant with purple and gold, and all manner of costly things. And let him observe, also, that the offence of the ruler of the Church is, that he allows a woman calling herself a prophetess, *i.e.*, a Church constituting itself the teacher of other Churches, to introduce idolatry, or in other words, *image worship*, together with other things utterly incompatible with the simplicity and purity of the Christian faith. Where then and when shall we look for the era in Church history which answers to that of the Church in Thyatira? We must fix its commencement, I think, from that period when Constantinople became the sole seat of the secular government, the metropolis of Christendom, and Rome was distinguished and powerful only as an *ecclesiastical*

* Viz., "Thou hast some that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication."

State. It was then that the Roman Church began “to call herself a prophetess,” and to assume an authority over all other Churches to which she had not the shadow of a right. It was then also that she attempted to establish with a high hand the invocation of saints and the adoration of their images, which led to the war of the Iconoclasts, or image breakers, which lasted till the end of the eighth century, nor ceased until image worship was fully and finally established throughout Christendom. This then is the era in Church history I would assign to this epistle; from about A.D. 500 to 800, which may be denominated—the era of the conflict in the Church respecting image worship.

5TH ERA.—*The Church in Sardis.*

No person who has any knowledge of Church history will be at a loss to determine to what era the Sardinian Church state belongs. Every one has heard of *the dark ages*, and what can describe more exactly the condition of the Church so denominated than these words addressed to the Church in Sardis,—“Thou hast a name to live, and art dead?” This era accordingly comprehends a period of nearly 500 years—from the middle of the ninth century to the dawn of the Reformation in the beginning of the fifteenth.

6TH ERA.—*The Church in Philadelphia.*

The era to which I would assign this epistle may be called, the Era of the Reformation. This may be said to have been begun by Wickliffe in our own country about the commencement of the fifteenth century. Many circumstances, indeed, induce me to think that the Church of England is specifically the antetype of the

Philadelphian Church, and, consequently, that the promises and warnings, the encouragements and threatenings, addressed to this Church, belong in a peculiar sense to ourselves, although applicable also, more or less, to the whole Protestant Church. My reasons for entertaining this opinion will be found in the detailed exposition of this epistle. When the era of the Philadelphian Church state ends I can scarcely venture to determine. Perhaps it has already closed, and we are now living in the next and last state of the Church ; but this point also will be more fully considered hereafter.

7TH ERA.—*The Church of the Laodiceans.*

After the remarks just made respecting the era of the preceding epistle, little more need be added here. If the Laodicean Church State has not already commenced, it is certainly near at hand. The deeply interesting circumstances connected with this fact, as pointed out in considering the details of this epistle, will be found deserving of the reader's especial attention.

CHAPTER II. 1—7.

THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS CHRIST CONCERNING THE EPHESIAN CHURCH.—FROM A.D. 33 TO 137.

THESE epistles, or messages to the Churches, as before intimated, I consider as constituting that portion of the Revelation which is called in the second verse of the first chapter, *the Testimony of Jesus Christ*. My reasons for entertaining this opinion are very simple and obvious. These messages were delivered to the apostle from the mouth of Christ himself, which would alone be reason sufficient for regarding them as his peculiar testimony. But, in addition to this, we are expressly told that these messages *are* his testimony. For each of them closes with these words of solemn admonition, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what THE SPIRIT saith unto the Churches.” But in c. xix. 10 we are told that “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” What, therefore, the Spirit here says *prophetically* to the Churches is unquestionably the testimony of Jesus Christ. And there is a peculiar propriety in this. These messages to the Churches are, I believe, a prophetic history * of the Church by itself, as the things which the

* I would observe, however, that although in the Commentary no notice is taken of the historical bearing and application of these Epistles, I have no doubt that they are historically true; that is to say, that the condition of the several Churches was actually such in St. John's days as is here described. Viewed in this light, the reader will find a good summary account of them in Milner's “Church History,” c. iii.

apostle saw are a prophetic history of the world, more especially of the Roman world, in connexion with the Church. But the prophetic history of the Church, replete as it is with admonitions, and promises, and threatenings, obviously comes with more propriety from the great Head of the Church than it could do through any secondary inferior channel.

We now proceed to the particular consideration of the testimony of Christ concerning the Ephesian Church, or, the Church as a whole as it existed in St. John's days, the metropolis being Jerusalem, and its members chiefly Jews, or Jewish proselytes. This testimony may be considered under the following distinct heads :—1st. The designation the speaker gives to himself. 2d. The commendation. 3d. The charge, or reproof. 4th. The admonition and threatening. 5th. The exhortation and promise.

And here I would observe, once for all, that I think in this and every other instance there will be found a general consistency and correspondence in all these points, both as respects each other, and the period in Church history to which the epistle belongs; that is to say, the designation corresponds with the admonition and threatening and promise, and all are suited to the characteristic feature in the condition of the Church at the period referred to. Keeping this in view, let us consider,—

1ST.—THE DESIGNATION.

“To the angel of the Church of Ephesus write: These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.”

Christ being about to address a Church in a declining state, designates himself as he that walks in the midst of

all the Churches, and upholds all ministers by his grace. And can any more suitable designation be imagined? It implies at once warning and encouragement. It is as if he had said, "Remember, you hold all things of me. Your very existence depends upon me. Beware, then, lest, if you continue to decline, and let go your love to me, I should let go of you, and give you over to inevitable destruction."

2D, 3D, AND 4TH.—THE COMMENDATION, AND CHARGE,
AND THREATENING.

"I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patient endurance, and that thou canst not bear the evil; and that thou hast proved those that say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them false, &c. Nevertheless I have this against thee, that thou hast let go thy first love. Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, &c., or else I come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place."

I have put this commendation, charge, and threatening together because in the historical fulfilment, as will be seen, they are closely connected. Regarding the Ephesian Church as symbolical of the primitive Christian Church founded by the apostles at Jerusalem and composed chiefly of Jews, I have fixed the era of this message from A.D. 33 to the final extinction of Jerusalem as a Jewish city by Hadrian, A.D. 137. Now do the circumstances of the primitive Church during this period correspond with the terms of the message? Did the Hebrew Christian Church exhibit extraordinary zeal for Christ and devotedness to his service? Did it endure much and labour much for his sake, and did it indignantly reject all those persons who called themselves apostles,* who set themselves up for Christian teachers,

* It should be observed, that only in this instance and in the Epistle to the Smyrnæans is there any allusion to the apostolic office or the Jewish

whilst they taught things contrary to the doctrine of Christ, and endeavoured to bring in destructive heresies? And did it, notwithstanding, soon begin to lose the fervour of its first zeal, and to decline in love until at length, having forfeited the favour of its Lord, it was given over to its enemies, and ceased to be distinctively a Church? Were these things so? Yes; marvellous indeed is the accuracy with which all this has been fulfilled. As regards the fervent zeal and energetic love of the primitive Church, nothing need be said. But did these begin to decline even in the apostles' days? I think we may infer that they did, even from the New Testament itself. What other proof can we require of this than is furnished by the Epistle to the Hebrews? There is, indeed, a most remarkable and wonderful correspondence between that epistle and this message to the Ephesian Church, showing, I think, not only that they were both dictated by the same spirit, but that they both refer to the same people and the same period. For what is the great subject of the Epistle to the Hebrews? Is it not the danger of apostasy? Do we not, in fact, in this Epistle find precisely the same designation of Christ, the same commendation from him, the same admonitions and warnings as in the message? Let the reader mark the following :—

“ God hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, by whom he made the worlds, and who, UPHOLDING ALL THINGS by the word of his power, when he had by

name; intimating, I think, very plainly that these two epistles alone belong to the early history of the Church; the first having relation to the very first beginnings of Christianity; the second, to that period when Gentiles began to take the place of Jews in the Church, until at length Jewish converts were almost unknown. (See Comment. on the next Epistle; also on c. vii.)

himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." (Chap. i. 1, 2.)

"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." (iii. 12.)

"But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation; for God is not unrighteous to forget *your work and labour of love.*" (vi. 9.)

"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without *wavering*; and let us consider one another *to provoke unto* (or, to the sharpening of) *love and good works.*"

"For if we sin wilfully,—there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment."

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." "But *call to remembrance the former days* in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions," &c. "But if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." (x. 23—38.)

"Let brotherly love *continue.*" (xiii. 1.)

Now it is impossible, I think, for any one to read these passages and compare them with the message to the Ephesian Church, and not be struck with the correspondence.* The one says, "I know thy labour, thy patience;" the other says, "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love," &c. The one says, "Remember from whence thou art fallen, and do thy first works;" the other, "Call to remembrance the former days in which," &c. The one says, "Repent, else I come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick," &c.; the other, "For yet a little while, and he that shall

* A similar correspondence will be found in the Epistles of St. James and St. Peter, which also were addressed especially to Hebrews.

come will come ; now the just shall live by faith ; but if he draw back my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”

Finally, the one says, “Thou hast let go thy first love ;” the other, “Let brotherly love continue.”*

Now are these correspondences accidental ? Shall we find a similar correspondence in any other of St. Paul’s Epistles ?

And here let me ask the reader’s attention to an extract from Milner’s “Church History” bearing upon this point. The subject of the chapter is the Church of Jerusalem. Speaking of St. James’s Epistle he says, “From its practical turn it is but too evident that the Church had *considerably declined* from its original purity and simplicity, and that the crafts of Satan were *wearing out apace* the precious fruits of that effusion of the Spirit which has been described.” And so, in speaking of the Epistle to the Hebrews, he takes precisely that view of the general bearing of the epistle I have done, and says, “The whole turn of his exhortation shows that their spiritual taste *had declined*.” Again : “It was the departure of the heart from the Lord Jesus against which he warned them.” And at the close of the chapter : “Thus earnestly did these two apostles instruct and warn a *declining Church*.” (Milner’s “Church Hist.,” vol. i., c. 1.)

Is not this remarkable ? This pious man had no intention whatever of illustrating the message to the Church of Ephesus ; it was not in his mind when he wrote the above words ; and yet what better commentary can we have upon it, supposing the Ephesian Church to be a symbol of the primitive Jewish Church ?

* The correspondence here is by implication. The exhortation implies that brotherly love was decaying, otherwise it would have been uncalled for.

And then, how striking are the historical facts connected with the Judæo-Christian Church of Jerusalem as related by Eusebius,—“Until these times,” says he, quoting Hegesippus, “the Church of God (he is speaking of the Church of Jerusalem) remained a pure and undefiled virgin ; for such as endeavoured to corrupt the perfect rule and sound preaching of the Word of God hid themselves in some obscure place. But after the holy company of the apostles were become extinct, and that generation had passed away which by special favour had heard with their own ears the heavenly wisdom of the Son of God, then the conspiracy of detestable error *through the deceit of such as delivered strange doctrine* took root, and, because not one of the apostles survived, they published boldly false doctrine and impugned the certain and known truth.” (“Eccles. Hist.,” b. iii., c. 29. Hanmer.)

Mark how this illustrates the words, “and hast proved those that say they are apostles and are not.”

And as regards the removal of the candlestick, how speedily and how awfully was that accomplished ! Eusebius tells us that until the second taking of Jerusalem by Hadrian (A.D. 137) the primitive Jewish Church was governed by a regular succession of bishops, all Jews by birth, but from that period the succession ceased, and Jerusalem had no longer any bishops of Jewish extraction. These are his words : “Until the destruction of the Jews under Hadrian there were fifteen bishops of Jerusalem, all of whom, it is said, were Hebrews by descent ; but then the bishops of the circumcision failed.” And having then enumerated all the rest by name he adds,—“The fifteenth and *last of all* was Judas.” (“Eccles. Hist.,” b. iv., c. 5.)

Thus then was the candlestick of the first Christian Church, which had been planted by the apostles at Jerusalem, REMOVED OUT OF ITS PLACE. The warning was disregarded, and, therefore, the threatening was fulfilled.

Nor must we omit to notice the agreement of circumstances on another point. The Ephesian Church hated the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes. But the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes was a system which produced and fostered licentious practices under the cloak of extraordinary spirituality; and whilst they pretended to condemn marriage as a carnal thing, they seem to have given themselves up to lasciviousness.* And did the primitive Hebrew-Christian Church ever give the slightest encouragement to this abominable system? No, none whatever. We have seen that the Church at Jerusalem up to the time of its destruction “remained a pure and undefiled virgin.” However much it may have declined in *love*, in doctrine and outward decency it manifested a hatred of evil.

5TH.—THE EXHORTATION AND PROMISE.

“He that hath an ear, &c. To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”

The tree of life was that tree upon the eating of which man’s immortality in Eden depended. Hence the allusion to it here. Christ is addressing a Church declining in spirituality. Now spiritual life can be maintained in existence only by feeding on him by faith. He is the tree of life to the Christian. According to his own words, “I am the bread of life. He that eateth me, shall live by me.” Now what this eating means he

* See p. 88.

explains in another place : “ He that *believeth* in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.” (John vi. 57 ; xi. 25.) This, then, is the tree of life. Christ himself is that tree. The primitive Church in general, of which the Ephesian Church was put as the representative, had begun to decline because it had ceased to feed by faith on Christ ; and therefore does he say, addressing it in the way both of admonition and encouragement, “ To him that overcometh, even to him that is striving for the victory and conquering by faith in me, will I give to eat of the tree of life.”

He, then, that hath an ear, let him hear what the Lord by the Spirit saith to this Church.

The Smyrnæan Church state, c. ii. 8—11.

The era assigned to the Smyrnæan Church state is from the first persecution by Nero, (A. D. 67,) to the last heathen persecution under Dioclesian (A. D. 313). The applicability of the whole message addressed to the Smyrnæan Church to this period is obvious. Nothing, indeed, can be more striking than the correspondence between the terms of the message, and the history of the Church during this epoch.

We have first the designation : “ These things saith the first and the last, that was dead and is alive.” Now, how suitable these words at the commencement of an address to a persecuted, suffering Church ? For what consideration so well calculated to strengthen the believer in the prospect of a premature and painful death as that which is here suggested ? “ I, thy Lord, once died ; I, who am the first and the last, the author and finisher of thy faith, even I once died upon a cross, and was laid in a grave ; I, as thou art about to be, was once a

martyr for the truth." It is like that similar admonitory exhortation of the apostle, "Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead." (2 Tim. ii. 8.) Both passages have a similar import, and are well adapted to fortify the believer in the prospect of persecution and suffering for the truth's sake.

We have next the commendation,—

"I know thy works and tribulation, &c.; and the blasphemy of those that say they are Jews, and are not, but the synagogue of Satan."

Does this describe correctly the condition of the Church during the period assigned to this Epistle? Was the Church poor and afflicted, and, notwithstanding, did multitudes join themselves to it who were not *of* it? Were there even at this early period of its history many who called themselves Christians, but were really the servants of Satan? * Let us hear the testimony of ecclesiastical writers on these points. As regards the poverty of the Church during the three first centuries, it is almost superfluous to say anything. The charge of Celsus, who wrote in the latter end of the second century, against Christians was, that they were almost exclusively "mean, illiterate, ignorant people, such as weavers, tailors, fullers, and day-labourers." "They can gain only," says he, "the foolish, the vulgar, slaves, women, and children." "It does not appear,"

* The phrase, *call themselves Jews*, is here evidently equivalent to, *call themselves Christians*. The word *Jew* is employed in a similar sense by St. Paul (Rom. ii. 28,) "*He is not a JEW who is one outwardly,*" &c. The reason why this phrase is here used is, I conceive, that the Church at the period to which the Epistle relates, was composed chiefly of Jews, or Hellenists. And this, as before intimated, affords a confirmation of the correctness of the foregoing application of this Epistle. We read no more of Jews after this, excepting in the sealing vision, c. vii., which relates, I believe, to the same period.—See Commentary.

says Milner, in his remarks on the state of the Church at the close of the third century, “that the number of converts among the learned, or the great, was considerable. The lower ranks of men were best disposed to receive it, and the bulk of Christian professors consisted of these.”*

The Church, then, at this period was poor. But how rich was it in grace! how abundant in works! And what tribulation did it endure! Was it, however, *altogether* a pure Church? Did none belong to it who were Jews only outwardly, and not inwardly in the heart? I know not that I can illustrate this subject better than by the following quotation from Eusebius:—

“Who can suitably describe those innumerable multitudes throughout all cities and large towns who frequented the places dedicated to prayer? So that not content with the old buildings (which could not contain them) they erected throughout all cities wide and ample churches. Thus, as long as the Divine and heavenly hand of God upheld and visited his people, no Satanic malice, nor devilish craft, could hinder the work and prevent its continual increase far and near. But, after that, the state of the Church, through too much liberty, ease, and security, had degenerated, and Christians began to hate and persecute one another, &c. Lastly, when DAMNABLE HYPOCRISY AND DISSIMULATION overflowed beyond the brim, the heavy hand of God, after his wonted manner, notwithstanding that the people continued to assemble in the churches as usual, began by degrees to visit us, so that the persecution that was raised against us TOOK ITS FIRST ORIGIN FROM THE BRETHREN WHO WERE UNDER CHRIST’S BANNER IN THE CAMP.” (Eccles. Hist., b. viii., c. i.)

* See Milner’s Church History, c. xxi.

Thus writes Eusebius concerning the Church, at the end of the third century. And what does this extract prove? Does it not prove distinctly that the state of the Church at large was precisely that described in the Epistle under consideration? The *true Church* of Christ poor and afflicted, but the outward and visible Church beginning to be filled with empty professors, men calling themselves Christians, who by their unholy, vicious lives dishonoured the Gospel, and practically blasphemed (or spoke against) God!

But the most remarkable part of this Epistle, regarded as a prophecy, still remains to be considered.

“Fear none of those things which thou art about to suffer. Behold, the devil (or, *the accuser*) will 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 a crown of life.”

Now, are there not manifest difficulties in the way, if we confine the application of this address to the Church in Smyrna? Did that Church alone suffer persecution? Were the members of that Church alone cast into prison? Or, was *it* alone subjected to a persecution which lasted ten days? All these questions must be answered in the negative. In none of these respects did the Church in Smyrna stand alone. If it suffered much, as indeed it did, it suffered in common with other Churches, and no reason can be assigned why this Church in particular should be addressed in these terms, except as the representative of the universal Church at some specific epoch in its history.* And how

* It is indeed true that we have a more particular and minute account in ancient ecclesiastical history of the martyrs of Smyrna, than of those of almost any other Church. This account is contained in an Epistle from the Church in Smyrna to the Church of Philomelium, and is a deeply

wonderfully do the circumstances of the Church during the epoch to which I have assigned this Epistle, correspond with the terms here employed! “*Ye shall have tribulation ten days.*” It is the number *ten* here that is so remarkable. No persecution indeed of which there is any record lasted ten days; nor is it probable that there was any persecution in any place which continued for so short a period. But supposing that these days are to be taken for *prophetical days*, *i. e.*, supposing that a day stand for a year, as is *uniformly* the case throughout this book,* then the thing predicted will be an extraordinary time of suffering to the Church for the space of ten years. Or, the words, “Thou shalt have tribulation ten days,” may be taken as a prophetical intimation that the Church would have to endure ten consecutive persecutions, separate in point of time, and clearly distinguishable one from the other. That is to say, the

interesting document. It will be found in Eusebius, b. iv., c. xv.; also in Milner, vol. i., c. v. It informs us that the martyrs were torn with whips, until their very veins and arteries were laid open; that they were thrown to wild beasts; that they were burnt with fire; and, in short, were tortured in every way that the ingenuity of Satanic malice could devise. All which things they endured without a murmur. It is certainly not a little remarkable that this particular narrative of the sufferings of the Smyrnæan Christians should have been preserved, whilst we have no specific history of those of any other of the seven Asiatic Churches. That the persecution, however, of that period (A. D. 167) was not limited to Smyrna is certain. There is extant a similar epistle to the above from the Churches of Lyons and Vienne, giving an account of the martyrdoms which took place amongst them about the same time.—*Euseb.*, b. v., c. ii.; *Milner*, vol. i., c. vi.

* I assume for the present that the *year-day* theory, as it is usually called, is correct. The reasons on which this theory is founded will be noticed hereafter. But it is surely no small argument in its favour, that in the very first instance in which *days* are spoken of in the Apocalypse, we are compelled, in a manner, to understand by them *years*, and that so understood, the prophecy has had a remarkable and incontrovertible fulfilment.

phrase, *ten days*, may signify *ten times*, the word day being used here, as it often is in Scripture, not for a specific period of so many hours' duration, but generally for a duration of time bounded by its prescribed limits, having its beginning and end, and to which certain acts or events are assigned. I can see no reason why we should not understand the expression here in both senses. In that case we shall then have a double prophecy, the one foretelling ten distinct persecutions of the Church during the period of its poverty and tribulation; and the other, one peculiarly severe persecution to last ten years, and end in victory and triumph. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." These words are addressed, it must be borne in mind, not to an individual, but to a Church; and consequently the expression, *unto death*, intimates the apparent destruction and extinction of that Church, as does the promise its after-restoration and exaltation.* And how striking the fulfilment of the prophecy thus understood! There *were* ten Heathen persecutions,† neither more nor less, and the last, which

* I do not mean by this that the words, "And I will give thee a crown of life," are not applicable also to individuals. Undoubtedly they are. And a very great and precious promise do they contain: a promise, no doubt, which encouraged many a confessor to acknowledge Christ before the tribunal of his Heathen judges, and sustained him amidst the roaring of wild beasts and the shouts of the amphitheatre.

† These persecutions, as enumerated by Augustine, occurred in the following order:—

1st	under Nero,	begun A. D.	65,	lasted about	3 years.
2d	.. Domitian,	.....	94,	.....	3 ..
3d	.. Trajan,	.....	103,	.....	very short.
4th	.. Antoninus,	.....	161,	.....	18 years.
5th	.. Severus,	.....	202,	.....	9 ..
6th	.. Maximin,	.....	235,	.....	3 ..
7th	.. Decius,	.....	249,	.....	3 ..

was by far the severest and most general, continued exactly ten years. Was this an accidental coincidence? or was it not rather an evident accomplishment of prophecy?

Let the reader attentively consider the following account of the last great persecution, as given by Lactantius:—

“And now the fury of the Emperor raged not only against those of his own household, but against all, so that he compelled his daughter Valeria and his wife Prisca to pollute themselves by sacrificing to the gods. The priests and ministers, being condemned without any trial upon their own confession, were led to death, with all who belonged to them. Persons of every age and sex were consumed in the flames, and so great was the multitude, that they were not burnt one by one, but in whole companies, who being surrounded with fire were thus consumed. The household servants were thrown into the sea with a millstone about their necks. *The prisons were filled with the accused.* Tortures unheard of before were invented; and that no one might have the benefit of a trial needlessly, altars were placed in the courts and before the tribunals, that the accused parties might do sacrifice before they were permitted to plead their cause.”

“In this manner the whole earth (*universa terra*), with the exception of the Gallic provinces,* was harassed, and

8th under Valerian, begun A.D. 256, lasted about 3½ years.

9th .. Aurelian, 273, very short.

10th .. Dioclesian, 303, 10 years.

See “De Civitate Dei,” l. xviii., c. lii. The reader will find a learned dissertation on these ten persecutions in the “Decline and Fall,” c. xvi., s. 4.

* These were preserved by Constantius, who permitted the churches of the Christians to be destroyed, but protected their persons.—Lact., *in loco*.

these three princes, *like furious wild beasts*, raged from east to west.” “Had I a hundred tongues, and a hundred mouths, and a voice of iron, I could not narrate all the forms of wickedness, or even rehearse the names of all the different kinds of torture which the provincial magistrates practised towards righteous and innocent persons.” *

“Thus,” says the same writer at the close of his narrative, “from the *overthrow* of the Church to its restitution was a period of ten years and four months, more or less.” †

Now what shall we say to these things? Is this remarkable correspondence of circumstances, I would again ask, accidental? Was it an accident that there were TEN persecutions of the Church, and that the closing one continued TEN years? Or did God, foreseeing what would happen, forewarn his Church that it would *have tribulation ten days*?

But there is that other point here before alluded to which must not be allowed to pass unnoticed. The intimation of utter extermination contained in the words, “Be thou faithful unto death.” Was the Christian Church then destroyed by Dioclesian? So he thought, and so to outward appearance it seemed. For at one time scarcely a visible vestige remained of Christianity throughout the Roman world. Every Christian church

* Lact. de Mortibus Pers., p. 28. Ed. Oxon., 1680. Lactantius was a cotemporary writer, and an eye-witness of the scenes he describes. A similar account is found in Eusebius, “Eccles. Hist.,” l. viii.

† Ibid., p. 90. The persecution began Feb. 23 (now March 7), 303, and ended June 13 (or 25), 313, and, consequently, lasted exactly ten years, three months, and nineteen days, dating from the publication of Dioclesian’s decree authorizing the persecution, to the joint letter of Constantine and Licinius forbidding any further molestation of the Christians. This letter is given at length by Lactantius, p. 86.

had been razed to the ground; every copy of the Scriptures burnt. In proof of this, let the two following inscriptions, found on some columns of rare workmanship at Clunia in Spain, suffice :—

1.

ERECTED BY DIOCLESIAN AUGUSTUS
AND GALERIUS CÆSAR, ADOPTED IN THE EAST
TO COMMEMORATE THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CHRISTIAN SUPERSTITION,
AND THE PROPAGATION OF THE WORSHIP OF THE GODS.

2.

DIOCLESIAN OF JUPITER, AND
MAXIMIAN OF HERCULES,
CÆSAR AND AUGUSTUS,
(ERECTED THIS PILLAR IN COMMEMORATION OF)
THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE IN THE EAST AND WEST,
AND THE DESTRUCTION OF THE NAME OF CHRISTIANS WHO WERE
OVERTHROWING THE REPUBLIC. *

Greatly, then, surely did the Church at this epoch of its history need the exhortation, “ Be thou faithful unto

* The originals are as follows :—

1.

Diolesian. Cæs.
Aug. Galerio. In. Ori-
ente. Adopt. Supers-
titione. Christ.
Ubiq. Deleta. Et Cul-
tu. Deorum Propagato.

2.

Diolesianus Jovius Et
Maximian Hercules
Cæs. Augg.
Amplificato Per Orientem. Et Occidentem
Imp. Rom.
Et
Nomine Christianorum
Deleto Qui
Remp: Ever-
tebant.

The above are taken from a work entitled, “ The Church in the Catacombs,” by E. Maitland, M.D., p. 129. London, 1846.

death.” But it *was* faithful, and the accompanying promise was fulfilled.

“He that overcometh shall not be hurt by the second death.”

This promise is clearly addressed, not to the Church as a body, but to individual believers. The import of it appears to be this :—“He that overcomes the fear of the first death, and is willing to lay down his life for my sake, shall never experience the second death. In the day of the resurrection he shall not rise to hear the sentence of condemnation, ‘Depart from me,’ &c., but the assurance of eternal life, ‘Come, ye blessed,’ &c.” The suitableness of such a promise to men exposed to martyrdom needs not to be insisted on.

Thus, then, every part of this message to the Church of Smyrna is consistent with itself, and shows that it belongs to that period in the Church’s history which has been called, “THE ERA OF MARTYRS.”

PERGAMOS.—EPOCH FROM A.D. 313 TO ABOUT 600.

c. ii. 12—17.

The further we advance in the consideration of the testimony of Jesus Christ contained in these messages to the seven Churches, the more difficult of interpretation and the more perplexing they become, if we confine the application of them to the Churches specifically addressed. On the other hand, the more easy we shall find them to be of explanation, and the more striking and indubitable the application, if we understand them symbolically, and regard the seven Asiatic Churches as representing seven different states at seven different epochs of the Universal Church. The truth of these remarks will, I think, become manifest as we contemplate the several particulars of this epistle

to the Church in Pergamos. The era I have assigned to this epistle is from the establishment of Christianity under Constantine to about the year 600. Do then the circumstances of the Church during that period accord with the symbolical representation here given? Or, to put the inquiry in another form, Do the terms of this epistle suit the condition of the Church at that epoch? Here is the question we have to consider.

There are then, it will be observed, five remarkable features in this epistle:—

1st. The dwelling-place of the Church.

2d. Its stedfastness in the faith when a faithful witness, called Antipas, was slain amongst them.

3d. The allusion to Balaam and Balak, and also the Nicolaitanes.

4th. The threatening, “I will fight against thee with the sword of my mouth.”

5th. The promise concerning the hidden manna and the white stone.

1. Now, that the Church, after Constantine’s conversion, had its dwelling-place where Satan’s throne was, can scarcely need historical proofs. That Rome from that period became the metropolis of Christendom, is a fact too notorious to admit of dispute. But it has already been shown that the throne of Satan is Rome, and the Roman territory. (See p. 88; also c. xiii. 2.) And what is so remarkable in the fulfilment of this symbolical prophecy is, that not only did Rome after the last great heathen persecution become the metropolis of Christendom, but Christianity from that period was for a long time almost confined within the limits of the Roman empire. So literally was the prediction accomplished; so truly had the Church its dwelling where Satan’s seat once was.

2. But who or what was this faithful martyr, Antipas, that had been slain among them? Do we ever read of any such martyr in Ecclesiastical History? And if not, is it not strange whilst so many other comparatively obscure and insignificant persons are mentioned by name, and their sufferings minutely related,—is it not, I ask, strange that no mention should be made of so distinguished and remarkable a martyr as this? But was Antipas really an individual? In a book like the Apocalypse, where there is so much that is figurative and symbolical, may we not reasonably assume that this name is figurative, and that Antipas means not an individual, but a class? For what is the signification of this name? It is, *INSTEAD OF ALL*. A remarkable appellation, it must be allowed, considering the connexion in which it occurs. And does it not explain itself? Is it not as if the Lord had said, “I know that thou hast not denied my name in those days when *all* my faithful martyrs (I give one name that it may stand for all), were slain among you”? &c. This, surely, is no fanciful application of this mystical name. And how true is the declaration to the facts of history? The Catacombs surrounding Rome, where lie entombed thousands of the primitive followers of Christ, testify to this day that the early Roman Church was true to its God, and did not “deny his name.”*

3. We come now to the most remarkable feature in the message to this Church, the charge against it that “it had some within it who held the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the

* See “The Church in the Catacombs,” before cited. It should be borne in mind that the heathen state persecutions of Christians began at Rome, under Nero, in the year 65.

children of Israel," &c. These words call for the most careful examination, and I would ask the reader's earnest attention whilst we endeavour to ascertain their true symbolical meaning. With this object in view it will be necessary briefly to glance at the historical facts to which they refer.

Balaam, then, it will be remembered, was that prophet of the Lord whom Balak, the King of the Moabites, hired to curse Israel, but who, contrary to his own inclination and wishes, was compelled to bless them. We might have supposed, that after the experience he had had, he would have been brought to a right mind, and that when he saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he would have desisted from any further attempt against them. But it appears not. We find that notwithstanding he and Balak parted in anger, they were afterwards reconciled, and that it was he who suggested to the king the stratagem of sending Moabitish women into the camp of the Israelites to seduce them to idolatry. (Numb. xxxi. 16.) Which stratagem for a time but too well succeeded. Thus, then, it appears that a prophet of the Lord—for Balaam was unquestionably a real prophet;—he had communications from Jehovah, and delivered true prophecies (see Numb. xxiii., xxiv., and xxv.)—it appears that a prophet of the Lord in conjunction with a Gentile king, endeavoured by subtle means, by the instrumentality of Gentile women, to introduce idolatry into the Church of the living God, and to corrupt his people by inducing them to participate in heathen sacrifices. This was the offence of Balaam. Now the charge against the Church in Pergamos is, that there were some in it who held the "doctrine of Balaam," &c. But why this allusion to Balaam and Balak?

What possible reason can be assigned or conceived why the Lord, in addressing the angel of the Church in Pergamos, should refer to the case of an apostate prophet, and a Gentile king? Were the two cases parallel? Were there any points of resemblance between them? But if we regard the Church of Pergamos as representing symbolically the universal Church, after the conversion of Constantine and the establishment of Christianity as the religion of the Roman empire, how striking is the correspondence! Very soon after that event did the Bishops of Rome begin TO COUNSEL THE NEWLY CONVERTED HEATHEN EMPERORS to sanction the introduction of HEATHEN RITES AND PRACTICES into the services of the Church. Not, indeed, at first, with the direct intention of corrupting Christianity, but in the hope that by thus allowing ancient rites and customs to be retained whilst they gave them new names, and, as they supposed, a Christian application, they would overcome one of the principal hindrances to the conversion of the great mass of the people, and allure them into the Church. In proof of this let the two following extracts, one from Augustine, the other from Jerome, suffice:—"When peace was made (viz., between the Emperors of Rome and the Church,) the crowd of Gentiles who were anxious to embrace Christianity were deterred by this, that whereas they had been accustomed to pass the holidays in drunkenness and feasting before their idols, they could not easily consent to forego these most pernicious yet ancient pleasures. IT SEEMED GOOD THEN TO OUR LEADERS TO FAVOUR THIS PART OF THEIR WEAKNESS, and for those festivals which they relinquished, to substitute others in honour of the holy martyrs, which they might celebrate *with similar luxury,*

though not with the same impiety.”—(August. Epist. xxix.)

“ We almost see the CEREMONIAL OF THE GENTILES introduced into the Churches UNDER PRETENCE OF RELIGION : piles of candles lighted while the sun is yet shining, and everywhere people kissing AND WORSHIPPING I KNOW NOT WHAT,—a little dust in a small vessel wrapt up in a precious cloth. Great honour do such persons render to the blessed martyrs, thinking with miserable tapers to illuminate those whom the Lamb in the midst of the throne shines on with the splendour of his majesty.”—(Jerome adversus Vigilantium, c. ii. From “The Church in the Catacombs,” p. 226.)

Now who can read these extracts and not be struck with the remarkable correspondence between the statements they contain in regard to the introduction of idolatrous practices into the Church, and the word of the Lord to the Church in Pergamos? How can we fail to see in that correspondence a symbolical prophecy of that state of things which followed speedily upon the cessation of persecution and the enthronization, as it were, of the Church in the very seat of Satan? Then, as these quotations prove, did the Bishops and Emperors of Rome, like Balaam and Balak of old, conspire together to seduce the *children of Israel*, the outward Church of God just escaped from the hand of their persecutors, *to commit fornication, and to eat things offered to idols*; or, in other words, to mingle the adoration of saints and relics with the worship of Jehovah, and to draw away the attention of the Church from the one great and only Mediator between God and man, to a host of inferior and secondary mediators, and thus to obscure the glory of Christ and corrupt the faith.

“*So hast thou those which hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes,*” &c.—It has already been observed, that we know not exactly who or what the Nicolaitanes were. We have no clear and satisfactory account of their doctrines, and it is impossible therefore to bring historical proof that encouragement was given to them by the Church at this period. But if the essence of their offence was, as seems probable, that under the pretence of transcendental purity they practised the grossest licentiousness, may we not discern the fulfilment of the prophecy in the imposed celibacy of the clergy and the growth of monasticism, both of which belong to the epoch I have assigned to the Pergamæan Church state? The account given by Socrates, the ecclesiastical historian, of a controversy which occurred on the subject at the Council of Nice is indeed very remarkable, and strikingly confirmatory of the above view. Speaking of Paphnutius, bishop of a city in the Upper Thebais, he says:—

“Another thing also I will relate of him, no less honourable to himself than beneficial to the Church. The bishops thought proper to bring in a *new* law, to the effect that the clergy, who had married as laymen—I mean, bishops, priests, and deacons,—should live apart from their wives. Whilst they were debating this matter, Paphnutius stood up in the midst of the assembly of bishops, and protested with great vehemence against the introduction of such a law, saying, that the necks of the clergy ought not to be pressed down by so heavy a yoke; that marriage was honourable in all and the bed undefiled; and that they should take care, lest, by passing a severe law like this, they should wrong the Word of

God, and cause many to offend.”—(Socrates’ Eccles. Hist., lib. i., c. viii.)

On reading these words, I could not but be struck with the similarity of the language held by Paphnutius, and that of the passage we are considering. It will be remembered that Nicolas, the founder of the sect of the Nicolaitanes, is said to have expressed his willingness to give up his wife to whoever would marry her,—and is it not, then, clear, that in the Nicene Council there were some high in the Church WHO HELD THE DOCTRINE OF THE NICOLAITANES ?

4. But let us now turn to the threatening and the promise addressed to this Church. We shall find that here also there is a no less wonderful correspondence between the condition of the Church and the things spoken. The threatening is, “Repent, or I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.” I will fight against *them*, namely, Balak and Balaam, the Gentile king and the apostate prophet,—not, against *thee*. But this is the very thing predicated concerning the beast and the false prophet, c. xix. 15, 19, 20. Let the reader compare the passages together; also c. xvii. 14. There cannot, I think, be a doubt but that the same persons and the same things are referred to in both places.

5. Then there is the promise concerning the *hidden manna* and the *white stone*. Can any reason be assigned why this promise should be made to the TRUE Church (for it should always be borne in mind that these promises are given to the spiritual Israel, the people of God, and none others),—can any reason, then, be assigned why this promise should be made to the

Church at this particular epoch of its history, supposing that epoch to be the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries? Assuredly there can. For was it not about this period that the true Church, the pure spouse of Christ, commenced her flight into the wilderness? and was it not also now that the Church of Rome, assuming to herself authority over all other Churches, began to shut up the Scriptures from the people, and to thunder out her excommunications against all who refused to submit to her authority, and to cast them out, as she pretended to have power to do, from the Church of Christ? And what promise, then, more suitable to comfort believers under such circumstances than this? The Church is about to pass away into the wilderness; but as God fed his Church of old with manna during all the time they were in the desert, so does he promise that he will feed his Church now with the *hidden manna*, *i.e.*, I conceive, the word of truth, the written word contained in the Scriptures, which were now about to be hidden from the eyes of men in general, and would be fed upon only by those who, in the midst of almost general darkness and corruption, would be hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and striving to overcome. This *hidden manna* may also signify those spiritual consolations, hidden from the world, whereby he sustains his people, and imparts to their souls unspeakable joy and peace, and which it is here promised would be richly granted to all his faithful servants, even in the times of the Church's greatest obscuration.

And the WHITE STONE, with the NEW NAME, how well also is this part of the promise adapted to the circumstances of the Church at this epoch! It was now that the great fundamental doctrine of Christianity, the

articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesiæ, justification by faith, began to be lost sight of, and instead of knowing themselves to be “justified by faith,” and thus “having peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. v. 1), men sought to be justified, in part at least, by their works; the doctrine of purgatory, as an almost necessary consequence, crept in, and instead of possessing that peace which passes all understanding, arising from the knowledge of the forgiveness of sins, and so rejoicing in the sure hope of the glory of God, their minds were agitated by doubts and filled with gloomy apprehensions. Not submitting with a simple faith to the righteousness of God, they went about to establish a righteousness of their own, and as they thus adulterated and neutralized the glorious Gospel of Christ, and, like the idolaters of old, changed it, as it were, into an image made like to corruptible man, substituting for the unchangeable, everlasting truth of God a lie of their own invention, a specious counterfeit; they lost its blessedness, and knew nothing of that hope which is an anchor to the soul, sure and stedfast. What promise, then, can be conceived more suitable, more opportune, to humble-minded, sincere believers so circumstanced, living, that is, in the midst of so much darkness, than this? For what is this “white stone, with the new name written on it, which no man knoweth but he that hath it,”* but

* The allusion is to the manner in which the votes of the judges were taken when sentence was about to be pronounced upon an accused person. The sentence of acquittal was signified by a *white* stone, of condemnation by a *black* one. The Athenians used to write the name of the party whom they condemned upon an oyster-shell. Hence the term *ostracism*, which signifies banishment by oyster-shells. Christ writing a name upon the *white* stone signifies just the reverse, not banishment from the city of God, but the acknowledgment of citizenship. (c. iii. 12.) Some commentators think that the allusion is to a practice connected with the rites of hospi-

that personal knowledge of forgiveness and acceptance, that “witness in himself” of the sufficiency of Christ’s atonement and righteousness, and of the freeness and unchangeableness of God’s redeeming love, which he graciously vouchsafes to impart to all who bringing the sacrifice of a broken and a contrite heart, cast themselves with perfect simplicity of faith upon his mercy? To such he promises to give not only “a white stone”—the sign of acquittal—but “a white stone with a new name written,” even the name of his heavenly Father, conjointly with his own (compare c. xiv. 1), thus assuring them of their adoption, and declaring them to be heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. (Rom. viii. 14.) And how exceedingly precious must such a promise as this have been to those few faithful ones who lived in the times of which we speak! With what indescribable delight must they in their solitariness have fed upon such gracious words, and drunk in the consolation they afford! But they are equally precious still. If we would have spiritual life, if we would know the fulness of the blessings of the Gospel of Christ, we must still eat of the “hidden manna,” and possess that white stone with the “new name written upon it, which no man knoweth but he that hath it.” For the wilderness is not yet passed through, neither does the world yet know us (1 John iii. 1); we must therefore still feed

tality. It is said to have been customary when a host and his guest, who had conceived a friendship for each other, separated, to cut a stone into two parts, on one of which the host wrote his own name, and gave it to his guest, and on the other the guest wrote his, and left it with his host; and thus this stone became a perpetual pledge of friendship between them and their descendants. So, it is alleged, the white stone in this place may signify the pledge of that perpetual love and regard which Christ has for his people. I prefer, however, the former interpretation, as being the most natural.

upon the *hidden manna*, and content for the present with the inward testimony of the Spirit to our adoption, “wait for the manifestation of the sons of God.”

The message to the Church in Thyatira.—c. ii. 18—29.

EPOCH, A.D. 600 TO ABOUT 900.

The epoch to which I have assigned this message commences with the seventh century, and occupies the space of about three hundred years. The leading feature in it is the encouragement given to idolatry by a symbolical woman called Jezebel, whom I have assumed to be the Church of Rome. Have we any ground for this assumption? Have we any historical proof that at about this period the worship of images began, and was encouraged and finally established, mainly by the authority and influence of the Romish Church? This is the point to which I would now ask the reader's earnest and unprejudiced attention. Having considered the historical evidence on this point, we will then go through the several particulars of the message in detail, and I trust I shall be able to show that, not only as regards this one leading feature, but in every other respect, even to the minutest circumstance, the contents of this epistle suit the epoch to which it is assigned.

We have first, then, to adduce the historical evidence that during the seventh and two following centuries Rome favoured the worship of images, and that, too, in opposition to the feelings and opinions of a large number of bishops and leading men in the Church, who nevertheless eventually succumbed to her authority. Now, in proof of this, I shall bring forward two

witnesses,—the historian of the declining empire, and the historian of the Church of Christ, two very different men indeed, and directly opposed in sentiment, but on that very account the more unexceptionable witnesses, since it makes the concurrence in their testimony the more remarkable. To begin, then, with the Infidel historian.

The heading of the forty-ninth chapter of the “History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,” is as follows :—

“Introduction, worship, and Persecution of Images—
TEMPORAL DOMINION OF THE POPES—ESTABLISHMENT OF
IMAGES.”

Now, let the reader observe here that remarkable parenthesis, as it were, in this heading, “Temporal dominion of the Popes,” coming in between the introduction and establishment of image worship. Does not this seem to imply some relationship between them?—that, in fact, the temporal dominion of the Popes is the connecting link which joins the beginning with the end, and makes the chain complete? But let us now hear what the historian has to say upon these points, the very announcement of which is so full of meaning.

After stating that he had purposely abstained from noticing religious controversies of a purely abstract character, as not being connected with the great subject of his work, whilst he had dwelt largely upon those events in ecclesiastical history by which the decline and fall of the empire were materially affected, he proceeds thus :—

“At the head of this class we may justly rank the worship of images, so fiercely disputed in the eighth and ninth centuries; since a question of popular superstition

produced the revolt of Italy, the temporal power of the Popes, and the restoration of the Roman empire in the West.”*

“The first notice of the use of pictures is in the censure of the Council of Illiberis, three hundred years after the Christian era. Under the successors of Constantine, in the peace and luxury of the triumphant Church, the more prudent bishops condescended to indulge a visible superstition for the benefit of the multitude. The first introduction of a symbolic worship was in the veneration of the cross, and of relics; but a memorial more interesting than the skull or sandals of a departed worthy, is a faithful copy of his person and features, delineated by the art of painting or of sculpture. At first, the experiment was made with caution and scruple: and the venerable pictures were discreetly allowed to instruct the ignorant, to awaken the cold, and to gratify the prejudice of the Heathen proselytes. By a slow though inevitable progression, the honours of the original were transferred to the copy: the devout Christian prayed before the image of a saint, and the Pagan rites of genuflexion, luminaries, and incense, again stole into the Catholic Church. The scruples of religion and piety were silenced by the strong evidence of VISIONS AND MIRACLES; and the pictures which speak, and move, and bleed, must be endued with a Divine energy, and may be considered the proper objects of religious adoration. . . . The use and even the worship of images was firmly established before the end of the sixth century.”—P. 116.

It was not to be expected, however, that so direct and flagrant a breach of one of God’s plainest com-

* Vol. ix., c. xlix., p. 113.

mandments could become general without some opposition, some dissentient voices being lifted up against it. And we find accordingly that the introduction of image worship led to a long and terrible conflict, which lasted the greater part of two centuries, and was attended not only with bitter animosity between the contending parties, but with war and bloodshed. What part the Church of Rome took in the conflict the reader will perceive as we follow the historian in his narrative.

“The worship of images” (thus he proceeds) “had stolen into the Church by insensible degrees, and each petty step was pleasing to the superstitious mind, as productive of comfort, and innocent of sin. But in the beginning of the eighth century, in the full magnitude of the abuse, *the more timorous Greeks* were awakened by an apprehension that, under the mask of Christianity, they had *restored the religion of their fathers.*”—(P. 121.)

At this crisis Leo the Isaurian ascended the imperial throne of Constantinople. Inspired by his early education and by his intercourse with Jews and Arabians with a hatred of images, he seems from the first to have determined upon their abolition; but owing to the unsettled state of the empire during the early period of his reign, he was afraid of attempting a reform which he foresaw would be attended with so great danger. “During ten years,” says the historian, “Leo submitted to the meanness of hypocrisy, bowed before the idols which he despised, and SATISFIED THE ROMAN PONTIFF with the annual professions of his orthodoxy and zeal.” (P. 124.) At length, however, he threw off the mask, and had the courage boldly to declare himself a decided and determined opponent of image-worship. Still he

proceeded with moderation and caution, and in the first instance enacted only, with the consent of the senators and bishops, that all images should be removed from the altars to the higher parts of the church where they might be seen, but without the same danger of their being superstitiously revered. This, however, only provoked the resistance and invectives of the image worshippers; and being irritated by their opposition, by a second edict he proscribed not only the use but the existence of religious pictures, or representations of any description. The images of Christ, the Virgin, and the saints, were everywhere demolished, and a smooth coat of plaster spread over their pictures. And now there began the war of the Iconoclasts, or Image-breakers, a sect which was supported by the zeal of six Emperors, and which involved a noisy conflict between the East and the West of one hundred and twenty years."

A general Council, consisting of three hundred and thirty-eight bishops, was assembled by Constantine, the son of Leo, to consider this question. "After a serious deliberation of six months, these three hundred and thirty-eight bishops (but it should be observed that none of them were from Italy) pronounced and subscribed a unanimous decree, that all visible symbols of Christ, except in the Eucharist, were either *blasphemous* or *heretical*; that image worship was a *corruption of Christianity and a renewal of Paganism*; that all such *monuments of idolatry* should be broken or erased; and that those who should refuse to deliver the objects of their private superstition were guilty of disobedience to the authority of the Church and of the Emperor."—(P. 126.)

Notwithstanding, however, the apparent unanimity with which this decree was passed, the passion for image worship was too deeply rooted in the minds of the people to be at once eradicated. In fact, a large number of the bishops themselves appear to have been secretly inclined in favour of the practice, and to have withheld their opposition to the decree only out of respect for the Emperor. A strong opposition was therefore raised against the execution of the decree; and it was not until many lives had been lost, that the worship of images was vigorously proscribed throughout the Eastern empire, and a solemn oath was exacted of the clergy that they would “renounce the worship of corruptible images.”—(P. 130.)

“The patient East,” proceeds the historian, “*abjured with reluctance* her sacred images: they were **FONDLY CHERISHED, and VIGOROUSLY DEFENDED,** by the independent zeal of **THE ITALIANS.**”—(Ibid.)

How they were cherished and defended, and *by whom* especially, will appear by the following extracts from two epistles from Gregory II. to the Emperor Leo. They are well deserving of the reader’s attention, as exhibiting not only the feelings of the Church of Rome at that time in regard to the worship of images (for as the head of that Church Gregory must be regarded as its representative), but the spirit of the Papacy in general.

“During ten pure and fortunate years” (says Gregory to the Emperor), “we have tasted the annual comforts of your royal letters, subscribed with purple ink, with your own hand, the sacred pledges of your attachment to the orthodox creed of our fathers. How deplorable is the change! How tremendous the scandal! You now

accuse the Catholics of idolatry: and by the accusation you betray your own impiety and ignorance. Were you to enter a grammar-school, and avow yourself the enemy of our worship, the simple and pious children would be provoked to cast their horn-books at your head.”—(P. 134.)

Thus at this early period does the Bishop of Rome commence an epistle to the mightiest monarch on earth! He then attempts to draw the usual distinction between the idols of the Heathen and Christian images. *They* were a fanciful representation of beings that had no existence, “*these* are the genuine forms of Christ, his mother, and his saints.”

“You assault us,” he says, “O tyrant! with a carnal and military hand: unarmed and naked, we can only implore the Christ, the Prince of the heavenly host. You declare, with foolish arrogance, I will despatch my orders to Rome; I will break in pieces the image of St. Peter. Are you ignorant that the Popes are the bond of union, the mediators of peace between the East and the West? The eyes of the nations are fixed on our humility; and they REVERE AS A GOD UPON EARTH the Apostle St. Peter, whose image you threaten to destroy. The remote kingdoms of the West present their homage to Christ and HIS VICEGERENT, while you alone are deaf to the voice of the shepherd. Reflect, tremble, and repent. If you persist, we are innocent of the blood that will be spilt in the contest; may it fall on your own head” —(P. 136.)

The Emperor however did not repent. A long and bloody contest followed,* the result of which may be thus given in the words of the historian:—

* It is said, that on one occasion the waters of the Po were so deeply

“The institution of an annual feast perpetuated the worship of images, and the abhorrence of the Greek tyrant. Amidst the triumph of the Catholic arms the Roman Pontiff convened a synod of ninety-three bishops against *the heresy* of the Iconoclasts (*the image-breakers*). With their consent he pronounced a general excommunication against all who by word or deed should attack the traditions of the fathers, or the images of the saints.”

Thus was the worship of images firmly established in the Western, or Latin Church. But the evil did not end here. Although the Eastern Church, under the directing control of six successive emperors, had repudiated images, an empress at length arose who was as zealous in encouraging idolatry, as her predecessors had been in opposing it. Under the infamous Irene a second Council was assembled at Nice, at which three hundred and fifty bishops were present, who unanimously pronounced, “THAT THE WORSHIP OF IMAGES IS AGREEABLE TO SCRIPTURE AND REASON, AND TO THE FATHERS AND COUNCILS OF THE CHURCH.” This decree was afterwards accepted and confirmed by the Pope, Hadrian I.; and thus, after a severe conflict of a hundred and twenty years, image worship was triumphant, both in the East and the West.

Such is a summary of the narrative given by the secular historian of the introduction and final establishment of image worship in Christendom. I will now call the reader’s attention to a few extracts in corroboration of this testimony from the historian of the Church. Let it be borne in mind that my object is to prove that

infected with the blood of the contending armies, that during six years the people, from a superstitious prejudice, abstained from the fish of the river.

image worship was established mainly by the influence and authority of the Romish Church. To begin, then, as before, with the title of the chapter. It is as follows :—

“ CENTURY VII.—CHAP. III.

“ THE CONTROVERSY ON IMAGES.—THE MATURITY OF
ANTICHRIST.”

Such is the heading of the chapter ; let the reader mark its commencement. “ In the year 727 the Greek Emperor began open hostility with the BISHOP OF ROME, and, to use the words of Sigonius, Rome and the Roman dukedom passed from the Greek to the Roman bishop. Hence I date the beginning of the Popedom ; which from this time is to be regarded as Antichrist indeed, for ‘ it set ’ itself by temporal power to support false doctrine, and PARTICULARLY THAT WHICH DESERVES THE NAME OF IDOLATRY.”

A dissertation on the origin and nature of idolatry here follows ; and having stated how pictures and images had stealthily crept into Christian places of worship, he makes the following remarks :—

“ Thus, six hundred years after Christ, images had begun to appear in churches, but still without idolatry. The authority of Gregory (he was Bishop of Rome), however, had evil consequences ; the spirit of idolatry grew stronger, as real spiritual knowledge decayed. In this respect the *Roman Church* advanced in corruption more rapidly than the *Eastern* ; and Grecian emperors employed themselves in destroying images and pictures, while in *Italy* they were held in *idolatrour admiration*.”

He then proceeds to give the same history in substance of the controversy which followed on the subject of image worship, as that which we have already considered.

It is remarkable indeed how perfectly the ecclesiastical and the secular historian agree on one main point, namely, the attributing the triumph of image worship to the Church of Rome. In proof of this one or two extracts may suffice :—

“ In 784, Irene wrote to Adrian, desiring his presence at a Council, to be held for the support of image worship. Adrian’s answer is worthy of a Pope. He expresses *his joy* at the prospect of the establishment of image worship.”

“ France had as yet shown no disposition positively in favour of idolatry ; THE ROMAN SEE ALONE IN EUROPE had in form supported and defended it.” “ The superior light of England and France, in the controversy concerning images, seems to show both these countries, in knowledge to have been far superior to Rome ; yet so strongly were men prejudiced in favour of the dignity of the Roman See, that it still remained in the height of its power, and was enabled in process of time to COMMUNICATE ITS IDOLATROUS ABOMINATIONS THROUGH EUROPE.”*

And can there, then, be any doubt as to who that woman Jezebel is ? Have we not here the clearest and most unquestionable evidence, that the Church of Rome was the great patronness of image-worship throughout the controversy on the subject, and that it was mainly through her influence that the servants of God were induced to “ adulterate ” the purity of Christian worship by the introduction of images and pictures, and thus spiritually to commit fornication, and eat things offered

* The historian here makes the following note :—“ Irene, towards the close of this century, dethroned her son Constantine. This monster, a worthy patronness of idolatry, then reigned alone, and *co-operated with the Pope of Rome* in the support of Satan’s kingdom.”

to idols? For who was the original Jezebel? A volume might be written in reply to this question. And volumes almost have been written upon it, with a view to show the correspondence between the wife of Ahab and the Church of Rome.* I can only touch upon a few leading points. The most striking are these—

1. Jezebel was a Gentile by birth, brought up in the practice of idolatry, but married to a professed worshipper of the true God.

2. She introduced her native gods and their worship into the Israelitish Church.

3. She nourished idolatrous priests.

4. She persecuted and slew the prophets of Jehovah.

5. She forged letters, and sealed them with the king's seal; and suborned men to swear falsely, in order to obtain possession of Naboth's vineyard; and thus she stopped not at fraud, perjury, and murder, to accomplish her ends.

6. By these means the true Church was reduced to a very small remnant, so that only seven thousand were left who had not bowed the knee to Baal.

Lastly, her end was terrific. Thrown down by her own *eunuchs* (!) into the street, she was trodden under foot by the very men who had eaten at her table.

And need I point out the parallelism in all these respects, between Jezebel and Rome? Have we not seen that the Church of Rome, the branch of the wild olive tree (Rom. xi.) grafted into the good olive tree, instead of being changed in its nature, and bringing forth fruits to the glory of God, retained its natural corruption, and whilst partaking of "the root and fatness

* See among others, a tract entitled, "Jezebel," by the Rev. H. M'Neile, published by the Protestant Association.

of the good olive tree," bore still, like the ancient Jewish vine, its wild berries?—having still its idols and its heathenish rites and superstitions? And have we not seen how she encouraged the favourers of image worship, and slew the servants of the Lord? And did not all this take place in exact chronological correspondence with the period to which, according to the scheme of interpretation hitherto followed, this message to the Church of Thyatira belongs? Was not the true Church thus reduced to a very small remnant, so that in the next epoch she is addressed as the Church in Sardis, the Church *of the remnant*, having only a few names left that had not defiled their garments? And with regard to the forged letters of Jezebel, her murders, and her sorceries, have they not also had their fulfilment in Rome? Did not the Church of Rome, by her bishop, forge decretals, giving himself a patrimony which never of right belonged to him? Did she not write letters in the name of Constantine, and seal them with his seal, in order that so she might take possession of her neighbours' property?*

* The Exarchate of Ravenna was wrested from the Greek Emperor, by Pepin, Mayor of Paris, and given to the popes, who afterwards forged decretals in the name of Constantine, bestowing all Italy upon them. The history of this forgery is thus given by Gibbon:—"The Vatican and Lateran were an arsenal and manufacture, which, according to the occasion, have produced, or concealed, a various collection of false or genuine, of corrupt or suspicious acts, as they tended to promote the interests of the Roman Church. Before the end of the eighth century some apostolic scribe *composed* the decretals and the donation of Constantine, the two magic pillars of the spiritual and temporal monarchy of the popes. According to the legend, the first of the Christian emperors was healed of the leprosy by St. Silvester, the Roman Bishop. This royal proselyte withdrew from his seat and patrimony of St. Peter; declared his resolution of founding a new capital in the East, and resigned to the popes the free and perpetual sovereignty of Rome, Italy, and the provinces of the

the parallelism between Jezebel and Rome ! Nor does it end here. As their character and deeds are alike, so shall their end be. Jezebel was cast into the street by her own eunuchs, and trodden underfoot by one of her captains, and so shall the Church of Rome be exposed to public shame by her own priests, even they who profess to have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake, and be trodden down and destroyed by that very secular power which has most served itself of her.

But we must not anticipate. For further illustration of this portion of the Epistle the reader is referred to the notes on the seventeenth and eighteenth chapters. There he will find the woman Jezebel more fully and distinctly depicted, and her end foretold. One other remark only I would make, and that in regard to the relative position of this message to the Church of Thyatira, viewed in connexion with the other prophecies in the Revelation concerning the apostate Church. It will be remembered, that in the Epistle to the Church in Pergamos, Balaam and Balak, a prophet and a king, are introduced as conspiring together to corrupt the Church, but here it is a symbolical *woman*, *i. e.*, a Church by itself, which is the great instrument of corruption. And is not this the precise order we find followed in the prophecies contained in the things which the apostle saw ? Is there not *first* the beast from the sea, the secular empire ; and *then* the beast from the land with his lamb-like horns, the emblem of the false prophet ? (chap. xiii.) And then, afterwards, is there not the

West."--(" *Decline and Fall*," c. xlix. § ii.) This forgery is now universally admitted by Roman Catholics themselves. I know not how they defend it. See this subject more fully discussed, c. x.

harlot triumphant, riding upon the scarlet-coloured beast, and guiding him at her will? (chap. xvii.,) just as in the testimony, Balak and Balaam first, and then Jezebel? Can there be any doubt, then, who this Jezebel is? Is it not clear almost to demonstration, that she is identical with the great harlot, that hath in her hand the golden cup full of the filthiness of her abominations, and is “drunk with the blood of the saints?”

Having thus shown at large the symbolical import of the woman Jezebel, who occupies the most prominent place in this address to the Church in Thyatira, I must now direct the reader’s attention to the remarkable correspondence between the other parts of this message and this, the leading article in it.

“*These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire,*” &c.—If we turn to c. xix. 11—21, which is an account of the last great conflict between Christ and his people on the one side, and the beast from the abyss and the false prophet on the other, we shall find many things which correspond with what is here written. The Son of God is the title of our Lord which in Scripture is more especially connected with his kingly dominion. Thus, in the second Psalm, we find the words, “Thou art my Son,” &c., immediately connected with the declaration, “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill.” See also Psalms lxxii. and lxxxix. This designation, therefore, “These things saith the Son of God,” joined with the “eyes of fire” and “feet as fine brass,” intimate the approaching manifestation of the Lord as the King of all the earth, and for the consuming and treading down of his enemies. And so accordingly in the before-mentioned passage, he who sits upon the

white horse “hath his eyes as a flame of fire, and on his head many crowns, and in righteousness doth he judge and make war; and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.” There is, therefore, a manifest correspondence between the designation which the Lord gives himself in this message, and the description of his person and acts in that nineteenth chapter, implying a correspondence in the general subject in both places. The narrative, in fact, in the latter place is only the fulfilment of the implied threatening in the former.

Ver. 19. “*I know thy works, &c., and the last to be more than the first.*”—It may, perhaps, be objected against the application of this message to the Church at large from the seventh to the tenth century, that this part of it is not a true description of the condition of the Church at that period. It is, however, a remarkable fact, that the controversy on images and the schism between the Eastern and Western Churches which followed it, were the occasion of increased efforts on the part of pious men in preaching the Gospel to the Heathen. In proof of this I quote the following remarks from Milner:—

“After all, it is in the propagation of the Gospel among the Pagans that the real Church is to be seen in this century. *Some real work* of the kind was carrying on while the Popedom was forming; and by the adorable providence of God pious missionaries, who entered not into the recent controversies, but were engaged in actions purely spiritual, were patronized and supported in preaching Christ among foreign nations by the same Popes of Rome who were opposing his grace in their

own. Their ambition led them to cherish the zeal of the missionaries." (Cent. viii., c. iii.)

"In this century the Churches of the East and West began to be separated from one another through the pride and ambition of the pontiffs of Rome and Constantinople. Providence, however, made use of the ambitious spirit of the prelates for the *still more extensive* propagation of the Gospel." (Cent. ix., c. v.)

Now let it be borne in mind that these remarks occur in the very chapters in which the historian is relating the controversy on image worship; and could we then desire a better commentary on the words, "I know thy works, and the last to be more than the first?"

Vers. 21—23. "*And I gave her space to repent,*" &c.—What space? It would be difficult to answer this question on the supposition that Jezebel is a literal person. But how true is the declaration of that Church whom we suppose to be symbolized by Jezebel! Has not God given abundant space to the Church of Rome to repent of her idolatry, and has she repented? On the contrary, does she not persist still in her saint and image worship, and obstinately defend them? Yes, truly, space enough has she had given her for repentance. First of all, did God lightly afflict her with the Saracenic locust woe (see c. ix. 5—10); then afterwards more severely, slaying a third part of her former children with death by the Euphratean horsemen woe (c. ix. 20); and still more recently, even in our own days, and, as it were, in our eye-sight, by the five first vial-woes. (c. xvi. 1—11.) Thus has God given this idolatrous Church warning after warning for the space of twelve hundred years, inflicting his chastisements at intervals, and waiting to see the effect produced, whether she will repent or not.

But the result has ever been, and still is, the same. "She repented not."*

Let the reader carefully compare the passages above referred to with these three verses. He cannot fail to be struck with the correspondence.

"*And I will kill her children with death.*"—This may have, and I think has, a twofold meaning and a twofold accomplishment. It may mean that God would kill the children of this symbolical idolatrous woman with *spiritual* death. And so it will have had its fulfilment in that state of utter lifelessness into which the Church sank about the commencement of the tenth century, and which is foretold in the message to the Church in Sardis; or it may mean that God would kill her children with literal death by causing multitudes of them to be slain, and those who remained alive to be cut off altogether from the Church. In this case, we must seek for the fulfilment in the destructive wars of the Saracens and Turks, especially the latter, by whom a third part of men was slain (c. ix. 18), as also in the still more recent revolutionary wars of the French.

It should be observed that the threatening is, "I will cast HER into a bed," and "I will kill HER children with death; not "THEE," and "THY;" the fulfilment of the denunciation is to be sought, therefore, not in Thyatira and her children, but in Jezebel and hers. What this *bed* may mean I confess myself at a loss to understand, unless it be the bed of affliction and sorrow.

Ver. 24. "*The depths of Satan.*"—In the early Church

* Of this the concluding paragraph of the first Encyclical letter of Pope Pius IX. is sufficient evidence. He therein addresses the Virgin Mary as the great patronness of the Church, and certainly ascribes to her apparently the same honour and the same power as to Christ.

there were persons who pretended to have attained to a degree of knowledge as well as of sanctity vastly superior to that of ordinary Christians. Such persons were the Gnostics, and the Nicolaitanes already mentioned.* These men called their abominations *the deep things of God*, but the true name for them was, *the deep things of Satan*. Such at least seems to be the most natural explanation of the words, “*as they speak*.” These persons certainly would not themselves have called their doctrines *the depths of Satan*, but they called them *deep things*, and He whose eyes are as a flame of fire shows whose *deep things* they were. What these depths of Satan, as regards the members of the literal Church in Thyatira may have been, we know not precisely; but we know that there are deep things in the Church of Rome which, whatever appearance they may have of being from God, belong rather to the adversary. Among these we may mention the SACRIFICE OF THE MASS, in which the priest is said to offer a true and proper sacrifice for the living and the dead. A dogma so utterly false and blasphemous, so repugnant to reason and Scripture, that whatever its advocates may say, can have come only from him who is “the father of lies.”

“*I will put upon you none other burden*.”—It seems then that this woman “calling herself a prophetess,” imposed burdens upon the members of the Church which Christ had not imposed; that, in fact, she presumed to require more than the Lord of all the Churches himself

* Thus Eusebius says of the Gnostics: “They have among them certain detestable mysteries which are said to amaze him who first hears of them. These men, indeed, are so full of what is horrible, detestable, and impious, that not only are their doctrines not fit to be committed to writing, but even to be uttered.” (Euseb. Hist., l. iii. c. 13.)

required; thus, like the Pharisees of old, “binding heavy burdens upon men, and grievous to be borne.” And can we fail here also to recognise a distinguishing characteristic of the mystical Jezebel? Did Christ institute monastic vows, and pilgrimages, and penances? Did he forbid priests to marry, and command men to abstain from meat one day in the week? Hath he laid these things as a burden upon men’s consciences? Who then has?

“*That which ye have already hold fast.*”—An important admonition. Oh that “the rest,” the remnant in Thyatira, would attend to it! But it may be asked, “What are we to hold fast?” I answer, The doctrines and precepts of Christ, those which he himself has given in opposition to the commandments of men; those “other burdens” which some would lay upon Christians, but which Christ has not laid upon them. (See c. iii. 11.)

“*Till I come.*”—This shows that the warning belongs to the Church to the end of the world; there would be no propriety otherwise in the addition, “till I come.” And is not this consideration sufficient by itself to awaken a doubt as to the correctness of the views of those commentators who deny the prophetic bearing of these epistles? If the members of the Church in Thyatira alone were addressed, why any allusion to the second coming? Why say to a Church which the Lord knew was to become extinct ages before his second advent, “Hold fast *till I come?*” But, on the other hand, how timely, how suitable is the admonition when considered as addressed to all those Christians and Churches who, having shaken off the burdens imposed upon men’s consciences by human traditions, hold fast by the word of Christ, waiting for his coming?

26. "*And keepeth my works.*"—I direct especial attention to this clause as indicating the importance of keeping the *works of Christ*, *i.e.*, of observing the precepts of Christ and doing the things which he has commanded. The woman Jezebel assuming to herself the character of a prophetess, required works to be done which Christ did not require ; and these, therefore, however zealously they might be performed, were nothing worth, inasmuch as they were not *his* works. Need I point out how all this applies to the works of supererogation done in the Church of Rome? What are works of supererogation but works over and above what Christ requires ?

"*To him will I give power over the Gentiles,*" &c.—In c. xi. 2 we read that "the holy city was to be trodden down and given to the Gentiles forty and two months." Now the Gentiles in both these places undoubtedly signify the same persons. But in the latter prophecy they symbolize mere nominal Christians, ungodly members of the Church. This, therefore, is a prophecy of the final triumph of the true disciples of Christ over their enemies and persecutors, and specifically of the pious few in the Romish Church who hold fast to the doctrine of Christ at the risk of their lives.

28. "*And I will give him the morning star.*"—The morning star is the harbinger of day, but it implies the previous prevalence of nocturnal darkness. This promise, then, must be addressed to a small remnant of believers living during the Church's obscuration, and is to them the assurance of the dawning of brighter and better days. What was the specific meaning of the promise as addressed to individual believers in the Church of Thyatira I confess myself at a loss to understand ; but as addressed to the small, pious remnant in the Church

of Rome, who mourned over its corruptions and degradation during what are proverbially called “the dark ages,” nothing can be more appropriate. Who has not heard of “the dawn of the Reformation?” But that “dawn” some who lived even in the midst of Papal darkness were privileged to behold. Of this the heraldic arms of the Waldenses is sufficient proof. They consisted of a lighted candle in the midst of seven stars, with the motto, “Lux lucet in tenebris,”* (*the light shineth in darkness*),—an emblem corresponding with that of the morning star, as implying that, notwithstanding the darkness around them, the members of the Waldensian Church enjoyed the light of truth.

Thus, then, it appears that in every the minutest particular, this message to the Church in Thyatira is suited to the circumstances of the Church during the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries. Can we doubt then that it is prophetic, and describes, in anticipation, the state of the Church during that period?

THE CHURCH IN SARDIS.—CHAPTER III. 1—6.

If the application which has been made of the four preceding epistles be correct, there can be no doubt respecting this. If the message to the Church in Thyatira be prophetically descriptive of the condition of the Church to the end of the ninth century, this to the Sardian Church must be referred to the era immediately succeeding. Does, then, the representation of the condition of the Sardian Church accord at all with the state

* I state this on the authority of the “*Horæ Apocalyptiæ*,” vol. ii., p. 393, Fourth Edition.

of the Church universal at this time? Let us go at once to the only sure and satisfactory proof in a case of this kind—the testimony of history. The prominent feature in the condition of the Sardian Church is, that “it hath a name to live and is dead.” And do then ecclesiastical historians represent such to have been the state of the Church at the commencement of the tenth century? The difficulty here is, not to find proofs, but to know which to choose out of the multitude that present themselves on every side. That the Church “had a name to live” at this period is manifest from one circumstance alone,—the enormous and almost incredible power which, regarded as a spiritual body, it possessed. The Church was then *everything*. Kings and emperors trembled at the feet of the pretended successors of St. Peter, and the clergy were looked upon with a superstitious awe, amounting almost to adoration. They were regarded as the only medium of communication between God and man; the sole dispensers of his judgments and mercies; the arbiters of good or evil to the human race. This proves that the Church had at least “a name to live.” For had it not been regarded as a living body, it never would have exercised so powerful an influence over mankind. But was it really alive? Did it possess any one of the characteristics of spiritual life, faith,—love, holiness? No; surely if the Church as a body, although to outward appearance alive and making great pretensions to spiritual vitality, was ever utterly destitute of life, and really and truly dead, it was then. This is a fact so notorious, that it is scarcely necessary to bring historical evidence to prove it. A few extracts from two of the most popular writers of Church history (Milner and D’Aubigné) may give the general reader an idea of

the condition of the Church at this period. The former commences his narrative of the events of the ninth century with these words :—

“We are penetrating into the regions of darkness, and a ‘land of deserts and pits, and a land of drought and of *the shadow of death,*’ and we are carried by every step into scenes still more gloomy than the former. *Here and there,* indeed, a glimmering ray of the Sun of Righteousness appears ; it is in vain to look for any steady lustre of Evangelical truth and holiness.”

Such was the state of the Church in the beginning of the ninth century. Its deterioration, however, had not yet reached the lowest point. The opening remarks of this same historian on the general condition of the Church in the next century present us, if possible, with a still more gloomy picture :—

“‘The famous analist of the Roman Church,’* says the historian, ‘whose partiality to the See of Rome is notorious, has, however, the candour to own that this was an *iron* age, barren of all goodness ; a *leaden* age, abounding in all wickedness ; and a *dark* age, remarkable above all others for the scarcity of writers and men of learning.’ Christ was then, as it appears, in a very deep sleep, when the ship was covered with waves ; and what seemed worse, when the world was thus asleep there were no disciples who by their cries might awaken him, being themselves all fast asleep.” And this, let it be borne in mind, is the testimony of a devoted adherent to the Church of Rome. Could we desire more unequivocal evidence of the death-like state into which the Church had sunk ? Well, surely, might the historian of the Reformation exclaim, with reference to the condition of

* Baronius.

the Church at this period, “What visions! what crimes in these ages of darkness, in which impurity was acquired by money! What might not be feared when a small contribution to the building of a church was supposed to deliver from the punishment of a future world! What hope of revival when the communication between God and man was at an end, and man afar off from God, who is Spirit and life, moved only in a circle of pitiful ceremonies and gross practices, in *an atmosphere of death.*” (D’Aubigné, “Hist. Reform.,” vol. i., p. 39.)

Yes, “an atmosphere of death.” Such, indeed, was the character of that moral atmosphere which professing Christians breathed in those days. And is there not something very striking and remarkable in the expression? Might we not almost fancy that the eloquent writer had this very epistle to the Church in Sardis in his eye, and that he was showing how truly it was descriptive of the Church at this period?

But was then the corruption universal, the deadness complete and without any exception? No; to quote again the language of the historian, “Doubtless the corruption was not universal. Justice requires that this should not be forgotten. The Reformation elicited many shining instances of piety, righteousness, and strength of mind. Still the evil of the period we speak of bore a character of *universality* that it has not borne at any subsequent date, and, above all, the abomination stood in the holy places, which it has not been permitted to do since.” (Ib., p. 38.)

How exactly does this agree with the words of the testimony:—“Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments!” Yes, not only were there distinct communities, such as the Albigenes

and Waldenses on the Continent, and the Lollards and Wickliffites in England, who kept their garments undefiled by idolatrous contact, but many individuals doubtless in the bosom of the apostate Church itself, who abhorred its abominations, and did not participate in its heathenish practices.

But this subject will come before us again in c. xiv. 1, where we have these “few names in Sardis” more fully described. Let the reader turn to the passage.

“*I have not found thy works perfect before God.*” And why not? Because they were her *own* works; works of this Church’s own devising, and done in her own strength. They were not, in short, Christ’s works (see c. ii. 26), and, therefore, they were worthless. But did she think then that her works *were* perfect? Certainly this is the natural import of the negation: for if this Church did not imagine her works to be perfect, why should the Lord tell her that they were *not* perfect? It would be a strange way of speaking to say to a man who had just declared his conviction that he was in a dying state, “You are *not* in good health.” This is a style we should assume rather to one who had stoutly maintained his freedom from all disease. The very negation, therefore, of Christ in regard to the perfectness of the works of this Church implies an assumption on her part that they *were* perfect. And was there ever any other Church that systematically taught the perfection of human works but one? Did any Church, but the Church of Rome, ever speak of the works of man in such language as the following:—

“If any one shall say that the *good works* of a man who is justified are so far the gifts of God that they are not also the good merits (*bona merita*) of the justified

person himself, or that the justified person himself does not *truly deserve* by the good works which are done by him through the grace of God and the merit of Jesus Christ, of whom he is a living member, an increase of grace, eternal life, and the actual attainment of eternal life (provided he shall die in a state of grace), and also an increase of glory, let him be accursed?" (*Decree of the Council of Trent*, sess. vi., can. 32.)

Or did any other Church ever teach its members to believe in regard to good works as follows:—

“ Q. What is the foundation of indulgences ?

“ A. The superabundant satisfaction of Christ *and his saints*.

“ Q. What do you mean by doing an action well ?

“ A. I mean the doing it so that God may have no cause to find fault with it.

“ Q. Are good actions of any benefit to a Christian besides making him virtuous ?

“ A. Yes, for moreover every good action is meritorious, impetratory, and satisfactory.

“ Q. What do you mean by a good action being meritorious ?

“ A. I mean that it deserves to be rewarded by God,” &c. (“*Christian Doctrine for the use of the Diocese of Limerick*,” by the Rev. Dr. Young.)

Now, do not these specimens of the doctrine of the Romish Church furnish a clue to the meaning and bearing of the declaration, “I have not found thy works perfect before God ?”

The Church of Rome says, that the works of her saints *are* perfect before God, and *merit* reward not only for the doers of them, but for others ; but Christ says, “I have *not* found thy works perfect.” Oh, how

wonderful is this testimony of Jesus Christ! Who can help exclaiming as he contemplates these things, Oh the depth both of the riches, and wisdom, and knowledge of God! What but the Divine prescience, or that omniscience which sees the end from the beginning, could thus have anticipated, and by one short sentence have annihilated, the doctrine of human merit?

“*If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.*”—The fulfilment of this threatening, considered as addressed to the Church of Rome, is most remarkable. Did not the Lord indeed come upon her “as a thief” when the spirit of the Reformation suddenly burst forth, and a poor monk shook the foundations of the “mother and mistress of all Churches” to the very centre? Nothing, indeed, can be more striking than the concurrent testimony of ecclesiastical historians on this point—as to the *suddenness*, I mean, of the outbreak of the Reformation. Rome was completely taken unawares. So firmly established did she regard her authority, so secure did she think everything to be, that even when the foe to her greatness came upon her and stood as it were at her gates, she would not believe there was any danger.

“At the opening of the sixteenth century,” says Milner, “the Roman pontiffs were the *uncontrolled* patrons of impiety.” “At the commencement of this century,” says Mosheim, “no danger seemed to threaten the Roman pontiffs.” “Europe,” says Mr. Cuninghame, speaking of the same period, “reposed in the deep sleep of spiritual death under the iron yoke of the Papacy. That haughty power, like the Assyrian of old, said in the plenitude of his insolence, ‘My hand hath found as a

nest the riches of the people ; and there was none that *moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped.*' ” Even after the first trumpet-note of the approaching warfare had sounded, after Luther had posted his famous theses on the church doors at Wittenberg, the Roman pontiff was not alarmed. They afforded Leo amusement rather than occasioned him terror ; and when urged by some of his officials to treat the author as a heretic, his reply was, “ That same brother, Martin Luther, is a man of talent, and all that is said against him is mere monkish jealousy.” *

So little was the head of the Romish Church prepared for the blow that was coming upon it ; so little did that Church herself know the hour when her calamity would come.

But this threatening will yet have a more signal and terrible fulfilment. The Lord did indeed come upon the Romish Church as a thief, when the outbreak of the Reformation so suddenly and unexpectedly shook her foundations ; but far more suddenly, and far more awfully, will He come upon her when her iniquity shall be full, and the decreed period of her total and final destruction shall have arrived. Then, at the very time she is congratulating herself upon her strength and security,—as she saith in her heart, “ I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow ; shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine ; and she shall be burned with fire.” (Compare c. xviii. 7 ; also xvi. 15.)

5. “ *He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment,*” &c.—These promises are made to “ the few names in Sardis who had not defiled their garments ;”

* “ Hist. of the Reform.” D'Aubigné. Vol. i., p. 324, Fifth Edition. Walther.

the small chosen remnant who had not participated in, but rather protested against, the idolatrous practices by which they were surrounded. And how suitable are they to their case? That imperious Church, which assumes to herself the title of the “mother and mistress of all Churches,” and claims the sole right of pronouncing who are saints and who are not, and whose names shall be written in the book of life and whose names shall be excluded from it, declared those faithful witnesses for Christ who protested against her idolatry and groundless assumption of supremacy, to be accursed heretics, laden with sin and guilt, and lying under the displeasure of God. Her language concerning them was, “We exclude them from heaven; and the Lord smite them with hunger and thirst till their strength fail them; and let them be delivered up with the devil and his angels to eternal fire.”*

But the Lord of the Church says of these very men, “They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy; and I will not blot out their names out of the book of life; but I will acknowledge them before my Father.” And what is this but saying, “Men may revile them, and say all manner of evil of them to *blacken* them, but I will clothe them, nevertheless, with the spotless robe of my righteousness, and they shall be white as snow. Men may cast out their names as evil-doers, and expunge them from *their* books, but I will not blot out their names from the book of life which I have written. (See Exod. xxxii. 32; Phil. iv. 31.) Men may deny them to be my disciples, and call them the children of Satan, but I will acknowledge them, and confess them before my Father and the holy angels.” Such, surely,

* Such is the form of excommunication in the Church of Rome.

is the natural interpretation and application of these words. And what, then, is this promise, but a prophecy by implication; for the Scripture saith nothing in vain, and the very promise, therefore, here made by Christ to those few names in the Church of the Remnant, as it might rightly be designated, the Albigenses and Waldenses, and Lollards, and Wickliffites, and Hussites; these very promises, I say, imply that some would attempt to sully their fair fame, and to blot their names out of God's book. (Compare c. xix. 5.)

But have we here no lesson for ourselves? Is there no danger lest "we should have a name to live whilst we are dead?" What is the profession of Christianity and the regular punctilious performance of a round of religious services, whilst there is no faith, no love, no spiritual affections in the heart, and no spiritual fruits in the actions, but the name of life with the reality of death? And what brings a Church, or an individual, into this state? What brought the Sardian Church into this state? It was the "not holding the head," (Col. ii. 19); the letting go of Christ, and taking hold of other things as substitutes (ver. 1); and thereby cutting themselves off from the root and spring-head of all spiritual vitality, and so ceasing to receive those vivifying influences which he alone can supply. For it should never be forgotten that Christ is the only source of life to the Church, both individually and collectively. "He is the vine, we are the branches." He is not only "the way and the truth," but "the life" also; and separated from him, therefore, the profession of Christianity is a mere name; the ceremonies of religion an empty form; and the outward Church itself a body

without a soul,—a graven image, symmetrical, it may be, and elegant, but colourless, cold, and lifeless.

THE CHURCH IN PHILADELPHIA.—CHAPTER III. 7—13.

We have now arrived at that epoch in this prophetic history of the Church given by the Great Head of the Church himself which reaches to our own times, and which, therefore, involves a greater degree of personal interest than any of the former, and calls for a proportionably greater degree of earnest and prayerful consideration.

It will be borne in mind that the era to which I have assigned this message, is the commencement of the fifteenth century; and the specific event in the history of Christendom to which I suppose it to refer, is—the egress of the infant Protestant Church from the Church of Rome, and its gathering from that time forth strength and numbers. Let us now test the correctness of this theory, as before, by a comparison of the sacred text with the records of history.

In the exordium of this address the Lord designates himself as, “*The Holy One, the True; he that hath the key of David; he that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth.*” Now, if we refer to Isaiah xxii. 22, we find that God there employs precisely similar language to the above concerning Eliakim, whom he was about to call to the treasurership of the kingdom in the place of Shebna. “The key of the house of David,” he says, “will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.” Thus it appears that *the key* of the house of David was the ensign of the office of

TREASURER, and the possession of it gave the possessor, in fact, possession of the treasury, and power to dispense it according to his will. In a spiritual sense, consequently, "the key of the house of David," is the key of the treasury of the spiritual Israel, "the Church of the living God," the possession of which gives to him that has it the power of disposing of and communicating the riches of the kingdom of heaven to whomsoever he will. It implies also the power of opening and shutting the gates of that kingdom, of saying who shall be admitted into it, and who shall not; and, as regards the kingdom itself, of determining when, and to what extent, it shall be established, and thus of enlarging or contracting its boundaries. In short, it implies SUPREMACY in everything relating to the discipline, government, and extension of the Christian Church. And had the Lord no especial reason for thus designating himself in addressing the Church in Philadelphia? Doubtless he had. There must have been peculiar circumstances in the state of things in Philadelphia which rendered such a designation peculiarly appropriate. Perhaps, the presiding minister of the Philadelphian Church may have been a particularly bold and zealous preacher; and in consequence, whilst a great door and effectual was opened to him, he may, like the apostle under similar circumstances, have stirred up the hatred of the natural man to the truth, and have brought upon himself many adversaries. (See 1 Cor. xvi. 9.) And this may have been spoken to strengthen and encourage him. But whatever may have been the peculiar circumstances in the literal Philadelphian Church which called for this address, nothing can be more suitable than such an exordium to the infant Protestant Church, at the epoch I have assigned to this Epistle.

If we attentively consider the language employed, it cannot, I think, fail to produce upon the mind the impression, that our Lord here speaks of himself in the way of contradistinction to *some other*, and that he asserts his rights and prerogatives in opposition to the claims of one who pretended to be his representative, and as such personated his character and assumed his authority. "I am," he says, "*the Holy One and the True; I have the KEYS,*" &c. And who can require to be told, for who does not know, that there was at the period before mentioned, and is to this hour, one, a human being, a poor, frail mortal, like ourselves, who, nevertheless, does claim to be the visible representative of Christ upon earth; the fountain-head of truth and power; the arbiter of the destinies both of the Church and of the world? Who has not heard of "the power of the keys," and of him who is called "his *Holiness*?" the *only true* successor of St. Peter, and the vicegerent of Christ upon earth?—of him who claims to be, and is styled by his adherents, "the head of the Church; the father and the teacher of all believers; the ruler of the house of God; the *keeper* of God's vineyard; the universal bishop!"* Who, in short, has not heard of the Pope of Rome, and his sweeping claims to sanctity, infallibility, and absolute supremacy?† And would it not seem as though the Great Head of the Church, foreseeing that such an usurper of his exclusive attributes and prerogatives would arise, had dictated this message

* Such are the titles given to the Pope by Cardinal Bellarmine. The original runs thus:—"Papa, pater patrum, Christianorum pontifex, *vicarius Christi*, caput corporis ecclesiæ,—*pater et doctor* omnium fidelium, *rector* domû Dei, *custos* vineæ Dei, *episcopus universalis*."—"Bellar. de Rom. Pontifice," lib. ii., c. 31.

† "He who reigns on high hath committed the one holy Catholic,

to the Philadelphian Church, with specific reference to these baseless and blasphemous pretensions? It is as if he had said, addressing himself to the few names still left him in Sardis, the small remnant of his faithful followers still remaining within the pale of the apostate Church, but sighing for release and deliverance, and preparing to come forth from it, "Lift up your heads, and take courage, ye my little flock. There is One, who calling himself holy and true, and pretending to be my representative and vicegerent, assumes to himself the title of ruler of my house, and claims the exclusive power of admitting and excluding, of binding and loosing, of acquitting and condemning, according to his pleasure;—but know that I have not thus resigned the keys of my kingdom to any of my creatures: all the officers in my Church are men like yourselves, and your fellow-servants. I alone have the key of David, and I alone dispense the treasures of the heavenly kingdom; if I shut, none can open: if I open, none can shut. If I dispense those treasures, none can keep them back; if I withhold them, none can bestow them." Thus, I say, may we suppose the Lord to address the infant Protestant Church, in its first strugglings to come forth from the dark recesses of Romish corruption and tyranny, where for so many ages it had lain entombed. And how encouraging to the primitive Reformers must such language have been! Can we not well imagine, indeed, that this very passage may have occurred to the mind of Huss, when standing, on the 6th of July, 1415, in

Apostolic Church, to one alone on earth, namely, to Peter, the prince of the apostles, and to the Roman Pontiff, the successor of Peter, to be governed in the plenitude of his power."—Bull of Pope Pius V. against Queen Elizabeth.—(See the Addendum to this volume.)

the presence of his merciless enemies at Constance, he heard his sentence of condemnation read, charging him, among other things, with “obstinately trampling upon the KEYS of the Church,” and “despising ecclesiastical censures;” and with “appealing to Jesus Christ as the only true Head of the Church, and Sovereign Judge?”* Can we not, I say, imagine that these very words may have come into his mind, and have inspired him with that undaunted courage he then and there displayed?

“I know thy works: behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it, because thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. Behold, I do make of the synagogue of Satan those who say that they are Jews, and are not, but do lie,” &c.—Ver. 8—10.

Let me ask the reader’s earnest and unprejudiced attention to these words. What the peculiar circumstances in the Philadelphian Church were which rendered such an address suitable to it we know not. That it *was* suitable to the condition of that Church I have no doubt; but history furnishes us with no facts which throw any light upon the meaning and application of the message considered as addressed to that particular Church. Far otherwise is it if we take Philadelphia in what I suppose to be its symbolical import, as the representative of the Protestant Church in its antagonism to Rome. Regarded in this point of view, every word becomes invested with the deepest personal interest and most momentous meaning. We shall, then, have here a

* See “History of the Church,” by Rev. G. Waddington, p. 595.

compendious history of the Protestant Church, from its first egress from communion with Rome, to its final triumph and exaltation, accompanied with a solemn warning to all its members. Let not the reader think that this is a mere fanciful application. Only let him carefully weigh the terms of the prophetic message, and with patience trace its historical fulfilment, and, I doubt not, the result will be the most unhesitating conviction of the correctness of the application I am now advocating.

Regarding this message, then, as prophetic, what are the prominent features in it? They are, 1st, The setting before this Church AN OPEN DOOR, which may be understood either of a door of *escape*, or a door of *enlargement*. It has probably both these senses here. 2d, An intimation of physical or political WEAKNESS, but of spiritual STRENGTH. "Thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word," &c. 3d, An assurance that some (and let the reader well mark this part of the message)—that some *calling themselves Jews*, professing, *i.e.*, themselves to be Christians, but who had no just claim to the title, should be proved to belong to the congregation of Satan rather than of God (see c. ii. 9), and be compelled to honour this Church they had once despised, and to acknowledge it to be loved and favoured by God. 4thly, A promise of protection and preservation in a time of great trial which was about to come upon THE WHOLE EARTH.* Let this last circumstance be noted. Does not the universality of the trial imply that the promise of preservation has reference to something more than the small Church in Philadelphia?

* Or, *habitable world*, τῆς οἰκουμένης ὅλης.

Would there not be in that case a disproportion, if I may so speak, between the vastness of the field over which the trial was to extend, and the smallness of the area exempted from it ?

Such are the prominent features in this message. Let us now see how far they can be traced in the history of Protestantism. And, first, as regards its beginnings. When and where may Protestantism be said to have taken its rise ? Perhaps, some would say, from the earliest period of Romish corruption, in the valleys of Piedmont. But I should rather say, in England, in the fourteenth century. It was then and there that the Lord of the Church opened that door for the emancipation of his people from the tyranny of Rome, which man has ever since endeavoured in vain to shut, and which, so far from ever having been closed, has been opened wider and wider to this day.

John Wickliffe, the founder of the Protestant Church in England, and, we might almost say, in Europe, was born about the year 1324. He boldly maintained the three great principles of Protestantism, namely, the sufficiency of the Scriptures without the aid of tradition, the right of private judgment, and justification by faith. He openly declared that the Pope was a usurper ; and when the schism in the Papacy took place, by the appointment of two Popes, he exhorted the princes of Europe to seize the opportunity of extinguishing the evil altogether.* In short, Wickliffe was to England what Luther was to Germany. He planted the seed of that true apostolic Church

* See Waddington's Hist., p. 583. Also, Penny Cyclopædia ; Article, Wickliffe. And Le Bas' Life.

known by the title of the "Church of England," the branches of which now reach to the ends of the earth. Truly marvellous indeed have the ways of God been in regard to this Church. Wickliffe died in 1384. Thirty years afterwards, by an edict of the Council of Constance, his bones were dug up and burnt, and the ashes cast into an adjoining brook. But, "the brook," says Fuller, "did convey the ashes into Avon, Avon into Severn, Severn into the narrow seas, and they into the main ocean. Thus the ashes of Wickliffe are the emblem of his doctrine, which now is dispersed all the world over."* It was indeed so. For Huss received his first light from the writings of Wickliffe, and Luther his—in part, at least—from the writings of Huss; and how many of our English reformers received theirs from the writings of Luther! Thus wondrously did *the light which sprung up* in our own country travel back again to its original source, after having first traversed Europe, and thus was that open door set before the infant Protestant Church, which no man could shut. And how was all this effected? Who were Wickliffe, Huss, Jerome, and Luther? Were they the great and mighty of the earth? Had they in the eyes of men "*much strength?*" Or the Churches of which they were respectively the founders, were they, in their *beginnings, great and powerful?* Might it not be truly said of the infant Protestant Church, whether in England, or Bohemia, or Germany, that it had, to human appearance, but "*LITTLE STRENGTH?*" And how, then, did it win such mighty victories? What were the weapons of its warfare? The answer is before us. It "kept the word of Christ, &c., and

* Waddington's History.

did not deny his name.” “The Word of God in opposition to the traditions of men,” may be said to have been the motto of the Reformers. In this one sentence is comprised the great principle of the Reformation, and the grand subject of controversy with the Church of Rome. “The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants,” has been the watchword of the Reformed Church from its birth.* Most exactly does this commendation, therefore, apply to that Church. But there are circumstances which incline me to think that Philadelphia and its Church is specifically the type of England and its Church. For three hundred years and more England has been regarded, and justly too, as the bulwark of Protestantism; and I think a modern writer has truly observed, that “there is the strongest reason to believe, that as Judea was chosen for the especial guardianship of the original Revelation, England has been chosen for the especial guardianship of Christianity.”† Is it not a remarkable fact, that the Sovereign of this country should have received from the Roman pontiff himself a designation indicative of such guardianship? For upwards of three hundred years have the kings and queens of England borne on their arms and on their coins the title of “DEFENDER OF THE FAITH!” True, this title was given by one bad man to another like himself, and in a very different sense from that in which it is now understood, but does this invalidate

* And it is accordingly the foundation-article of the English Church: “Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation, so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an Article of the Faith.”—*Art. VI.*

† See a tract entitled, “England the Fortress of Christianity.” By the Rev. G. Croly, LL.D., published by the Protestant Association.

the argument derived from the fact itself? Does it not rather strengthen that argument? Have we not scriptural authority for believing, that bad men may be made the unconscious instruments, in their official capacity, of uttering true prophecies, and giving to individuals their true and proper designation, not only without their being aware of it, but even in direct opposition to their own sentiments? Was it not so with Caiaphas and Pontius Pilate? Did not the former speak under the influence of the Spirit when he stood up in the midst of the Council, and declared, in his official character as High Priest, that “it was expedient that one man should die for the people, and not the whole nation perish?”* And did not the latter act under a Divine impulse, and declare the truth, when, as the representative of Cæsar, he in derision wrote the title, “THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS,” and put it upon the cross? And why, then, should it not be so in the present instance? The parallelism is indeed most striking; and I cannot but think that as Caiaphas and Pontius Pilate were compelled in their official character to utter truth concerning the man they were about to destroy, so the Bishop of Rome, the so-styled sovereign pontiff, and then generally acknowledged head of the Christian Church, may, by a Divine direction of which he was not aware, have given to our King and his successors that title which, although in a very different sense (but yet in its true and proper sense), they have ever since borne; and that God did thus point out the Sovereign of this country as the

* “This spake he not of himself, but being High Priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation,” &c.—John xi. 51.

guardian of the true faith, as opposed to Romish error.* And viewed according to this application, how strikingly have the promises and threatenings herewith connected been fulfilled! Has not the falsehood of the pretensions of the Papal Church to be regarded as the only true Church of Christ been palpably made manifest, and has not God indeed shown such extraordinary favour to this nation and its Church, and exacted even from its enemies such respect and honour, as to compel at least a tacit admission on their part that he has loved it? † Who can contemplate the history of Protestant England for the last three hundred years, and not be struck with amazement at the manner in which God has honoured her, and made her enemies to come and “BOW DOWN BEFORE HER FEET?” Have not those very countries which sought her destruction, because she was the opponent of Popery and the stronghold of Protestantism,—have not those very countries, I say, been compelled to court her alliance, and to acknowledge her to be “the first of the nations?” Did not the destinies of Europe at the commencement of the present century hang upon England? and have not her victories by sea and land, the extent of her empire, and her immense wealth and power, made her the arbiter of the

* It is remarkable that Leo met with great opposition from the College of Cardinals in bestowing this title upon Henry the Eighth, and they strongly urged him to alter it; but he persisted in his purpose notwithstanding. Just as the Chief Priests came to Pilate and said, “Write not the King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews.” But Pilate answered, “What I have written, I have written.”—See Roscoe’s Leo X.

† See, *e. g.*, the last Apostolical Letter of Pius IX. In this famous letter there occur these words: “Giving way to our feelings of affection towards that beloved part of our Lord’s vineyard,” &c.—Sept. 29, 1850.

world, and so exalted her in the eyes of all the nations of Europe as to compel those who hated her to acknowledge that God has loved her? Are these things accidental? Nor is the fulfilment of the remainder of the promise less striking and remarkable. How wonderfully has God kept this country hitherto from those "trials which have come upon all the rest of the earth!" Who can read the history of the last half-century, and not be struck with the extraordinary fact, that whilst every other country in Europe has been the seat of sieges, battles, and desolating warfare, no foreign foe has for a moment set his foot on our shores?*

The mere politician may resolve this into our insular position, but there is something more in it than this. The shield of the Almighty has been spread over us. It is the fulfilment of his promise. With all our sins, we have nationally as a government "kept his word," and therefore "he has kept us in the hour of trial."

"Behold, I come quickly: hold fast what thou hast, that none may take thy crown."—If Philadelphia be the symbol of the Protestant Church, and specifically of the Protestant Church in this country, then have

* The exemption of Britain from the evils to which the continental nations have been subjected for the last hundred years is thus strikingly stated by Mr. Macaulay:—"During several generations we have been exempt from evils which have elsewhere impeded the efforts and destroyed the fruits of industry. While every part of the Continent, from Moscow to Lisbon, has been the theatre of bloody and devastating wars, no hostile standard has been set up here as a trophy. While revolutions have taken place all around us, our Government has never once been subverted by violence. During a hundred years there has been in our island no tumult of sufficient importance to be called an insurrection. The law has never been borne down either by popular fury or legal tyranny. Even in times which might by Englishmen be justly called evil times, we have enjoyed what every other nation in the world ever considered as an ample measure of civil and religious freedom."—*Hist. of England*, vol. i., p. 280.

we here an affectionate, solemn warning, deserving of our most earnest attention. It is melancholy to think that a Church and nation which have been so highly favoured as our own, may, nevertheless, at length “let go” what they already hold, and so eventually lose the crown of honour which shall be bestowed upon the most deserving. What that crown specifically may be, I pretend not to say; but the very caution to hold fast, “lest the crown should be bestowed upon another,” implies that there is danger. And do I imagine, then, that there is any danger of England’s giving up its Protestantism, and once more embracing Popery? I trust not. I confidently hope that there is too much scriptural light in this country ever to allow the darkness of Romish tradition again to prevail. Yet who would affirm that the thing is impossible? If we let go, as a nation, those great fundamental truths which form the basis of our national Church,—namely, the sufficiency of Scripture in opposition to tradition; the right of private judgment as opposed to blind submission to the authority of the Church; and the sufficiency of the atonement and mediation of Christ as contradistinguished from the doctrine of the Church of Rome in regard to the sacrifice of the mass, the merit of works, and the mediation of saints,—if we let go, I say, these great fundamental truths, who shall say what we may become? For my own part, I do not expect we shall ever return to Rome; but that man must be blind indeed who does not perceive that a current proceeding from the Establishment has for some years been flowing in that direction, and that the minds of a large proportion of the younger clergy in particular

are infected with Romish principles. Here, then, lies our danger. As long as we present that bold and determined front to the errors and falsehoods of Rome which we have done for the last three hundred years, we are safe; but if we let go our hold of Christ and his Word, and take hold in their stead of the Church and tradition, we shall assuredly find that we have let go the substance to grasp the shadow, and that in letting go of Christ we have forfeited our crown.

“*Behold, I come quickly.*” Why this announcement to the Philadelphian Church, and not to any of the preceding? Surely there is a reason for this, and what other reason can be assigned, or conceived, but that the era of which the Philadelphian Church state is symbolical, is an era bordering upon the close of the present dispensation, at the expiration of which the personal advent of the Lord will be drawing near? I say *drawing near*, because we must not suppose that the declaration, “Behold, I come quickly,” implies that his advent will follow *immediately* upon its close. The Laodicean Church state must intervene, and what may be the duration of that state we know not; it may be fifty, or it may be a hundred, or two hundred years; but whether it be long or short, this is certain, that it will be the immediate prelude to the coming of the Lord. And it is equally clear, supposing these Epistles to be prophetic, that the Philadelphian Church state is the last but one.

“*He that overcometh, I will make a pillar in the temple of my God,*” &c.—Let the reader observe the *peculiarities* in the terms of this promise. The conqueror is promised, not merely a permanent abode in the temple of God, but that he himself shall be a pillar in that temple, and go forth no more. Further,

mention is made of “a new name to be written upon him,” and “of the city of God, the new Jerusalem which cometh down out of heaven, from God.” Now, why these allusions? What do they imply, but that the time of the Church’s glorification is approaching? That the eternal city, the New Jerusalem, described in c. xxi., is about to be completed, and to appear in all its glory? Therefore is our attention directed to this blessed consummation; therefore are we taught to look forward to becoming pillars in the temple of our God,* and the perpetual inhabitants of that city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is the Lord of hosts. How should these “great and precious promises,” whilst they may teach us not to be high-minded but to fear, kindle our hopes and stimulate us to a steady perseverance “in running the race that is set before us!”

LAODICEAN STATE.—*The Protestant Church become proud and self-sufficient,—rich in its own eyes, but poor in the sight of God.*

CHAPTER III. 14—22.—*Period—Perhaps, yet future.*

One of the principal objections of Bishop Newton and others, against the prophetic bearing of these Epistles is, that this message to the Church of the Laodiceans represents it as being in a worse condition than any other of the Churches, whereas the last state of

* In the description of the New Jerusalem, c. xxi. 22, it is said, indeed, “I saw no temple therein;” which may seem to militate against the application of this promise to that period of blessedness. But although it is said, “I saw no temple,” it is immediately added, “For the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.” Now we are sure that the only way in which the Lord can be a temple, is in the persons of his believing people. And this circumstance, therefore, rather confirms, than otherwise, the above application of this promise.

the Church will be the most glorious of all. But the reply to this objection is obvious. The final condition of the Church in an absolute sense, will indeed be glorious ; none of the Epistles, therefore, can be suitable to it in that state. It does not, however, follow, that its last condition as a Church militant and changeable, and immediately preceding its final glorification will be the best : now, it is to the last state of the general Church in this sense that the application of this Epistle must be made.

And are we then, it may be asked, to look forwards still to such a wretched, discouraging state of things as is here described, before we may hope to see the Church of Christ shine forth in all its glory ? Is this to be the result of all our efforts, unparalleled by anything done in former times, for the conversion of the heathen, and the diffusion of scriptural truth throughout the world ? Are all the labours of our Bible and Missionary Societies to come to this ? It is, indeed, somewhat discouraging to think so. It would be far pleasanter if we could on good grounds anticipate other and better results. But in these cases we must not judge according to our wishes and desires, but according to what is written, so far at least as God has been pleased to reveal his purposes. If the correctness of the application of the six foregoing epistles to the state of the universal Church be admitted, then there can be no doubt as to the application of this. Now, for my own part, so far from finding any difficulty in conceiving that the state of the Laodicean Church is symbolical of the last condition of the universal Church just previous to the second coming of Christ, it appears to me that such a view is perfectly consistent with the general tenor

of Scripture, and that, in fact, there are even now many very clear indications, not only that such a state of things is possible, but that it is fast approaching, if it has not already commenced.

Let us now consider the characteristic features of the Laodicean Church, and we shall be able to judge how far this observation is founded in truth.

The first characteristic is *lukewarmness*. Not, that is, decided and open opposition to the Gospel, but a sort of indolent indifference about it; a want of zeal for the glory of God, and of real interest in the preservation of the true Christian doctrine; a latitudinarianism of principle, in fact, arising from a mistaken notion of charity, and a defective view of the nature of Christian holiness, and of the requirements of the Christian law. This seems to be the import of the descriptive phrase "*neither hot nor cold.*" The parties referred to are not unbelievers; not Atheists or Deists; but they are persons who make a profession of Christianity, and assume to themselves an extraordinary degree of Christian charity and candour.

The second characteristic is, if I may so express myself, *evangelical self-confidence*. This Church says, "*I am rich, and have need of nothing;*" yet is she "*wretched, and miserable, and poor,*" &c.* Now such language as this implies more than that ordinary self-confidence common to natural men who "trust in themselves that they are righteous." It is the self-confidence, clearly, of those who have *a knowledge of the truth*, which is here referred to; of persons who think themselves rich in spiritual things, and who have what is

* The Greek is still stronger. Literally translated it is, "*And knowest not that thou art THE wretched one, and the miserable,*" &c.

commonly called a theoretical acquaintance with the Gospel; it is the confidence of a Church proud of its evangelical orthodoxy, and yet destitute of all the essential and distinguishing *moral* qualifications of a Christian people.

The third characteristic of the Laodicean Church, and the source of the two former, is, *security*, and freedom from persecution. This may be inferred from the expression in ver. 19, "*As many as I love I rebuke and chasten ;*" which implies that the Church addressed had been free from chastisement, and had, in consequence, fallen into that lukewarm state for which she is condemned.

Such are the three chief characteristics in the condition of this Church, and I think it will be found upon examination, that they agree in a very remarkable manner with the general tenor of the declarations of our Lord and the apostles concerning the state of the Church in the latter days. What, for example, do such passages as the following imply? "*When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?*" (Luke xviii. 8.) And, "*Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many (many, that is, of my professed disciples) shall wax cold.*" (Matt. xxiv. 12.) And again, "*In the last days perilous times shall come ; for men shall be lovers of their own selves, proud, boasters, &c. : HAVING THE FORM OF GODLINESS, but denying the power thereof.*" (See the whole passage, 2 Tim. iii.) I allow that this last quotation may apply to the whole period of the Christian dispensation ; still it may very reasonably be inferred that it is more especially true of the close of that dispensation.

Analogy, also, would lead to the same view of the

subject; I mean the analogy between the Jewish and the Christian Church. The state of the former at the time of our Lord's first coming, was precisely that which is here described. Having renounced idolatry, which had once been the great national sin, they were proud of their knowledge of the true God, and looked with contempt upon the ignorant Gentiles around them. They thought, indeed, that they were rich and increased in goods, and had need of nothing; although, as every one knows, there never was a people more truly miserable, blind, and naked. (Compare Matt. xxiii. and Rom. ii. 17—29.) With a zeal which moved them to compass sea and land to make proselytes, they were themselves "*the children of hell.*"

It was when the visible Church of God was in this condition, that our Lord first appeared; analogy teaches us to expect that it will be in a similar condition when he shall appear again.

And do we not, indeed, as has been already intimated, see evident symptoms of its passing into such a state? It is dangerous, I am aware, to interpret prophecy by the events of our own times, and all attempts of this kind generally only serve to show the folly of those who made them to such as come after. In the present case, however, I do not pretend to prophesy; my object is simply to point out what appear to me symptoms of the approach of that state of things which is here described. Far from presuming to speak positively, I would merely throw out for the consideration of the reader, some of the thoughts which have arisen in my own mind in contemplating the general state of the Christian Church at the present time.

I think, then, in the first place, we have every reason

to expect that ere long a very great and general diffusion of real Evangelical truth will take place in the world; a far greater and more general diffusion than has ever yet been known. This has certainly already been the case in our own country. If we compare, for example, the character of the sermons preached in the pulpits of the Establishment now with that of those preached a hundred years ago, we shall find a great and striking difference between them. At the period referred to sermons, generally speaking, were little more than moral essays with the least possible tincture of Christianity now and then introduced; but now, there are, I believe, but few churches in which the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel are not brought before the people, and salvation in the name of Christ proclaimed. This alone is an important fact. Combined with this improvement in the character of our pulpit instructions, the much greater diffusion of scriptural knowledge, by means of schools, Bible Societies, and other institutions of a similar description, must be taken into consideration. It cannot be denied that by these means the great truths of Christianity have been more generally diffused among the people of England than ever they were before. Nor has the operation of these causes been confined to our own country. The same are in operation also on the Continent and in America. And who can estimate the extent to which in a few years the knowledge of Christian truth may be diffused by these, or similar means? Surely, when we reflect upon one circumstance alone, namely, the number of languages into which the Bible has been translated, in many of which it had never been known before, we have good reason for thinking that an era of

very general knowledge of scriptural truth is approaching.

But now, as far as we can judge from what has hitherto taken place, have we reason to hope and expect that the prevalence of Christian principle, and the practice of Christian morality, will keep pace with the march of Christian knowledge? What is the state of things in our own country? Do we find it to be so here? Do the fruits which appear amongst ourselves correspond with the degree of Evangelical light we possess, and with our religious professions? I fear we must answer this question in the negative. I am not speaking now, let it be observed, of the whole body of the English people, but of that portion who lay claim to more than a mere nominal Christianity, and who do in fact possess a theoretical knowledge at least of the true nature of the Gospel. Amongst this part of the community, both in and out of the Established Church,* is there not a manifest tendency to that state of mind described in those expressive words, "*I am rich, and have need of nothing?*" And do we not too often see this self-confidence accompanied with an utter destitution of anything like spiritual-mindedness, meekness, humility, or Christian virtue? I do not mean to say, of course, that this is universally the case; but that it is so to a great extent few, I imagine, will deny.

If such, then, be the consequence of emancipation from the shackles of Popish superstition, and the more

* It is not the writer's wish to speak harshly of any denomination of Christians. He cannot, however, help observing, that the disposition which he believes prevails very much among Dissenters to depreciate the Revelation and treat it with neglect, appears to him a very bad symptom.

general diffusion of the *knowledge* of the true scriptural doctrine amongst ourselves, may we not infer that similar consequences will follow in the other countries of Christendom, when they shall be brought into the same state as we are? The result, therefore, at which it is my object to arrive by these remarks is this: that the last condition of the Protestant Church, emancipated from Papal dominion, and free from persecution, will resemble that of the Laodicean Church; that is, it will be a state of much religious profession, and much apparent or fancied light and knowledge, but notwithstanding, a state of but little real and practical Christianity. Not that this will be *universally* the case; for none of these epistles are to be considered as describing the state of the Church at any particular period absolutely without any exception; but such, I am inclined to think, will be the *general* character of the condition of the Christian Church in its last stage, symptoms of which, as I have before said, are beginning already to appear. Even now I think we may discern indications of the existence of that state of things which is here so powerfully described. Never was Christianity ostensibly more honoured; never were men less liable to persecution for righteousness' sake; and never was the professing Church apparently so well supplied with means of instruction. In the common parlance of the day, "Science and religion go hand in hand together, and mutually support each other."

We are in our own eyes, in short, infinitely wiser and infinitely more knowing than our forefathers, and we regard their highest attainments as mere ignorance compared with our own. Yet, with all this, there is,

I fear, a certain something wanting. The Gospel salt has lost its savour; it may have the outward appearance of salt still, but it has no pungency or taste. And that is why it is acceptable to the world. It is so insipid and tasteless that the carnal palate does not perceive its presence; and men who have no love to Christ in their hearts, nor one single indication of a spiritual mind, can thus be induced to receive it without enmity and without opposition.*

The foregoing view of the prophetic bearing of this Epistle is confirmed by the exordium with which it opens, and the promises and invitations with which it closes.

The exordium is, "*These things saith the Amen, the true and faithful witness, the beginning of the creation of God.*" Now, Amen is a Hebrew word, and signifies TRUTH, in the most absolute and abstract sense. When Christ, therefore, calls himself THE AMEN, it is equivalent to saying, not only that he is himself true, and cannot be otherwise, as the apostle says of God, "He *cannot lie,*" but that He is the only source and fountain of truth; He who alone can make known the truth to us, and render us capable of receiving it:—that is to say, He is *the Amen, the Truth*, in the same sense as He is the *Life*, and as out of him all is spiritual death, so out of him all is religious darkness, ignorance, and error. But as He is the *source* of truth, so He is the witness of the truth; He bears a true and faithful testimony concerning God, his character, will, and

* I cannot forbear mentioning here the self-confident tone assumed by all the writers in our periodical publications, those that may be denominated *religious* not excepted. Every man writes in the same style of absolute infallibility, and none of them seem to think it possible that they can be mistaken.

purposes. All He has told us is a true and *faithful* report of what He had seen and heard, as dwelling from all eternity in the bosom of the Father. As He says himself, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." (John iii. 11.) This testimony therefore is not the testimony of a reporter merely, who witnesses to the truth of what another has said, but it is the testimony of an eye-witness, of one who tells what he himself has seen. But the reference here is rather to the truth and fidelity of this testimony concerning the condition of the Churches. And this constitutes the peculiar propriety of the exordium, regarded as introductory to the testimony respecting the state of the Laodicean Church which follows. The characteristic of this Church is self-ignorance; and being filled with an idea of its own superiority, it would naturally be unwilling to believe itself to be really in that low and wretched condition in which it is represented as being. Therefore does the Lord begin his message by declaring himself to be "the faithful and true witness," bespeaking, as it were thus, the reverent and anxious attention of those whom He addresses, inasmuch as the testimony He is about to deliver concerning their state, however unpalatable and humbling, is nevertheless the testimony of a true and faithful witness, and deserving of their most earnest consideration.

Nor is the designation which the Lord gives himself less suitable or less full of meaning. "*The beginning of the creation of God.*" *The beginning*, that is, the originating cause, or primary agent by whom all created things were called into existence. For so the expression

is to be understood; not as though Christ were the *first thing created*, but as being the *primary* agent in the production of created things. Just as St. Paul says in Col. i., “By Him were all things created, whether they be things in heaven or things in earth, all things were created by Him and for Him.” And the propriety of this designation in the connexion in which it here occurs is obvious. Christ is addressing a Church the members of which are proud and self-sufficient. He reminds them, therefore, that He is “the beginning of the creation of God;” and thus, while He rebukes their pride, He directs them to the only source from whence any created good can come.

“*Behold, I stand at the door and knock,*” &c. This is usually explained to signify Christ’s standing, as it is said, at the door of men’s hearts, and seeking admittance. And as an accommodation, such an interpretation and application may be admissible. But it is only an *accommodation*. The true and proper import of these words is, that the speaker, the Lord himself, is at hand. He is at the very door. As St. James says, speaking of the judgments shortly coming upon Jerusalem, “Behold, the judge standeth before the door.” This, therefore, is an intimation to the Church of the Laodicean epoch of the immediate advent of Christ. Before, his language was, “Behold, I come quickly.” But now it is, “Behold, I stand at the door.”

The promise to him that opens also is no less significative: “If any man open, I will come in and sup with him,” &c. It is then, as the meal specified implies, the *evening time* of the Church and the world that is referred to. We have only indeed to compare this promise with what we read c. xix. 9, and we shall

see at once what supper that is of which the Lord here speaks. "Write," said the angel to St. John, "Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb." The other part of the promise also, taken in connexion with what is written in c. xx. 4, is equally remarkable. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne," is the promise: "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and they reigned with Christ," is the fulfilment. And why these allusions to the actual *advent*, the *supper*, and the *throne*, but because the Laodicean Church state symbolizes the condition of the Church at large just previous to the personal coming, the marriage supper of the Lamb, and the millennial reign?

Having thus gone through these Epistles, I would now ask the reader's attentive consideration of the following summary of the leading contents and prophetic bearing of each:—

<p style="text-align: center;">1.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">EPHESUS.</p> <p><i>Name.</i>—Failure, cessation.</p> <p><i>Characteristic.</i>—Declining in love.</p> <p><i>Threatening.</i>—Removal</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">1.</p> <p>Prophetic application.—Primitive Judæo-Christian Church.</p> <p>Era.—From A.D. 33 to 137.</p> <p>Rapidly declined after the death of the apostles.</p> <p>Ceased to be a Church A.D. 137, when Jerusalem was finally destroyed, and the bishops of the Hebrew race ceased.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">2.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SMYRNA.</p> <p><i>Name.</i>—Myrrh (<i>used to embalm the bodies of the dead; also given to persons who were put to a violent death</i>).</p> <p><i>Characteristics.</i>—Poverty and suffering.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">2.</p> <p>The Church subjected to Heathen persecution.</p> <p>Era.—From A.D. 67 to 313.</p> <p>Ten persecutions.</p> <p>The last persecution continued exactly ten years.</p> <p>The Church apparently anni-</p>

Ten days' tribulation.

Promise.—A crown of life.

3.

PERGAMOS.

Name.—A lofty place.

The Church's dwelling-place.
—Where Satan has his throne.

Characteristics.—Beginning to adopt Heathen rites and practices, and to favour monasticism, *i.e.*, the practice of the Nicolaitanes.

4.

THYATIRA.

Name.—The place of sacrifices.

Characteristics.—Jezebel, a woman calling herself a prophetess, seduces the servants of God into Idolatry.

She and her children are threatened with death.

5.

SARDIS.

Name.—The remnant.

Characteristics.—The great body of the Church spiritually dead, but yet some few remaining alive.

6.

PHILADELPHIA.

Name.—Brotherly love.

Characteristics.—A door of

hilation, suddenly sprung into life, and crowned with honour on the accession of Constantine.

3.

ROME.

Era.—From 323 to about 600.

The Bishops of Rome and the Emperors favour the amalgamation of Heathenism with Christianity.

Monasticism encouraged.

4.

CONSTANTINOPLE.

Era.—From 600 to 900.

The Church of Rome, which calls herself the mother and mistress of all Churches, is Jezebel.

She establishes image worship. She has been visited at various times by tremendous judgments, and has not repented.

5.

The true Church not visible.

Era.—The dark ages.—From A.D. 900 to 1300.

Some few spiritually alive, as the Waldenses, &c.

6.

The Protestant Church. Perhaps, specifically the English Church.

escape, and a door of enlargement, set before it; and a promise given of protection and exaltation.

Era.—From 1,300 to the present day.

England, the bulwark of Protestantism, exalted in the sight of the nations of Europe, and wonderfully preserved in times of great trouble. (See c. xiv. 1.)

7.

LAODICEA.

Name.—The people's righteousness.

Characteristics.—Evangelical pride and self-sufficiency. Much religious intellectuality combined with self-ignorance and want of spiritual-mindedness.

Christ's second coming near at hand, AT THE DOOR.

"I counsel thee to buy of me white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear."

7.

The state towards which we are verging.

The probable result of the general diffusion of scriptural knowledge amongst the great mass of mankind: the understanding being enlightened, while the heart remains unsanctified.

The majority of professing Christians unprepared.

"Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame." (Ch. xvi. 15.)

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

Thus I have endeavoured to give what appears to me to be the real meaning and right application of these seven epistles. The reader must allow that the coincidences and correspondences pointed out are curious and remarkable. To my mind, they are infinitely more. They are irresistibly convincing, and put the question as to the prophetic bearing of this part of the Revelation beyond the pale of controversy. They prove, it seems to me, to demonstration, that these

messages to the Churches are nothing more or less than the prophetic testimony of the Lord of the Church concerning the most remarkable phases of its history to the end of time. How otherwise shall we account for them?—for these coincidences are either real or imaginary. That they are imaginary, no one, I think, who is acquainted with the history of the Church, will maintain. Every person who knows anything of ecclesiastical history must admit that they exist. But if they are real, then they must be either accidental or providential. Now if they were few in number, or of doubtful character, I should be disposed to admit that they might possibly be accidental; but seeing they are so many, and so clear and indisputable, who can for a moment doubt that they are of God, and are intended to show his infinite foreknowledge and providential care? And viewed in this light how deeply interesting are they! how full of instruction, consolation, and encouragement!

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.”—Seven times is this admonitory exhortation repeated. Seven times are spiritual persons thus called upon to give an attentive ear to the things spoken to the Churches. And is this a vain repetition? Are these things no longer worthy of attention? Reader, if thou hast ears to hear—if it has pleased God to give thee some little knowledge and understanding of spiritual things, see that thou despise not his word. Apply thy heart and mind, thy soul and spirit, all thy intellectual faculties and all thy spiritual endowments, to the mysteries he has revealed—**HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT SAITH UNTO THE CHURCHES.**

Present state of the Apocalyptic Churches.

Some of my readers may like to know what is the present condition of these seven Churches. It may be given in a few words.

EPHESUS is a heap of ruins; it is literally without inhabitants.

SMYRNA is a flourishing town, containing 130,000 inhabitants, a large proportion of whom are Christians.

PERGAMOS is also still in existence, and contains a population of 15,000, about 1,700 of whom are Christians.

THYATIRA is a large village, containing about 1,400 houses, a fourth of which belong to Christians.

SARDIS is utterly desolate; two or three mills and a few mud huts contain all its present population.

PHILADELPHIA is still a place of considerable importance. It is the see of a bishop of the Greek Church, and contains about 300 Christian families, and has twenty-five churches.

LAODICEA is entirely abandoned. Its only inhabitants are wolves, foxes, and jackals. So fearfully has the threatening been fulfilled: "I will spue thee out of my mouth." Thus, in the language of an eye-witness—"Smyrna, Pergamos, and Philadelphia may be considered as flourishing cities; Thyatira is, for a Turkish village, not contemptible; but Ephesus, Sardis, and Laodicea are no more."* And who, then, can for a moment doubt that these messages to the Churches were spoken by the mouth of God?

* See "Asia Minor," by Josiah Conder, p. 175. An account of the seven Churches will also be found in Hartley's "Researches in the Levant," and "A Mission of Inquiry to the Jews from the Church of Scotland, 1846," p. 336.

PART III. CHAPTERS IV., V.

THE THINGS SEEN.

Introductory Vision.

WE now enter upon the third division of the Apocalypse,—*the things the apostle saw*; and it may be well here to remind the reader of the ground on which this triplex division is founded. It will be remembered, then, that I consider the second verse of the first chapter to be a summary account of the contents of the whole book, according to the statement of the apostle, who there tells us that he “bore record to the Word of God, the Testimony of Jesus, and as many things as he saw:” the Word of God being the words contained in the seventh and eighth verses of the first chapter; the Testimony of Jesus Christ, the epistles to the Churches; and the things which the apostle saw occupying the remainder of the book. (See Commentary on c. 1, v. 2, and v. 19.) These are the things, therefore, which he is now called upon to behold.

Christ having ceased speaking, he looked up and saw, as it were, a door opened in the sky, and he heard the *first* voice,—that is, not the same voice which had dictated the messages to the Churches, but the voice like a trumpet, which had called his attention to the former vision. (c. 1, v. 10, 11.) He heard this voice speaking again and saying, “Come up hither, and I will show thee the things which are to be after these.” Now, I must again direct the reader’s attention to this latter phrase, “*the things that are to be after these.*” It is very important to the right understanding of what follows that we should determine whether these were

the things about to be seen by the apostle, or *the events* foretold by these things. Most commentators, and in particular Mr. Elliott, take the latter view, and argue from hence that all the remaining prophecies must refer to events that were to take place *after* the time when the Revelation was given, as all that had gone before must relate to things past or present, and, consequently, that the messages to the Churches cannot be prophetic. It is manifest, however, that some things in those messages *are* prophetic; as, for example, the threatenings to the Churches; and it is also equally clear that some of the things which follow—as, *e.g.*, the Lamb as *just* slain in the midst of the throne, with the vision of the woman crowned with twelve stars—do not relate to things that were future when St. John wrote, but to things past; and therefore I think we may, without hesitation, assume that the word “HEREAFTER”* refers to the *things that were now going to be shown* to the apostle, as had been pre-intimated to him, *c. i., v. 19*, and not to *the events signified by them*; and the sense, therefore, of the verse is, “Come up, and I will show thee those things which it was told thee thou shouldst see, and write down, after thou hadst heard and written the messages to the Churches.” The word “hereafter,” therefore, refers to the order of time in which the apostle saw the vision, not to the period when the things foretold were to be accomplished.

And what, then, *were* the things which John now saw? Let us try and realize them. We must bear in mind that he is now “in the Spirit.” That is, he is, as before, entranced. His senses are shut to

* I quote the A.V. The more literal rendering is, “*the things which must be AFTER THESE.*”

external objects, and he sees only with the eyes of his mind. "Immediately," he says, "I was in the Spirit;" from which it would seem that during the time that Christ was speaking and dictating to him the messages to the Churches, he was not entranced, but in the possession and exercise of his ordinary faculties. Now, however, he again becomes wrapt in prophetic ecstasy, and sees and hears nothing but what the Spirit reveals. Being, then, thus wrapt, he ascended (not in the body, but in Spirit only) up into the heavens, or skies, through the door which had been opened before him, and there he beheld that sublime vision here so graphically described.

In the midst of a large open space, at a great distance above the earth, and far beyond our present sphere of vision, he saw sitting upon a throne a Being of dazzling brightness, clothed in a garment which reflected the cerulean blue, or amber colour of the jasper, mingled with the brilliant red of the sardine stone, and around the throne and over it, and, as it were, *crowning him that sat upon it*, was a rainbow,—not, however, a bow in which were seen the seven primary colours as in an ordinary rainbow,—but *a soft and beautiful green only*, resembling in appearance the emerald.

Around this throne the apostle saw four and twenty other thrones, and upon the thrones sat four and twenty venerable men, clothed in white, with golden crowns upon their heads. Vivid flashes of lightning, moreover, accompanied with loud peals of thunder and other awful sounds, proceeded continually from the throne, giving inexpressible grandeur and solemnity to the scene.

Further, before the throne, between it and the spot where the apostle stood, were seven lamps burning,

and a sea, or large vessel, transparent as crystal. And, lastly, in the *mid-space* between himself and the throne, and in the *outer circumference line* which surrounded and inclosed both the centre throne and the four and twenty thrones of the elders around it,* he saw *four living creatures* placed at the extremity of the circle, having their faces turned towards the four points of the compass, and their backs consequently to one another. Each of these living creatures was different in its appearance. The first, which looked towards the east,† in its general character resembled a lion; the second, which looked towards the west, was like an ox; the third, which faced the north, was like an eagle; and the fourth, which was turned to the south, had the face of a human being. These living creatures, moreover, had each of them *six wings*, like the seraphim seen by Isaiah (c. vi.), and were *full of eyes*, both their bodies and their wings being furnished with eyes before and behind, so that they could see in every direction without turning the head.

Such were the objects which now presented themselves to the enraptured eye of the apostle. Nor were these living creatures silent. At stated intervals—not absolutely without cessation or intermission, but *at stated intervals occurring regularly without interruption* both day and night, they gave glory to him that sat upon the throne, crying, “Holy! holy! holy! Lord God Almighty,” &c.; and each time that the four living creatures gave glory to the enthroned One in these words, the four and twenty elders fell upon their faces, and casting their crowns before the throne, joined in the

* The Greek is, ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ θρόνου καὶ κύκλῳ τοῦ θρόνου.

† The ground on which this is assumed will be stated immediately.

ascription, acknowledging him that sat upon the throne to be worthy to receive the glory and the honour and the power ascribed to him by the living creatures, inasmuch as all things were created by him and for him.

Such was the vision. What, then, is its meaning?

Now I think the specific object of this vision is manifestly to introduce the seven-sealed book. No other reason can be assigned why these things should have been presented to the eye of the apostle. This vision, therefore, of the fourth chapter must not be regarded as an isolated, independent vision, but as closely connected with and introductory to the things seen, as recorded in the next chapter. In fact, both chapters describe but one vision, and ought, therefore, to be read and considered in connexion with each other. Viewed in this light, what is the meaning of these introductory circumstances? Who is he that sits upon the throne? who are the four and twenty elders? who or what are the four living creatures? and how are these things connected with the seven-sealed book? These, then, are the points we have to consider.

Now, it was long since observed by Mede,* that there is an evident reference here to the Mosaic tabernacle and the order of the encampment of the Israelites. To make this resemblance the more apparent the accompanying diagram is annexed, a comparison of which with the vision shows the following correspondences:—

1. Between the throne in the vision, and the most holy place in the tabernacle.
2. Between the rainbow, and the mercy-seat and ark of the covenant.

* See his Works, fol., b. iii., p. 436.

3. Between the four and twenty elders, and the Levites.

4. Between the seven lamps of fire, and the golden candlestick.

5. Between the sea, or laver, of crystal, and the brazen laver of the tabernacle.

6. Between the four living creatures, and the standards of the leading tribes.*

Now, from these correspondences it is manifest that the scene of the vision in general is the counterpart of the tabernacle and Israelitish encampment; and we may, therefore, I think, from hence infer that the whole vision is a symbolical representation of the Church; *i. e.*, of the Church considered abstractedly, not as composed exclusively of either Jews or Gentiles, or as existing at any particular period, but as *a whole*, without reference to time or circumstances, and, consequently, that the meaning of the various emblems in the apocalyptic vision may be gathered from the patterns of them on earth. That is to say, that as the four living creatures correspond with the four standards of the tribes of Israel, and those standards may be regarded as the representatives of the whole host, so these living creatures are the representatives of the redeemed people of God—the Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven. Everything said of them is confirmatory of this view. They are *in the midst of the throne, and around the throne*;

* The devices on the standards are derived from ancient Jewish traditions; and as the lion for Judah is undoubtedly correct, it is highly probable that the others are also. This is the only thing traditional, the rest of the circumstances are gathered from Numbers i. and ii. See Mede's Works, fol., b. iii., p. 437.

i.e., supposing a circle to be drawn round the throne and the elders, these living creatures occupy respectively a middle point between a spectator placed outside the circle and the centre of the throne, and equidistant from each other at the four points of the compass.* Just as the four standards were fixed in the circumference line of a circle drawn around the tabernacle, and at equal distances from the centre and each other; this their position, therefore, indicates who or what they are.

So also do the characteristics themselves of these living creatures. For who can doubt that the *lion* is the symbol of courage; the *ox*, of labour and patient endurance; the *man*, of knowledge and intelligence; and the *eagle*, of faith and heavenly-mindedness? And are not these the characteristics of the *living* members of the Church? “Add,” says St. Peter, “to your faith, *courage*; and to courage, *knowledge*; and to knowledge, *temperance*; and to temperance, *godliness*; and to godliness, *brotherly kindness*.” (2 Pet. i. 5—7.) Could we desire a better commentary than this upon the four living creatures of the Apocalypse? For what is that boldness in the profession of the faith, that knowledge of Divine things, that patient endurance of sufferings for Christ’s sake, and that godliness, that saving faith and devoted active love, of which the apostle speaks, but the courage, the rationality and humanity, the patience, and the heavenly-mindedness of which these living creatures are respectively the symbols?

And further, *the wings*, and *the eyes* before and behind, what are they but the emblems of the fulness of that spiritual light enjoyed by the true members

* This is evident from what took place on the opening of the four first seals.—See Comm., c. vi.

of the Church, and the readiness with which they fly to perform the commands of their God ?

Again, the laver, or reservoir, of glass, corresponds with the brazen sea of the tabernacle, and we may, therefore, infer that as the one was typical of the cleansing necessary for the service of the earthly tabernacle, the other may typify the cleansing needful for the service of the heavenly one.

The seven lamps of fire are explained by the apostle to signify *the seven spirits of God, i.e., seven*, not as being personally distinct one from the other, but in allusion to those seven-fold gifts of the Spirit, of which the seven branches of the candlestick proceeding from the *one* shaft were the emblem.

Further, the four and twenty elders sitting on thrones with crowns of gold upon their heads immediately around the *centre* throne, thus corresponding with the four and twenty courses of the priests and Levites around the holy place, must symbolize those whose position in relation to the universal Church answers to that of the Levites to the Israelitish Church ; that is, they represent those who in all ages have faithfully exercised the ministerial office, and who, as being the instruments in the hand of their Lord of turning many to righteousness, are placed nearest his throne, and are associated with him in honour and glory.

But who then is he that sits upon the throne ? This is a question of some difficulty. Most commentators, indeed, assume that it is God the Father, or the Deity abstractedly considered without reference to any distinction of persons. But is the Godhead ever thus visibly personified ? I think not. I believe it will be found that whenever a corporeal, visible representation of

Deity occurs in the Scriptures it is always the second person in the Divine essence ; the Word, or Son of God, who is the subject of personification. A comparison of John xii. 41 with Isaiah vi. puts this I think, in the present instance, beyond doubt. The individual whom Isaiah saw was unquestionably the same as he whom St. John saw. The similarity in the circumstances of both visions leaves no doubt on this point. Now he whom Isaiah saw was Jehovah. "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw Jehovah sitting upon a throne," &c. But the apostle tells us expressly that he whom Isaiah saw was the Son of God ; he who afterwards came into the world as the man Christ Jesus : "These things said Isaiah, when he saw his glory and spake of him." As, then, it was the Word, the Lord, whom Isaiah saw, so I think we may without hesitation assume that it was the same Divine person, and not the Father, or God abstractedly considered, who was now seen by the apostle.

With regard to the symbolical meaning of the *jasper*,* and the *sardine stone*,† and the *emerald-like rainbow*, the first is generally thought to be the emblem of holiness and purity, and the second of Divine justice and that fiery indignation which shall devour the transgressors. But the emerald-like rainbow, encircling and, as it were, crowning the throne,—in which the violet, the indigo, and the blue on the one side, and the yellow, the orange, and the red on the other, are all absorbed and, as it were, annihilated in the milder green,—seems to be a beautiful

* The *jasper* is a species of flint, and is said to be sometimes of a cerulean blue, and sometimes of a clear amber colour.

† The *sardius* is a stone of a bright red colour, resembling the ruby, clear and sparkling.

emblem of that attribute in the Divine nature which stands forth most prominently in the covenant of grace ; for, as the rainbow is the symbol of a covenant, so is its colour here symbolical of that MERCY which originated God's covenant with fallen man, the terms of which are thus comprehensively expressed by the Great Covenantor himself :—"I will be merciful to their transgressions, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

But wherefore this vision? Why is the Lord thus exhibited in his condition of primeval glory, and adored as the Creator of all things, before any further revelation is made of the things that were shortly to come to pass? The answer to this inquiry will be found in the remarks on the next chapter. Let it suffice here to direct the reader's attention to the two leading points in the ascription of glory to him that sits upon the throne contained in the eleventh verse. It is as the CREATOR and RIGHTFUL POSSESSOR of all things that he is worshipped. "*Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they exist and were created.*" Ownership, therefore, in right of creation and the title acquired thereby to the adoration of all created things, this is what forms the subject of the glorification. And hence we may infer that the specific object of this part of the vision was to bring the great Head of the Church before the apostle in the character of the Almighty Creator, the possessor of heaven and earth, previously to his being exhibited, as he was immediately about to be, in the character of the Redeemer of his people.

CHAPTER V.

THE THINGS SEEN.

THE great subject of this part of the vision is the seven-sealed Book. The interpretation, not only of this chapter, but of all that follow, indeed of the whole of the Apocalypse, depends very much upon the view we take of this book. The idea generally entertained is, that this seven-sealed book is the Revelation itself, and that what St. John wrote, at least from the opening of the first seal, is nothing more or less than a transcript of it.* Now there appear to me to be insuperable difficulties in the way of this interpretation; difficulties which are either wholly passed over by expositors, or, if noticed at all, are met in so unsatisfactory a manner that they are left in the mind as strong and perplexing as ever.† In order that the difficulties to which I refer may be perceived, it is only necessary to get a distinct idea of what it was St. John now saw.

As, then, he was contemplating this glorious vision he perceived in the right hand of him that sat upon the

* Mr. Elliott supposes that the writing *without* was a sort of supplement to the writing *within*.

† Nothing, in fact, can be more *jejune* and unsatisfactory than the remarks of the generality of writers on this subject. To be convinced of this, let any one only read the Commentary of Bishop Newton, in his "Dissertation on the Prophecies," who, in a short compass, gives a summary of all that has been said by other writers. Even Vitringa, one of the most diligent and accurate of Commentators, although his remarks on this chapter fill twenty-six quarto pages, and in the course of them he notices most of the difficulties with which the usual interpretation is clogged, altogether fails, in my opinion, to remove any of them. He commences his observations in these words: "Liber hic haud dubie symbolice figurat *divina Decreta*." *This book, without doubt, signifies symbolically the Divine decrees.*

throne, or it may have been *at* his right hand lying upon the throne, a book, or roll written on both sides, and sealed with seven seals. Now it must be borne in mind that this book was very unlike our books. It was a roll of parchment, or leather, coiled round a cylinder, and was fastened probably by small projecting slips, like tongues, on which the seals were placed; or, it may have been, as was frequently the case, by bands passed all round the roll and afterwards sealed over.* Such was the character of the book. Now it is obvious that before *any part* of the writing *withinside* the book could be read *all* the seals must be broken. For the book, to be read, must be unrolled, which could not be done until all the seals were loosed.† The breaking of two or three,

* This was the ancient way of sealing letters. Hence the usual expression for opening a letter was, "*Incidere linum*,"—*to cut the string*. (See Cic. in Cat., Or. iii.)

† I am well aware that a different description of the sealing of this book is generally given by commentators. Vitringa, *e.g.*, says, "We must not suppose that the seven seals were seen by St. John all at once, for (*says he*) in that case the book could not be read (*as certainly it could not*) until all the seals were opened. This, therefore, is here said in the way of anticipation. John saw a book in the hand of the King sealed externally with one seal; but afterwards, when the whole volume came to be unrolled, it appeared that it was sealed with *seven* seals, since it consisted of seven volumes, contained one within the other, and each sealed with its own seal, which volumes were separately opened and read." (Vitringa, in Apoc., p. 198.) But is this satisfactory? St. John tells us that he saw a book sealed with *seven* seals. Would any one for a moment suppose that this meant that he saw only one seal? Mr. Elliott thinks that the edge of each roll may have been sealed by a projecting slip, so that the seals appeared hanging down at the side. But this does not remove the difficulty, for if there were seven distinct rolls, sealed with distinct seals, there would have been seven books, whereas we are told the book was but one. I have no doubt that the form of the book was as is represented in the frontispiece to this volume. Nothing else will answer to the description, nor would any other form ever have been thought of by those acquainted with ancient MSS. but for the difficulties connected

or even of six of the seals would not bring to view a single line written within. Let not this fact be lost sight of. But now a new and wonderful scene in this divine drama commenced. A mighty angel appeared, and, with a voice which was heard to the utmost bounds of creation, invited any one who thought himself worthy as possessing the requisite qualifications, to come forward and open and read the book. A dead silence succeeded the proclamation. No one presented himself. No created being in heaven or earth ventured to accept the challenge as duly qualified to undertake the mighty task. Nay, none dared even to look upon the book, so awful was the outer writing, the very title-page of the mysterious volume; so tremendous the conditions to be fulfilled by him who should undertake to loose the seals of the book and read the things contained therein. In vain did the beloved apostle look around with an anxious, expectant eye, hoping that some one would come forward to claim the book. No one appeared. All living intelligences shrank back and turned away their eyes with terror and dismay. At this, overcome with grief, he burst into tears and wept aloud. Soon, however, was his grief assuaged. One of the elders near whom he was standing bid him take courage and dry his tears. For although no created being in heaven or on earth, or under the earth, was worthy to take the book and open the seals thereof, yet he would soon see that one had been

with the common interpretation. In venturing to give a title to my ideal representation of the book, which I suppose may have been part of the writing without, it is scarcely necessary to say that the idea is put forth simply as a probable conjecture. The translation of the title is, "THE BOOK OF THE NEW COVENANT DEDICATED WITH BLOOD," which is founded on Heb. ix. 18, "*Wherefore neither was the first (covenant) dedicated without blood.*" (See also ver. 19.)

found equal to the mighty task, and willing to undertake it. He who was known as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, even he had *overcome* all difficulties that stood in the way, and had proved himself worthy to receive the book and loose its seals.

Consoled and revived by this intelligence, the apostle again lifted up his eyes, and then he saw standing in the midst of the circle that surrounded the throne, and of the elders and four living creatures, the *appearance** of a lamb that had been slain; having, *i.e.*, the marks of a mortal wound still upon it, indicating that although now alive, it had been dead. This Lamb, moreover, had seven horns and seven eyes, showing it to be almighty in power, and infinite in knowledge. And drawing near to the throne, it went and took the book from the hand of him that sat upon it. And then did the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders, having all of them harps, and golden censers full of sweet incense, fall down before the Lamb and worship him, giving him glory in a song of praise; and then did all the hosts of heaven, the myriads of angels that surround the throne of Deity, take up the wondrous theme, and join with the living creatures and the elders in giving glory to the Lamb; and the full chorus of their voices bursting through the vaulted heavens, reached the heights above and the lowest depths beneath, awakening in the inhabitants of the earth and skies and seas similar transports of joy, and causing them also to break forth into songs of praise.

* I say the *appearance*, because, as Vitringa remarks, it is by no means certain that it was altogether a lamb. He justly observes, that it is obvious it must have had hands, for how could a lamb take and open the seals of a book with its hoofs? And the probability is, therefore, that the lamb-like appearance extended only to the head.

Such were the things which John now saw and heard. And what, then, was their meaning? What was there in this mysterious book that called forth this proclamation? What, that after the proclamation had been made, caused that awful solemn silence, whilst all created beings in heaven and earth stood sadly mute, none daring even so much as to lift his eyes and look without dismay upon the outer writing of this fearful book? What made the apostle weep so bitterly, that none was found worthy to open it? And what, when the slain Lamb appeared, and took the book, as of right belonging to him, caused that universal shout of joy which rang through heaven and earth? In answer to these inquiries we are told, that this book was the register of the future purposes of God; that the proclamation of the angel was intended to show that none but the Almighty Ruler of all events can know or declare what shall be hereafter; that John, as the representative of the Church, wept to think that no one should be found worthy to open the book, because he had conceived a longing desire to be made acquainted with its contents;* and that the joy and exultation which followed upon the Lamb's taking the book arose from the assurance that now it would be opened, and the hidden purposes of God be revealed.

And does this answer satisfy the reader's mind? If so we must think very differently. To me, it is anything but satisfactory. In the first place, was it true that the future purposes of God in regard to the Church had not been revealed? Had not Christ foretold its destinies to the end of the world? Had they not been made known even to the Old Testament prophets,—Isaiah,

* See, *e.g.*, Vitringa, Bishop Newton, Elliott, &c., *in loco*.

Ezekiel, and Daniel? Not so fully and minutely, it may be, as in the Revelation, but still with sufficient fulness and minuteness to render *a sealed book* an inappropriate emblem, supposing it to be the register of God's future purposes; for what would this imply but that, until this book was opened, everything connected with the future would be utter darkness and ignorance?

Then was there anything,—could there have been anything so terrible in the registry of God's decrees, as to make every created being in heaven and earth afraid even to look upon it? Are we not told that the angels desire *to look into* (*παρακνῦσαι*, *to stoop down and narrowly inspect*, 1 Pet. i. 12,) the future purposes of God; and did not Ezekiel look upon a similar roll without the slightest terror? (Ezek. ii. 10.)

Moreover, did the apostle do well to weep so bitterly because none was found worthy to reveal the future purposes of the Lord? Did he not know that secret things belong to God; and had not enough been revealed to remove all anxiety and fear? (1 John i. 1—3.) And if he did weep because he longed for fuller and clearer information which he thought was about to be denied, is it not strange, notwithstanding the consolatory assurance of the elder, that for centuries after the seals *were* opened, the Church knew so little of their meaning? Were the results of the publication of the Apocalypse, I would with deference and reverence ask, commensurate with that thrill of extatic joy which ran through all the heavenly hosts when the Lion of the tribe of Judah, as the Lamb that had been slain, took the book, and asserted his right to open the seals thereof?

These are difficulties which I think every one must

feel. According to this scheme, the scaffolding is too great and expensive for the building about to be erected. The exordium is too grand and magniloquent for the subject of discourse. And an effect, the very reverse of that produced by every other part of the Word of God is the inevitable consequence. Our expectations are raised to the highest pitch only to be disappointed.

But it is not so. The word of inspiration is here, as it is everywhere else, consistent with itself, and worthy of its author; and if the reader will give me an attentive and patient hearing I will endeavour to make good the assertion.

All the difficulties, inconsistencies, and contradictions, and, I might almost say, puerilities,* connected with the interpretation of this chapter have arisen from regarding the sealed book as a book of prophecy, a register of future events. If, instead of this, we regard it as a COVENANT DEED, the book in which were registered the terms of man's redemption, and his restoration to the dominion of the earth and all those privileges which he had forfeited by transgression, everything becomes clear, intelligible, and consistent; and not only the contents of this chapter, but all that follows, even to the closing

* Among these may be mentioned the interpretation given of the little book in the hand of the angel that stood upon the land and sea (chap. x.). This has been called a *codicil* to the larger book, as resembling the codicil to a will, something which a man adds to his original will; an *after-thought*, in consequence of a change of mind or of circumstances. As if the *seven-sealed* book, if it were indeed the book of God's decrees, would not be *complete*; or as if the omniscient mind of Deity could have omitted anything from ignorance or forgetfulness! But the most absurd part of the idea is, that this *little* book is made to contain a great deal more than the original large book. Surely these may be called *puerilities*; and it is indeed astonishing that so many men of understanding should have given in to them.

words of the apostle, becomes comparatively easy of interpretation. We have found a key which fits every part of the varied imagery employed, and enables us to lay open all its beauty and sublimity. Let us see if it be not so.

We say, then, that this book is the Book of the Everlasting Covenant, wherein were registered the terms on which alone man could be redeemed and restored to the inheritance he had forfeited by transgression.

To establish the reasonableness of this interpretation, and to show that it is not a mere arbitrary assumption, it will be necessary to prove that we have the authority of Scripture for regarding the earth as a forfeited inheritance to which man, the original owner, could have no right or title until it should be redeemed. It will be necessary to prove also, that the redemption of a forfeited inheritance or alienated possession amongst the Jews was accompanied by circumstances resembling those here described, so that the apostle himself would, from his familiarity with those circumstances, at once perceive and understand the true symbolical meaning of the book. This being done, all that follows will be easy of explanation.

As regards then the first point, there can be no question that the earth and all things in it were originally given to Adam and his posterity for a possession. This primeval grant is contained in the first chapter of Genesis, (ver. 28), where we read, concerning Adam and Eve, "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." Here, then, we have

man's original title-deed to the possession of the earth. It was given him by God himself, and is recorded in the very commencement of his Word. But this grant was not absolute. The continuance of it was dependent upon the fulfilment of one condition, which condition being violated, the title became null and void, and the possession was forfeited. At the same time that God constituted man the lord and ruler of this material world, and gave him possession of all things, he told him that there was one thing he must not consider his; one tree of the fruit of which he must not eat; for on the day he ate of it he would surely die. The result we all know. Adam did violate the condition; and, as an inevitable consequence, the grant ceased and the possession returned to him who had given it. By transgressing the command of God he lost his inheritance. From that time forth God resumed, so to speak, the title-deed he had put into his hand, and man was no longer the heir of the world. For how, seeing his tenure of the inheritance was not absolute but conditional, could he continue to hold it after the conditions on which it was given him were violated? Thus, then, the earth from the moment of Adam's transgression must have become, in respect to man, a forfeited inheritance. And this is in fact everywhere implied. It is implied in the promise to Abraham, to whom God promised that he should be the "heir of the world." (Rom. iv. 13.) It is implied in the promise to Christ, to whom God says, "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." It is obvious from hence that the inheritance had been forfeited, otherwise the mention of a new heirship would be inappropriate. God having given the

world to Adam in the first instance would certainly not have spoken of *another* heir, had not he to whom it was originally made over lost his title to it. We have, therefore, scriptural authority for asserting that the earth is to be regarded in the light of a *forfeited*, or *alienated inheritance*. Now what was done in such cases? What was the law and custom amongst the Jews concerning the sale and purchase and redemption of estates? It so happens that we have a particular account in Jeremiah (c. xxxii.) of a transaction of this kind, and from that narrative, compared with the laws on the subject in Leviticus (c. xxv.,) we gather as follows:—That no Jew could sell his land *absolutely and for ever* (ver. 23), since every estate always returned to the original possessor in the year of jubilee. We gather, moreover, that supposing a Jew to have sold his land until the year of jubilee, he or his nearest kinsman had the right at any time of redeeming it, provided he could pay back the price for which it had been sold, deducting a certain sum for the use of it during the time the purchaser had enjoyed its fruits. Further we gather, that in the case of a purchase and transfer, two documents were employed, one of them being *sealed* and the other *unsealed*, and that both the deeds, both that which was sealed and that which was open, were laid up in a safe place by the purchaser until the land should be redeemed (Jer. xxxii. 10—14); and we may also infer, although it is not expressly so said, that the amount to be paid for the redemption of the land was stated in the unsealed deed, and that none but the *goel*, or redeemer, had a right to open the sealed deed and take possession of the estate.

Now, with these facts before us how easy of explanation

does everything said of this book become ! It is on the right hand of him that sits upon the throne to show that the earth, of which it is the title-deed, has returned to the possession of its Creator ; man, to whom it had been given, having lost his claim. It is sealed with *seven seals*, as indicating the completeness of the alienation, and the impossibility of its ever being restored unless the redemption were paid. It is written *without* as well as *within*, to supersede the necessity of two deeds, as in ordinary cases, the writing without answering to the open or unsealed book of purchase, as described in Jeremiah, being not only the title of the deed or book, but expressing also the terms on which the inheritance was redeemable, namely, by the *goel*, or redeemer, paying the stipulated price of the forfeited inheritance, or, in other words, undergoing the penalty of the transgression by which the title to the inheritance had been lost.

The proclamation of the angel is a challenge to all created beings in heaven and earth, or, perhaps, rather, specifically to every individual of the human race, to come forward and establish his right to claim the book and to retake possession of the inheritance by paying the price of redemption. The silence that follows, the inability of any created being to *look* on the book, *i.e.*, so much as for a moment to contemplate the undertaking of the mighty task, needs no explanation. It is the acting out of that truth expressed in another place, "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him : for the redemption of their soul is precious, and he must therefore let that alone for ever." (Psalm xlix.) The grief of the apostle also is now easily accounted for. Well might he indeed

as the representative of mankind—for such is evidently the character he here sustains—well might he weep bitterly that,

————— “ On man’s behalf,
Patron, or intercessor, none appeared.”*

Acquainted as he was with the symbolical meaning of this mysterious book, he well knew that unless one could be found worthy to open it, the inheritance must be lost, and man remain for ever an alien and an outcast from the family of God.† The suitability and propriety of the reply of the elder also becomes apparent. For, as John may be considered as the representative of man, this elder may be regarded as the representative of the Church, and his consolatory assurance that the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, had prevailed, *i.e.*,

* Milton seems evidently to have borrowed the whole passage, which is one of the finest in “Paradise Lost,” from this chapter:—

“ He asked, but all the heavenly quire stood mute,
And silence was in heaven. On man’s behalf
Patron or intercessor, none appeared;
Much less that durst upon his own head draw
The deadly forfeiture, and ransom set.
And now without redemption all mankind
Must have been lost, adjudged to death and hell
By doom severe, had not the Son of God
In whom the fulness dwells of love divine
His dearer mediation thus renew’d,” &c.—(*Book iii.*)

† It may, perhaps, be objected that seeing St. John knew already that Christ had died for man’s redemption, his weeping because no redeemer appeared is inappropriate. It must be borne in mind, however, that this whole scene is a dramatic representation. The apostle himself sustains throughout a dramatic character. It is not the individual John that weeps, but it is John the representative of man, or of the Church, and who is described as doing *what he would have done* had no Redeemer been found. If there were any force in the objection it would apply far more strongly supposing the seven-sealed book were a book of prophecy; for with what propriety in that case could the apostle weep, seeing he had just been told that he was going to be shown things which must shortly come to pass?

had proved his sufficiency to pay the required ransom, and *had established his right* to open the book, comes therefore, with peculiar propriety from his mouth. It is the voice of the Church proclaiming by prophets and apostles to a lost and ruined world, the glad tidings of its redemption. It is the New Testament Church echoing the words of the ancient prophet, and saying, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." *

Nor can we be at a loss to understand why the Redeemer is designated "THE LION OF THE TRIBE OF JUDAH, THE ROOT OF DAVID." It is difficult, according to the usual view taken of this book, to perceive the propriety of these designations. For why, if the office of Christ, of which the elder is speaking, were merely that of a revealer of things future, should he be thus called? † But, regarded as the Redeemer of the world, nothing can be more appropriate than these epithets. It is as if the elder had said, "Weep not; one mighty, strong, and courageous as a lion, the offspring of David, even he of whom dying Jacob spake and Isaiah prophesied, shall rise up on man's behalf, and with lion-like strength shall take away the prey from the mighty, and deliver the captives of the terrible." (Isaiah xlix. 24, 25.)

The appearance immediately upon this, of the Lord

* Thus also Tychonius, an ancient expositor, says,—"*Ecclesia flebat, cujus figuram habet Joannes, onerata et gravata peccatis implorans sui redemptionem.*" "The Church, whose person John sustains, wept as being burdened and weighed down with sins imploring its redemption." (Hom. 4, quoted by Daubuz, p. 216.)

† Vitringa felt this difficulty. He says, "*Hæc enim epitheta parum videntur convenire officio illi quod Jesu Christo hic erat demandandum.*" "*These epithets seem not to agree very well with the office which was going to be committed to Jesus Christ.*" He endeavours, however, to show that they do suit him in the capacity of a revealer, but with little success.

Jesus Christ, under the similitude of *a lamb that had been slain*; *i.e.*, bearing upon it still the marks of a violent death, requires no comment. The *Goel*, the Redeemer of the lost inheritance, must die before he can claim the Covenant-deed whereby that inheritance would be again conveyed to its original possessor. Behold, then, the condition fulfilled. The Redeemer hath died. He bears in his body still the wounds through which his life-blood issued from his heart. And this Lamb as it had been slain in the midst of the throne, is but in metaphor and symbol what we have in another place expressed didactically, when it is said, "Ye are come . . . to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant; and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." (Heb. xii. 23.) The seven horns, and seven eyes, also, on this hypothesis, admit of an easy explanation. The Redeemer must be mighty in power to take possession, and infinite in knowledge that he may know who are worthy to be associated with him in the enjoyment of the purchased inheritance. (2 Tim. ii. 19.) And, accordingly, this Lamb has "seven horns and seven eyes;" *i.e.*, he is omnipotent and omniscient; and whilst *his eyes* go forth into all the earth to search out and gather in his redeemed people, the *horns of his power* assure them of protection and security. (Compare John x. 11—29.) Just as we read in the evangelical narrative, Jesus having died and risen again, comes and stands in the midst of his disciples, and says, "All power is given unto me in heaven and earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations; lo, I am with you always even to the end of the world." (Matt. xxviii. 18.) The parallelism is palpable and striking, and shows,

I think, that we are pursuing a right system of interpretation. Everything *fits*; everything comes in in its proper place. So it is with the next action in this Divine drama.

And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne." (Ver. 7.)—Yes; he has established his right of redemption, and he goes, therefore, and takes the sealed deed, by the opening of which he is to obtain possession.* And does any one dispute his right? No; no sooner has he taken the book into his hand † than all the members of the ransomed Church fall down before him, and worship him; and all the angels that stand round the throne of Deity, join with them in giving glory to the Lamb as the Redeemer of the world, and the rightful heir and owner of all created things. (Heb. i. 2; Col. i. 12—20.)

And here, then, the introductory vision ends. The next subject that comes before us is the opening of the seals. But the mystery of the sealed book

* It may be objected, that this is inconsistent with the idea that he who sits upon the throne is the Word, the second person in the Trinity, for in that case he would be taking the book out of his own hand, and receiving it from himself. There is, however, nothing really contradictory in this idea. As the Son of God, the Lord of all, the inheritance is his already; and therefore is the book, after man had forfeited it, laid up at his right hand. But as *man*, he had no claim to it, until the price of redemption was paid, and he had *fulfilled* the conditions on which it might be re-possessed. Therefore does he *as man*, and for man, take the book out of the hand of him that sits upon the throne. It is the man Christ Jesus, claiming that which was his before as the Lord in heaven.

† It is obvious that the *hoof* of a lamb could not take hold of a roll of parchment, and much less open seals. I am inclined, therefore, to think, with Vitringa, that although the Redeemer is here spoken of as a lamb that had been slain, it was only in part that he had the appearance of a lamb. (See Vitr. in Apoc., p. 210.)

being solved, as I trust it has been,* we are furnished with a key which will render the explanation of the seals comparatively easy.

Ver. 8. "*Having every one of them harps, and golden censers full of odours,*" &c.—There is an obvious propriety in this. The Lamb of God, by dying for man having taken away sin, a way of access is opened to the throne of Deity, and henceforth all prayer, and all praise, is to be offered through him: according to the words of the apostle, "Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by *the blood* of Jesus, by *a new and living way,*" &c. (Heb. x. 19.) And, again, "By him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of *praise to God continually.*" (xiii. 15.)

Ver. 9. "*Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred and tongue,*" &c.—This shows very clearly that the living creatures and elders are not only the Church (for the Church alone is *redeemed*), but that they are the Church abstractedly considered; that is, the universal Church, composed not exclusively of Jews or Gentiles, but of every nation and people.

Ver. 10. *Kings and priests.* (See chap. i. 6.)

"*And we shall reign upon the earth.*"—This also is confirmatory of the foregoing views. Every word in Scripture has its specific force and meaning. Now, why does the ransomed Church in celebrating the praises of its Redeemer, and declaring his worthiness to open

* I feel bound, however, to state, that this view of the meaning of the book is not original. Daubuz observes, "This book sealed at the right hand of God, is the new law or Gospel of the Christian dispensation, prepared and kept by God in his right hand, or power to be published and divulged by the mediation of his Son, Jesus Christ." (Commentary, p. 208.) This idea is more fully developed by Edward Irving, in his work on the Revelation.

the book, add, at the close of its doxology, "and we shall reign upon the earth," but because the redemption wrought out has reference to the earth, and its restoration to its original possessor? And what makes this the more striking is, the use of the future tense in regard to this anticipated dominion over the earth. It is not said, *we reign*, but *we shall reign*; *i.e.*, when thou hast opened the sealed covenant deed, and fully established thy right to the purchased possession, and hast put all opposing enemies under thy feet, *then* shall we reign with thee upon the earth. (See chap. xi. 15—18; xx. 1—4.)

CHAPTER VI.

IN interpreting the things consequent on the opening of the seals, the first point to be taken into consideration is, the symbolical meaning and bearing of the act itself. It must be borne in mind, that the opening of each seal was not a separate and independent opening of *a part* of the book. As before remarked, *no part* of the book could be opened; not a line of it (except the outside-writing, which was equally visible before a seal was broken), could be read, until *all* the seven seals were loosed. It is, therefore, manifest, that the opening of each seal did *not* reveal anything written or depicted in the book. *The book continued a sealed roll in the hand of the Lamb, up to the loosing of the seventh seal.* And this, in fact, constitutes the great difficulty in the ordinary view taken of the book. For supposing it to

be simply a book of prophecy, and the things which it reveals to be written within it, there would be a manifest impropriety in any one of those things being made known before the book itself began to be unrolled. Not so, if we regard it as a covenant deed. Then the symbolical meaning of the successive opening of the seals becomes apparent. For the opening of the seals is the preliminary act whereby the GOEL, or Redeemer, begins to take possession. And the successive opening of the seals implies that the act of taking possession would be gradual. As soon as the first seal is opened that act commences; but the heir for whom the inheritance has been redeemed, is not put into complete possession until all the seals are loosed, and the title-deed has been read, and no adversary remains to dispute his claims. And thus, it appears to me, the whole transaction is placed in a very clear and interesting light. This sealed book, although not primarily a book of prophecy, thus partakes of a prophetic character, and the loosing of its seals is made to mark *eras*, and to show the gradual steps by which the world is at length once again brought under obedience to its Lord, and also to make known some of the leading events in the corresponding periods of its secular history. And there is an obvious beauty and consistency in this. The gradual subjugation of the world to Christ involves, of necessity, changes in its social and political condition, so that the history of the Church is necessarily mixed up with the history of earthly kingdoms, and, consequently, it would be morally impossible to give a prophetic narrative of the one entirely independent of and distinct from the other.*

* This is proved by the fact that no ecclesiastical historian has ever yet confined himself exclusively to the affairs of the Church; and on the other

Hence we find that the two histories are blended together in that wonderful symbolical summary of them we are now about to contemplate, and which might not unaptly be entitled, “A dramatical and pictorial History of the Church and of the world, from the resurrection of Christ until the final consummation of all things.”

With these preliminary remarks, we will now proceed to the consideration of the meaning of the various symbolical objects which the opening of the seals brings before us. Let us endeavour, in the first place, as before, to get an accurate idea of what it was the apostle saw. It must be borne in mind, that St. John is supposed to be in the sky, standing (not actually, but in vision,) on the outside of that circle which was formed by the throne, the elders, and the living creatures, each of the living creatures occupying one of the cardinal points of the compass in that outer circle which surrounded the throne. Whilst contemplating from this position the heavenly vision, he sees the Lamb break one of the seals, and, at the same moment, one of the living creatures, that which was like a lion, and stationed probably on the east, cried out to him in a voice of thunder, saying, “Come, and look !”

Now before proceeding any further, it is important to determine *where* the apostle was to direct his eyes, whether towards the *book*, or the *sky*, or the *earth*. It seems to be almost universally assumed by commentators that he was called to look upon something *in* the book either written or depicted. But a careful analysis of his hand that no secular historian has ever attempted a purely political history of the empire. This circumstance alone may well, I think, make the advocates of the *exclusively* Church scheme of interpretation question the correctness of their theory. Even Milner could not write a purely ecclesiastical history.

own account of what he saw must, I think, convince every person of the improbability, not to say impossibility, of this hypothesis. For he speaks of a crown being *given*, and of a horseman *going forth*, and of a great sword being *given*. Now all these things are acts which must have taken place during the time the apostle was *looking on*; that is, the rider on the white horse had not a crown on his head when he first appeared, but a crown was given him in the sight of the apostle. So with regard to the *sword* of the rider on the red horse. Consequently, what the apostle saw could not have been anything painted in the book, much less anything written. But neither was it anything in the sky; for in that case there would be no propriety in the language employed in the fourth and the eighth verses, which speak of peace being taken from the *earth*, &c. But if St. John was not called to look directly at the book, nor upwards to the sky, it must have been to look *downwards upon the earth*. And so, in fact, it was.

At the opening of each seal, a different living creature spoke, and called him to contemplate from the high point of elevation where he stood the scene that lay beneath him. Let this be kept in mind. Let the reader try to realize to himself a miniature representation of the whole ancient Roman empire, viewed from an immense height in the air, and he will have, I imagine, a tolerably correct idea of the scene of this vision. Assuming, then, that St. John was called upon to look at something *eastward* upon the earth, what did he see? He saw a white horse, of a colossal size (for so it must have been, or he could not have seen it at all,) moving majestically along upon the tops of the mountains,

perhaps the mountains of Judea, and bearing upon his back a rider with a *bow*, to whom was given a *laurel crown*, and who, having received this presage of final triumph, went forth conquering *and to conquer*; in other words, in the certain assurance of gaining victory after victory, until all his foes should be subdued.

Whilst contemplating this vision, the Lamb opens the second seal (it should be observed the writer does not say he *saw* him open it), and the second living creature from the opposite side* of the throne calls to the apostle to come and look. He moves accordingly to the other side, and looking down westward towards Italy he sees a **FIERY-RED** horse, bearing a rider of a warlike character, to whom is given a great sword.

The third seal is now opened, and the third living creature, whose station is towards the north, gives a similar invitation to the two former; and the apostle having transferred himself to the north side of the throne, again looks down upon the earth, and sees a **BLACK** horse, the rider upon which has in his hand a pair of scales, and to whom certain words relative to the price of provisions are addressed.

Upon the opening of the fourth seal, the fourth living creature, whose station was to the south, speaks; and the apostle, having once more traversed the circle of the throne, sees beneath him, standing, perhaps we may assume, on the northern part of Africa, a *livid green* horse, bearing upon his back a rider, whose name,

* The second living creature was like an ox, which, it will be remembered, is the traditional standard of Dan, which tribe encamped on the west. It is obvious that the apostle was called upon to remove from the place where he then was, otherwise the invitation of the living creature, "Come, and look," would have been altogether inappropriate.

disease, (or pestilence,) and attendant Hades, or, as we should say, *the yawning grave*, sufficiently declare his character and errand.

Such were the things which St. John now saw ; and passing strange surely it is that commentators should have been so greatly divided in opinion as to the meaning of them. Nothing, indeed, can show more strikingly how men may refine and refine, and bewilder themselves at last in an inextricable maze of uncertainty, than the variety of expositions which have been given of these seals by different expositors : some supposing them to relate exclusively to secular events, others, exclusively to ecclesiastical affairs ; some confining the period of their duration to a few years, others extending it to the end of the world.* I shall not, however, here attempt an analysis, much less a refutation, of these various schemes, but proceed at once to give what appears to me to be the true interpretation.

* It is observable, however, that these remarks apply only to comparatively modern expositors. *All* the ancients, I believe without exception, explained the four first seals according to the interpretation now about to be given of them. Thus Irenæus, the earliest of all commentators, says, “*Ad hoc enim nasebatur Dominus, de quo et Joannes in Apocalypsi ait, Exiit vincens ut vinceret.*” For this end the Lord was born, of whom John says also in the Apocalypse, “*He went forth conquering that he might conquer.*” In like manner, Tertullian, Victorinus, Tichonius, and Augustine, and almost all commentators, in fact, until within a very recent period. (See “*The History of Apocalyptic Interpretation,*” appended to the “*Horæ Apocalypticæ,*” by the Rev. E. B. Elliott.) How strange, then, that this same writer should say, “*There was that in the details of the emblem of the very first seal which, if I mistake not, must at once have suggested the Roman Empire and Emperors as its intended subjects of symbolization ; i.e., to any one unprepossessed by other expectations as to the intent of the prophecy, and conversant, like the Evangelist, with the manners and customs of the age.*” (*Horæ Apoc.*, vol. i., p. 119.) But if so, how came Irenæus and all the early expositors not to discern in these horses the impersonation of the Roman Empire ?

1ST SEAL.—*The rider on the white horse.*

Now, let it be borne in mind that the loosing of the first seal is the first act by which the GOEL, or Redeemer, proceeds to take possession of the redeemed inheritance. And what, then, might we suppose would be the corresponding symbol presented to the eye of the apostle upon the opening of that seal? Might we not almost assume beforehand that it would be a representation of the Lord Jesus Christ going forth upon the earth with the ensigns of conquest and victory about him, in the confident assurance of final triumph? And is not this, in fact, the very thing which St. John now saw? Can this rider on the white horse, with the laurel crown on his head and the bow in his hand, proceeding forth from the mountains of the east, “riding on the high places of the earth,”* be any other than the Lord Jesus risen from the grave, entering upon that career of conquest which shall never cease until all enemies are put under his feet, and the earth again is brought into subjection to its original possessor? This idea is fully borne out by Scripture. Every image, in fact, here employed is used again and again in passages the application of which is unquestionable. The horse, the bow, and its implied accompaniment, the arrow, the conqueror’s crown, and the march of triumph, are all of them images employed by the ancient prophets to set forth the spiritual conquests of Messiah. Take, for example, that magnificent passage in the forty-fifth Psalm: “Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty, and in thy

* “And I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and I will feed thee with the heritage of Jacob, thy father.” (Isa. lviii. 14.)

majesty RIDE PROSPEROUSLY, because of truth and meekness and rightcousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine ARROWS are sharp in the midst of the king's enemies, whereby the people fall under thee."* Have we not here imagery and language almost identical with that the meaning of which we are endeavouring to discover? And can there, then, be any doubt as to the propriety, to say the least, of interpreting this rider on the white horse of our Lord, supposing there be nothing in the context opposed to such interpretation?

Compare, again, the following passages from Habakkuk and Zechariah:—"Was Jehovah displeased against the rivers? Was thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst *ride upon thy horses* and chariots of salvation? Thou didst *make bare thy bow* according to the oaths thou didst swear unto the tribes."† (Hab. iii. 8.) "Even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee: when I have *bent Judah* for me, *filled the bow* with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece," &c. (Zech. ix. 12, 13.)

Is not the correspondence between these passages and that under consideration most strikingly manifest? And can we suppose that St. John, with these passages, so familiar to him, in his mind, when he beheld the rider on the white horse going forth with the *bow* in his

* It is a remarkable fact, that in the Hebrew the word for *teacher* and *law* are derived from a root which signifies *to shoot*. Thus, under the word *jarah*, which is the root of *morch*, a teacher, and *torah*, a law, Taylor says, "*To throw darts, shoot arrows: to guide, instruct: a law, or rule of action.*" May we not, then, infer that the bow among the Jews might be used as the symbol of a teacher? (See also Psalm lxiv. 3.)

† The Authorized Version is, "Thy bow was made quite naked, according to the oaths of the tribes." The passage is confessedly obscure. I have followed the Vulgate.

hand upon his career of *peaceful conquest*, (see v. 4), would think of any other than the Lord Jesus Christ?

And then “the crown given to him,” how well does this also accord with the circumstances under which he is here presented to us? It was customary for the commander of an army, when *setting* out on an expedition, *to be crowned with a laurel crown* as a presage of victory;* so here, the Lord Jesus receives the *conqueror’s* crown, because, although he is only just entering upon his career of conquest, his final triumph is sure and certain. What, in fact, is this but the embodying in a hieroglyphic that sentiment of the apostle in the Epistle to the Hebrews? “In that he hath put all in subjection under him, he hath left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not YET all things put under him. But WE SEE Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, CROWNED† WITH GLORY AND HONOUR.” (ii. 8.) Can anything be more exact than the parallelism here? Might we not almost fancy that St. Paul had read the Revelation, or that he had had the same vision

* Thus Xenophon, describing the passage of a Grecian general with his soldiers across a river to attack the enemy who were drawn up on the other side, says, “καὶ αὐτὸς πρῶτος χειρὶσόφος ἔστεφανώμενος καὶ ἀποδύς, κ. τ. λ. “*And first Cheirisophus BEING CROWNED, and having put off his garments,*” &c. On which the editor (Hutchinson) remarks, “He is said, perhaps, to be crowned, ἔστεφανώμενος, because he had recently been offering sacrifice, for it is notorious that the ancients when they sacrificed wore crowns; unless it should be thought more probable that he took the crown AS A TOKEN OF GOOD, AND INDICATIVE OF THAT JOY WHICH FILLED HIS MIND IN THE CERTAIN ANTICIPATION OF VICTORY.” (See Xenophon, Anab., l. iv. p. 276. Oxon, 1745.) What better commentary could we desire on the words, “And a crown (στεφανος) was given to him?”

† δόξη καὶ τιμῇ ἔστεφάνωσας αὐτον. Βλεπομεν Ἰησουν—δοξη καὶ τιμη ἔστεφάνωμενον.

of the Lord going forth after *the suffering of death* (the Lamb that had been slain) on his victorious career, with the conqueror's crown even now encircling his brows?

It may be said, John already knew all these things, what need, then, of any fresh revelation of them? Certainly. But did he not know also that Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God, and that he had been slain? Why, then, it may be said with equal show of reason, should he be exhibited to the apostle in that character? Or, again, did not St. John know all that is implied in the symbolical representation of the Church in the twelfth chapter? Must not that symbolical representation, in fact, necessarily have reference to things past, seeing that most, if not all, of the other apostles who are represented by the crown of twelve stars, were now dead? And why, then, should not the first going forth of the Lord after his resurrection, to subdue the world to himself, be also here symbolically set forth, although an event which had already taken place? The reason, in fact, of this retrospective commencement of the symbolical prophecy is obvious. It is to make the prophetic history of the new covenant dispensation complete. Had not the prophecy begun with the first going forth of Messiah to acquire the dominion of the earth, there would have been a gap in the narrative. We should have had, if I may be allowed so to speak, the crucifixion (the Lamb slain), but we should not have had the resurrection and ascension. As it is, the history is complete, and everything comes in in its proper place.

It has been objected, however, that this rider on the white horse cannot be the symbol of the Incarnate Word,

because in the nineteenth chapter he is represented as having *many diadems*, or *kingly crowns*, on his head, whereas here he has only *one* crown given him, and that not a diadem, but a simple crown of victory. But is not this very circumstance confirmatory rather than otherwise of the interpretation I have given of this seal? For, as the apostle says, “We see not *yet* all things *put* under him,” but we do see him, after having suffered death, “*crowned* with glory and honour;” and therefore to have represented him as receiving the *royal* diadem on the opening of the first seal would have been premature. It would have been an anachronism. The kingdoms of the world had not yet become the kingdoms of the Lord and his anointed. But nothing can be more appropriate, as we have seen, than the gift at this juncture of the *victor’s crown*, which, with equal propriety, when the rider on the white horse again appears, is exchanged for the “many diadems” that then encircle his head, showing that the enemies which, when he was first seen, he went forth *conquering and to conquer*, are now *conquered*, and all the power, dominion, and authority they may have possessed transferred to him.

Such, then, is, I conceive, beyond all question the true symbolical meaning of the rider on the white horse.

2D SEAL,	3D SEAL,	4TH SEAL,
<i>The red,</i>	<i>The black,</i>	<i>And the pale horse.</i>

The generality of commentators in interpreting the seals appear to assume it as an axiom that the events foretold under each seal must be, strictly speaking, *consecutive*, and, consequently, that the expositor is bound to specify accurately the epoch when one begins

and the other ends. But a careful examination of the text of the prophecy, must, I think, lead to a different conclusion, and convince us that the events of the four, or rather five first seals, although as to their commencement perhaps consecutive, are in their after-progress contemporary, and occupy chronologically the same period. For it has, I trust, been satisfactorily proved that these four horses were all seen by St. John traversing the earth at the same time, although not setting out from the same spot, or at precisely the same moment; that is to say, there was first the white horse and his rider in the east, and then the red horse and his rider in the west, &c. But the white horse had not finished his course and *totally disappeared* ere the red horse was seen, nor had the red horse ceased from his warfare and carnage before the black horse came upon the scene from the north. And so, in like manner, as the black horse comes down from the north, the pale horse advances from the south; and thus all the horses and their riders were seen upon the stage of the Roman earth at once. It is therefore manifestly inconsistent with the terms of the prophecy to assign to each horse and his rider its own definite epoch.* But what, then, is their symbolical import? No person with a mind unwarped by prepossessions would, I believe, be at any loss to answer

* It is a fact strongly corroborative of this view, that scarcely any two of those interpreters who attempt to assign precise dates to the seals are agreed as to when they begin or when they end. Does not this fact in itself prove that these dates are purely arbitrary? If there were any truth in the scheme would this be the case? But why attempt to fix dates when there is no allusion to time in the text itself? Had each of these horsemen had his allotted period assigned him, would there not have been some intimation to that effect? But there is none. The work appointed to each is plain enough, but the time in which it is to be done is not specified.

this question. Any man of common understanding, who had seen these horses as the apostle saw them, and was told that they were symbolical representations, would at once say, "Surely that fiery red horse and his rider with the great sword appointed to take peace from the earth must be a personification of war; and the rider on the black horse must no less clearly be a personification of famine, seeing that blackness of skin is the characteristic of those who are perishing with hunger; * and the injunction respecting the sale of provisions, fixing the price of wheat and barley at a high rate, shows that scarcity and dearth would attend upon his steps. As to the pale horse and his rider, there can be no mistake; here is evidently the symbol of pestilence wasting the earth and filling the grave with its victims." Thus, I think, would every *unprepossessed* mind interpret this vision. Never, I am persuaded, would it enter into the thoughts that these horses and their riders were symbols either of different religious systems, or of the Roman Empire under different phases of adversity and prosperity.

Nor is there any difficulty in explaining the details, *the minutiae* of the prophecy, according to this view. On the contrary, the more minutely and accurately the text is investigated, the more exactly we shall find every circumstance of the symbolic prophecy to correspond with the interpretations of history. Let me now direct the reader's attention to some of the minutiae to which I refer.

THE RED HORSE.—A commission was given to the rider on this horse to take *the peace* from the earth. Not in general terms *peace*, but *the peace* which had

* So Lam. v. 6: "Our skin was BLACK like an oven because of the terrible famine."

prevailed, and of which, therefore, it is implied the rider on the white horse was the harbinger. He also stirs up the inhabitants of the Roman earth whereon he appears, to *slay each other*, and he brings with him therefore intestine civil wars as well as foreign slaughter. Moreover there was put into his hand *a great sword*, showing that whilst he was commissioned to take peace generally from the earth, a special commission was given him for the execution of God's judgments by death for an especial object. For the sword is given to this rider, not simply as an ensign of office, but that he may use it in the punishment of those whom, as the chief magistrate, he considers worthy of punishment. It is not the sword of war that is given him, but the sword of despotic power; the sword of persecution, wherewith, under the semblance of justice, he would be permitted to kill the people of the Lord.* And thus this seal foretels that whilst there would be foreign and intestine wars, there would also be persecution of the Church even to death.

THE BLACK HORSE. The rider on this horse had a *pair of scales* in his hand. Now every one knows that scales are sometimes the emblem of "even-handed" justice. But it does not necessarily follow that they must *always* have this meaning. They may be symbolical of that scarcity of provisions which demands more than ordinary exactitude in their distribution and consumption, and the context shows that they have this symbolical bearing here. For the voice from the midst of the four living creatures *fixing the price* of wheat and barley implies scarcity and dearness, it being usual in times of great scarcity for the Government to determine the highest price at which the necessaries of life shall be

* See ver. 9, and the Commentary.

sold, in order to prevent imposition and, in a manner, compel those who might have large stores of grain laid up to sell at a moderate profit.* The words, therefore, “A MEASURE (or *chœnix* †) OF WHEAT FOR A PENNY; AND THREE MEASURES OF BARLEY FOR A PENNY;” taken in connexion with the colour of the horse and the scales in the hand of the rider, indicate with sufficient clearness the mission of this horseman. It is THE ANGEL OF FAMINE coming down from THE NORTH, from whence proceed those chilling blasts which blight the nascent ear, and destroy the fruits of the earth.

But why does this injunction to sell the necessaries of life at a fixed price come from the midst of the four

* Thus Lactantius says of Dioclesian:—“Idem cum variis iniquitatibus immensam faceret caritatem, *legem pretiis rerum venalium statuere conatus est.*” “This same Emperor having by his multiplied iniquities occasioned a great scarcity of provisions, endeavoured to determine by law *the price of saleable articles.*” (*De Mortibus*, c. vii.)

† The *chœnix* was a dry measure of capacity, containing probably a pint and a-half. But this is a subject involved in too much uncertainty to build an argument upon it, I mean, the exact quantity contained in the *chœnix*. What we may consider as certain is, that the denarius was the ordinary wages of a day-labourer (see Matt. xxi.), and, consequently that the quantity of wheat and barley to be purchased was the remuneration for the labour of a day. Now, supposing the *chœnix* to have held *two* pints, which is the computation of some writers, still it is obvious that provisions must have been at a very high price—a famine price, in fact—when a man could only earn enough in a day to purchase one day’s food for himself alone. For what should we say if the price of the quartern loaf were fixed by law at two shillings or half-a-crown, and *no more*? Would not such a law imply an extreme scarcity of bread? And is it not obvious that the poor man with a family, who could only earn that sum by a day’s labour, would be in a starving condition? Something like this then we may suppose to be the state of the Roman people at the period here referred to. The difference between the price of the wheat and the barley seems disproportionate. But this circumstance in itself indicates extreme scarcity, since in a time of famine the price of wheat rises at a higher ratio than that of the inferior grains. (See the remarks on Mr. Elliott’s commentary on this seal in Appendix C.)

living creatures, and what means the prohibitory clause, “*See thou hurt not the wine and the oil?*”

These are points which have occasioned commentators great perplexity, and various are the solutions given of the difficulties they are supposed to involve. I am inclined, however, to think that these difficulties are in a great measure of our own making, and arise from an unwillingness to view the whole passage in its most natural light. For if we regard this rider upon the black horse as the *angel of famine*, what can be more natural or suitable than this voice from the throne of Deity giving him his commission, and telling him what he is to do? Is not famine one of those four sore judgments which God sends upon the earth to punish its inhabitants for their iniquity? And whence then should the charge to the angel of such a scourge proceed but from the throne of him whose minister he is? With regard to the prohibition, “*See thou hurt not,*” &c., this may be understood literally or figuratively. If it be taken literally, it must be regarded as a charge to the angel, whilst smiting the barley and the wheat, to spare the wine and the oil; and consequently it would convey an intimation that these latter productions would be plentiful during a scarcity of the former. But the figurative sense of these words appears to me in this instance to be by far the most probable. Both wine and oil are frequently put in the Scriptures for spiritual blessings. Thus, in the forty-fifth Psalm we have the phrase, “*the oil of gladness,*” for the gifts of the Holy Spirit; and in Isaiah, c. xxv., the blessings of the Gospel are compared to “*wine on the lees well refined.*” (See also c. lv. and lxi.; Psalm xxiii. 5; Matt. xxv., &c.) Now, as the words, “*See thou hurt not,*” are evidently used in *contradistinction* to the

former clause, which implies injury done to the other products of the earth, as if it had been written, “Whilst thou art charged with a commission to smite the wheat and the barley, see thou touch not the wine and the oil” (not, be it observed, the *vine* and the *olive*, but the *wine* and the *oil*)—seeing, I say, that there is this contradistinction in the two clauses, we may reasonably infer that there is a like distinction in the meaning, and that as the one clause is to be understood literally, the other is to be taken figuratively. But if so, then the prophetic bearing of this prohibition will be to this effect,—that whilst the angel of famine would be desolating the earth by causing a scarcity of the bread that perishes, that which endures to everlasting life would remain untouched; and thus during a famine of the one, there would be a plentiful supply of the other. Or, in other words, that the Gospel would continue to be preached in all its fulness, and the influences of the Spirit continue to be plentifully poured out on the Church, at the very time that this and the other predicted judgments of the Lord were wasting the Roman Empire.*

THE PALE HORSE. The name of the rider on this

* The only objection to this view is, that it involves a mixture of literal and figurative language in the same verse. This, however, is no uncommon thing. For example, in Ezek. xxxiv. 2, we read, “Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves; should not the shepherds feed the flocks?” Here the words “do feed themselves” are evidently to be understood literally of the luxury and gluttony of the Jewish priests; but *the feeding of the flocks* refers to giving them spiritual food—the feeding them with the word of life. (See also e. xxvii. 26; and xxxii. 1—10.) On this point Mr. Elliott justly observes, “As regards the general question, the mixture of the literal and symbolic is so palpable and so frequent in prophetic Scripture that it seems quite needless to detain the reader by citations to prove it. He can scarce open a page in this or other sacred prophecies without seeing examples.”—(*Horæ Apoc.*, vol. i., p. 330, Third Edition.)

horse tells at once his commission. It is the *angel of pestilence*, going forth to slay his thousands, accompanied by his attendant, Hades, or the grave, who follows close upon his heels, ready, as it were, to swallow up his victims as fast as they fall. The quarter from whence this horseman was seen to issue is confirmatory of this view of his symbolical meaning. For it was almost a physical axiom amongst the Romans that pestilence arose from the South and proceeded towards the West.* And this horseman accordingly came forth from the South, being first seen by the apostle on the eastern coast of Africa, making his journey towards Rome.

“*And power was given unto them to slay men over the fourth part of the earth, with the sword, and with famine, and with pestilence, and by the wild beasts of the earth.*”—It is a question of no small importance whether these words refer exclusively to the pale horse and his rider, or whether they belong also to the two preceding horsemen. Commentators in general take the former view, and assume that the power to slay over the fourth part of the earth is given only to the rider on the pale horse. But there are two objections to this view. In the first place, the pronoun is in the plural. It is not said power was given unto *him* (as in the case of the red horse and his rider, see ver. 4), but to *them*. Now who are the parties

* Thus Pliny says, “*Observatum a meridianis partibus ad occasum solis pestilentiam semper ire.*” (*Plin.* l. xvii., c. l.) “It has been remarked that the plague (or pestilence) *always* proceeds from the South towards the West.” Thus it was with the great plague of Athens, and with that terrific pestilence which swept over the Roman empire in Cyprian’s time, about A.D. 252, of which we shall have occasion to speak more fully presently.

to whom this power is given? The horse and his rider? But surely the horse is not one instrument of slaughter and his rider another. Regarded as an instrumental cause of destruction, they are identical, and cannot therefore be spoken of in the plural.* But, secondly, this rider has no instruments wherewith to destroy life corresponding with those afterwards mentioned. His name is THE PESTILENCE (*ὁ θάνατος*); and to make him the instrument of destruction by the sword and by hunger also involves an incongruity such, as I believe, we never meet with in the Bible. On these grounds, then, I think the plural pronoun must refer to the two former horsemen as well as to this; and consequently that the words, "To *them* was given," &c., are but a clue to guide us into the true symbolical meaning of those horsemen. That is to say, they inform us that to the rider on the red horse it was given to slay with the *sword*; to the rider on the black horse with *famine*, and so forth.

But then, it may be asked, where do the wild beasts of the earth come from? Of which horseman are they the attendants? Before we can answer this question we must determine who or what these wild beasts are. Now, I am inclined to think that the expression is here used in a figurative sense, and that these wild beasts are in fact Heathen perse-

* Mr. Elliott avoids this difficulty by reading the pronoun in the singular, *power was given unto him*. But although this reading is supported by the authority of some MSS., they are not the most ancient, and it is therefore rejected by Tregelles. When a reading comparatively modern is adopted merely to support a particular theory, it ought to be viewed with great suspicion. Mr. E. indeed says, "For *αὐτοῖς* I read with Griesbach and Tregelles, *αὐτῷ*." But this is a mistake, since the latter writer translates, "to them," and assigns a reason for so doing. See his foot note *in loco*.

cutors, and especially those Heathen *Emperors* who with the fury of wild beasts raged against the Christians. This term is so applied both by St. Paul and Lactantius, and other early Christian writers;* and the variation in the construction in the original, points, I conceive, to a variation also in the application; so that whilst the sword and the famine, &c., are to be understood literally, the *wild beasts* are to be taken in a figurative sense.† But if so, then they will not be the attendants of any particular horseman, but accompany them all, committing slaughter and havoc in the Church during the whole period that war, pestilence, and famine are desolating the empire.

One other point only remains to be noticed; the meaning of the words, “power was given to them

* Thus St. Paul, “If after the manner of men I have fought with wild beasts (εθρησιομαχησα) at Ephesus.” (1 Cor. xv. 32.) And Lactantius, speaking of Nero’s miserable death, says, “His body could nowhere be found, so that not even the burial place of so vile a beast (*tam male bestia*) was seen on earth.” And again, describing Dioclesian’s persecution, “The whole earth was disturbed, and, excepting only Gaul, these three most savage wild beasts (*acerbissima bestia*) raged from East to West.” (*De Mort. Pers.*, c. ii. and xvi.)

† The Greek is, “εν ρομφαια—και υπο των θηριων της γης.” As we might say in English, “with the sword, and by the instrumentality of wild beasts.” It would be difficult to show that any destruction worth mentioning of human life by wild beasts has ever taken place subsequently to the Christian era. In the early ages of the world there can be no doubt they were often a serious scourge. We read, *e. g.*, of embassies being sent from one prince to another for assistance to deliver a territory from the ravages of a single wild boar. (See the story of Atys and Adrastus, in Herodotus.) And Cicero tells us that Diocærcus mentions, amongst other causes of the destruction of mankind, the sudden irruptions of multitudes of wild beasts: “Beluarum etiam, repentinæ multitudinis, quarum impetu docet *quædam hominum genera* esse consumpta.” (*De Offic.*, lib. ii., c. v.) See also Deut. vii. 22, where the Israelites are told not to destroy the nations of Canaan all at once, lest the wild beasts of the earth should multiply upon them.

to kill over the fourth part of the earth." The earth, it must be borne in mind, means restrictedly the Roman empire, not what we now call the whole world.* And if, therefore, the power to kill is to be referred to all the four agencies taken *collectively*, this would imply that only a fourth part of the Roman world would suffer. But it is more in accordance with the general usage of Scripture to apply the expression to the four agencies *distributively*, *i. e.*, as assigning to each one of them its respective field of action; namely, a fourth part of the Roman earth to war, a fourth to famine, &c.† Just as in Jeremiah we read, "If they shall say unto thee, Whither shall we go forth? then thou shalt tell them, 'Thus saith the Lord: Such as are for death, to death (or, for the pestilence, to pestilence); and such as are for the sword, to the sword; and such as are for the famine, to the famine; and such as are for the captivity, to the captivity.'" (Jer. xv. 2. See also Ezek. xiv. 12—21.) So then, in the case before us, the power to slay over a fourth part of the earth is given to the ministers of each judgment *distributively*, and consequently the whole Roman world would be involved in them either simultaneously or consecutively.

Summary View of the Four First Seals.

The following then appears to be a summary of the events predicted under these seals:—

1. The rapid progress of the Gospel consequent upon

* See the quotation from Lactantius above, where we have the words, *rexabatur universa terra*.

† This is in accordance with the reading of the Latin Vulgate, which is, *super quatuor partes terræ*, "over the four parts of the earth."

the resurrection of Christ, through the Word preached by the apostles during a time of universal peace, which progress is to be regarded as the first step towards his taking possession of the redeemed earth, and as the earnest of his final triumph over all enemies.

2. A succession of judgments upon the Roman world, attended with an extraordinary destruction of human life by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence, which judgments would begin shortly after the going forth of Christ to conquer the world to himself by the Gospel, and be accompanied by the persecution of the Church and the slaughter of Christians.

FULFILMENT.

The first thing we have to show is, that the Gospel began its career of victories in a time of peace, and that its progress was rapid. But who can require any historical proof of the latter assertion? Who has not heard of the early triumphs of the Gospel? In the words of an eloquent modern author, who has thus unconsciously written a commentary on the opening of the first seal,—

“From the time that the Great Head of the Church gave the vast commission, ‘Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature,’ to the present hour, has Christ, by the instrumentality of his word, gone forth ‘conquering and to conquer.’ Many and mighty indeed were the enemies to be overcome,—Jew and Gentile, prince and peasant, rich and poor, the intellectual Greek, and the ignorant barbarian, were alike opposed to the holy, humbling doctrine of the crucified Nazarene; and united in one strong phalanx,

although composed of such discordant materials, they seemed to present an impenetrable barrier to the progress of the twelve poor ‘unlearned and ignorant men,’ to whom the diffusion of the ‘word of truth’ was committed. Nevertheless, armed simply with that word, and ‘strong in the Lord and the power of his might,’ they went forth. The arrows which they shot, as they were supplied to them from the heavenly quiver, (Matt. x. 20,) pierced ‘the hearts of the King’s enemies,’ and the mighty host of foes either turned their backs and fled, or were melted into friends.”

Thus, indeed, it was. The Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles of St. Paul, independently of any uninspired testimony, declare how mighty was the word of Christ in the beginning of the Gospel, to the pulling down of “the strongholds of Satan.” Within twenty-five years after our Lord’s ascension, there was not a province or city of the Roman empire, as we are told on good authority, where the foundations of a Church were not laid,* “so mightily, truly, grew the Word of God, and prevailed.”

But was this during a time of peace? Yes; it is a remarkable fact that at the period of our Lord’s birth, peace prevailed throughout the Roman world; nor from

* Thus Lactantius says: “Discipuli dispersi sunt per omnem terram ad evangelium prædicandum, sicut illis magister dominus imperaverat, et per annos xxv. usque ad principium Neroniani imperii per omnes provincias et civitates Ecclesiæ fundamenta miserunt.” (*Lact. de Mort. Pers.*, c. ii.) And in like manner Eusebius: “By the Divine power and helping hand of God, the wholesome doctrine, as it were sunbeams, suddenly shone throughout the world, and forthwith the sound of the holy evangelists and apostles passed throughout the whole earth. So that throughout all cities and villages forthwith many, and the same very populous, Churches were established.”—*Hist.*, b. ii., c. 3.

that time until towards the end of Nero's reign, a period of sixty-eight years, was the empire seriously disturbed by foreign wars, or civil commotions.*

Both the last-named emperor and Augustus commemorated the extraordinary peace which prevailed during a part of their reigns, by public memorials, the inscriptions on which, whilst they state the fact, imply the rareness of its occurrence.† And what makes this circumstance the more striking is, that three of those emperors, during whose reigns this extraordinary peace

* The violent death of Caligula can hardly be regarded as an exception; for he died by the hands of his own domestics, and his death was not accompanied by any popular or military insurrection. It is remarked by Gibbon that, "the convulsions which agitated Rome at his death were confined to the walls of the city."

† On an ancient column in Spain was found the following inscription:

IMP. CÆS. DIVI.
P. AUGUSTUS PONT. X. MAX.
COS. XI.
TRIBUNIC. POT. X. IMP. VIII.
ORBE MARI ET TERRA
PACATO. TEMPLO JANI CLAUSO.

"The Divine Emperor, Cæsar Augustus, the tenth time High Priest, the eleventh time Consul; the tenth, Tribune of the People; the eighth, Commander. Peace being established throughout the world by sea and land, the Temple of Janus being shut." Suetonius tells us, "That the gates of the Temple of Janus, which were open during war, and closed only in times of universal peace, had only been twice shut, and that but for a brief space, from the building of the city to the time of Augustus, but in his reign they were shut three times, peace being established both by sea and land."—*Terra marique pace parta ter clausit. Vita Oct.*, c. 22. So Horace:—

"Custode rerum Cæsare, non furor
Civilis, aut vis exiget otium."—*Odes*, l. iv. O. 15.

See, also, the notes, Ed. Delp.

This peace continued with but little interruption until the end of Nero's reign. Innumerable coins of his are still extant with the following inscription:—"PACE P. R. TERRA MARIQUE (VEL UBIQUE) PARTA, JANUAM CLAUSIT." The date of these coins is about A. U. C. 811, or 819, or A. D. 58 and 66. They may be seen in the British Museum.

prevailed, were three of the vilest of mankind ; and the more likely, therefore, we might suppose, to embroil the empire in both domestic and foreign wars. But He, “ whose ways are not as ours,” ordained otherwise ; and it was during the reigns of these monsters of iniquity that that state of peace prevailed which certainly favoured the progress of Divine truth, and enabled the Church, in the feebleness of its infancy, to grow up and acquire strength.

But the rider on the red horse was commissioned to take “ the peace ” from the earth ; and we have now to show, on historical evidence, that this was done. We have to show, it must be borne in mind, not merely that men were slain in battle, and died of hunger and disease during the period which succeeded the first promulgation of the Gospel, for in this there would have been nothing so unusual as to form a subject for prophecy, but that wars, famines, and pestilences, of an extraordinary character, and attended with immense destruction of human life, distinguished that period. Now for this purpose we have simply to refer to the facts of history. Nero first drew the sword of imperial persecution in the year 65 ;* and from that period to the accession of Constantine, the empire was wasted by a continual succession of wars, pestilences, and famines. In the year 68 Nero was slain, amidst civil wars and convulsions which cost the lives of millions of Roman citizens, and shook the foundations of the empire.† In the year 70, Jeru-

* *Nero primus omnium persecutus Dei servos.*—*Lact. de Mort. Per.*, c. ii. So, likewise, Tertullian ; “ *Orientem fidem Romæ primus Nero eruentavit.*”—*Contra Gnost.*, c. 15. Vol. ii., p. 387. Ed. J. H. Semler.

† “ Nero involved the whole empire in his ruin. In the space of eighteen months, four princes perished by the sword, and the Roman world was shaken by the fury of the contending armies.”—*Decline and Fall*, c. iii., § 2.

salem was besieged and taken by Titus, when upwards of a million Jews, *Roman subjects*, perished by the sword, pestilence, or famine, not to mention the number of besiegers slain by them.* In the year 80, a terrible pestilence desolated Italy. During Domitian's reign all the most honourable members of the Senate were put to death,† besides multitudes of others of inferior rank. This tyrant also persecuted the Christians, and after committing incredible atrocities was himself slain by his own guards. In 96, Nerva was called to the throne, and was succeeded by Trajan, Hadrian, and the Antonines, who, for the space of eighty years, preserved the empire in a state of great prosperity. Nevertheless, the sword of war, and the sword of persecution, were never during these reigns wholly sheathed, nor was the Roman world unvisited by famine and pestilence. It was during the reigns of Trajan and Hadrian, that the Jews rebelled a second time, and after having suffered the most dreadful calamities, and slain vast multitudes of Romans, were themselves put to death by myriads.‡ The wars of Trajan are notorious, and although successful, must, like all other wars, have been attended with immense loss of human life even on the part of the victors. The reign of Antoninus Pius (from 138 to 161) was peaceful; but the apology of Justyn Martyr,

* See Josephus, Eusebius, &c.

† "Interfecit nobilissimos ex senatu."—*Eutr.*, l. vii.

‡ In Cyrene they massacred 220,000 Greeks; in Cyprus, 240,000. In Egypt a very great multitude. The victorious Jews devoured the flesh, licked up the blood, and twisted the entrails like a girdle round their bodies."—*Dion. Cassius*, l. lxxvii., p. 1145. Quoted in the *Decline and Fall*, c. xvi. "In Hadrian's war 580,000 Jews were cut off by the sword, besides an infinite number which perished by famine, by disease, and by fire."—*Dion. Cass.*, l. lxxix. *Ibid.* See also Euseb., l. iv., c. 2, 3.

written at this period, shows that the sword of persecution had not yet returned to its scabbard. In the next reign, that of Marcus Aurelius, all God's four sore judgments were let loose, and the angel of war, of famine, and of pestilence, combining with *human* wild beasts, made desolate the land. His war with the Marcomanni, on account of the length of its continuance, and the disasters sustained in it, has been compared to the wars with Hannibal. And about the same time a pestilence which raged throughout Italy and the provinces carried off the majority of the inhabitants, and destroyed nearly the whole army; and so great was the expense incurred by these wars, that the Emperor was obliged to sell his own and his wife's jewels, and the most valuable ornaments of his palace, to pay the soldiers.*

I have been thus particular in showing the fulfilment of the prophecy at this period, because it is that fixed upon by Mr. Elliott as the era of the white horse and his rider, which he supposes to be symbolical of the prosperity of the Roman Empire under Trajan and the Antonines; but the facts I have just adduced seem to me utterly incompatible with such an application.† From this time to the final establishment of Christianity under Constantine, the history of the Roman Empire, with the exception only of the reign of Severus, is little more than a history of civil wars,

* *Bellum ipse unum gessit, Marcomannicum: sed quantum, nulla memoria fuit, adeo ut Punicis conferatur: nam eo gravius est factum, quod universi exercitus perierant: sub hoc enim tantus casus pestilentiae fuit, ut post victoriam Persicam, Romae ac per Italiam provinciasque, maxima hominum pars, militum omnes fere copiae, languore defecerint.*" —*Entrop.*, l. viii.

† See this point more fully investigated in the Appendix.

conspiracies, seditions, and tumults. At one time thirty individuals contended for the Imperial power, and of those who attained it scarcely one died a natural death.* The loss of life occasioned by these domestic struggles was immense. Famine and pestilence also assisted in the work of destruction. In a famine which occurred in the reign of Maximin (A.D. 257), a bushel of wheat was sold for two thousand and fifty atticks. Multitudes died of starvation in the cities, towns, and villages; and being left unburied in the high-ways, became the food of dogs.† Pestilence, as usual, followed, and myriads were swept away by a loathsome and rapid death: the rich, whom famine could not reach, being carried off even in greater numbers than the poor.‡ The account given of these calamities by contemporary historians is harrowing to the mind, and almost exceeds belief.§ The following extract, from the “Decline and Fall,” may give the reader some idea of their unparalleled greatness, and satisfy him that in the foregoing statements there has been no exaggeration:—

“A long and general famine was a calamity of a

* “Such was the unhappy condition of the Roman Emperors, that whatever might be their conduct, their fate was commonly the same. Almost every reign is closed by the same disgusting repetition of treason and murder.”—*Decline and Fall*, c. xii.

† See Euseb. Hist., l. ix., c. 8.

‡ Eusebius says—“Therefore the rich, the princes, the presidents, and many of the magistrates, as fit people for a pestilent disease (because they were not pinched with penury) suffered a sharp and swift death.” He adds, “Death after this sort waging battle with double armour,—to wit, with famine and pestilence,—destroyed in short space whole families.”—*Hammer's Euseb., ut supra.*

§ It was about this period (A.D. 252) that Cyprian wrote his tract, “De Mortalitate” (*i.e.*, on the Plague) in which he endeavours to strengthen Christians against the fear of death, and exhorts them to show kindness, not only to each other, but to their Heathen enemies.

more serious kind. It was the inevitable consequence of rapine and oppression. Famine is almost always followed by epidemical diseases, the effect of scanty and unwholesome food. *Other causes* must, however, have contributed to the furious plague which, from the year 250 to the year 265, raged without interruption *in every province, in every city, and in almost every family, of the Roman Empire.* During some time FIVE THOUSAND PERSONS DIED DAILY IN ROME; and many towns that had escaped the hands of the barbarians were entirely depopulated.”

“We have the knowledge of a very curious circumstance, of some use, perhaps, in the melancholy calculation of human calamities. An exact register was kept at Alexandria of all the citizens entitled to receive the distribution of corn. It was found that the ancient number of these, comprised between the ages of forty and seventy, had been equal to the whole sum of claimants from fourteen to fourscore years of age who remained alive after the reign of Galienus. Applying this authentic fact to the most correct tables of mortality, it evidently proves that *above half* the people of Alexandria had perished; and could we venture to extend the analogy to other provinces, we might suspect that WAR, PESTILENCE, and FAMINE, had consumed in a few years the moiety of the human species.”*

* Vol. i., c. x., p. 455. See also Euseb., l. vii., c. 21. It can scarcely be necessary to say, that, in quoting the above work so frequently it is not my intention to recommend it for general perusal. As a book of reference it will always be useful; but the impiety and indecency with which it abounds, as well as the want of fairness and truth in the author wherever religion is concerned, notwithstanding his boastful asseverations of impartiality and candour, cannot fail to excite pain and disgust even in those who are not likely to be injured by the poison which it endeavours with

What better commentary can we desire than the concluding sentence of this extract on the prophecy before us? There is no other period, I believe, in the history of the world in regard to which any historian has ever made a similar assertion to the above. And have we not, then, sufficient ground for affirming that the period which succeeded the promulgation of the Gospel was distinguished by an unparalleled destruction of human life by the three great scourges of mankind—war, pestilence, and famine?

Having thus shown the fulfilment of the prophecy according to the view taken of it by myself and *all ancient expositors*, without attempting at present to answer objections, I leave the subject to the candid consideration of my readers. One thing only I would remark as confirmatory of the correctness of the old interpretation, namely, the extraordinary discrepancy in the expositions of those who have departed from it. Scarcely any two of those commentators who maintain that these four horsemen must, as to their symbolical meaning, be *homogeneous* and *consecutive*, are agreed either as to what they represent, or the time when each begins his course.* Now, if there

so much subtlety to convey. We cannot, however, but feel some gratification in turning the weapons of an enemy against himself; and it is surely not a little remarkable that a book written for the express purpose of bringing Christianity into contempt, should supply us with the best materials for the interpretation of the only prophetic book in the New Testament, and of thus establishing its truth. It is like cutting off the giant's head with his own sword.

* Thus, Mr. Cuninghame says of the third seal: "This prophecy was accomplished in the rise and prevalence of the *Papal power*. During these ages the Scriptures were hidden from the eyes of the people," &c.—P. 10. And the fourth seal he explains of the persecutions of the Albigenses, Hugonots, &c. But Vitringa thinks this latter seal relates to the ravages of the Saracens and the Turks. Others, again, interpret it as

were truth in any one of these systems, would it not in all probability commend itself more generally to the mind? But who ever, on rising up from the perusal of the commentaries referred to, felt satisfied that he had got the true meaning of the prophecy?

CHAPTER VI. 9—11.—THE FIFTH SEAL.

Upon the opening of the fifth seal of the covenant deed, by having fulfilled the conditions of which the Lamb became entitled to take possession of the redeemed inheritance, the apostle, who had hitherto been looking down upon the Roman world, was called upon to contemplate another scene. Turning his eyes in the direction of the throne, he saw under the altar *the souls* of those who had been slain for the Word of God and the testimony which they held. Now, it is an important remark of Vitringa's, that these souls must have had the form of a material body, since they *speak*, and are *clothed* with white robes; so that, although they are called *souls*, yet did they possess all the characteristics of *persons*, being endued with a human form, and being visible to the eye, and speaking

prophetical of the reign of Infidelity; and Mr. Croly heads his exposition of this fourth seal, "The prophecy of the French Revolution!" (P. 87.) Yet, strange to say, all these writers suppose the first trumpets to relate to events which took place a long time prior either to the French Revolution or the Reformation! Surely this is, as Mede justly remarks, *susque deque miscere omnia*, to go backwards and forwards without any fixed principle, and to confound all order and method. The seals, the trumpets, and the vials are clearly consecutive chronological marks, showing the order in which the events belonging to them would occur. The events of the seven trumpets are contained under the seventh seal; and to suppose, therefore, that any of those events should be antecedent to those predicted under the seals, involves a manifest anachronism. If this remark be not founded in truth, the Revelation is to me a confused chaos, instead of the most orderly and methodical of inspired books.

with man's voice. Another circumstance also noticed by him deserving of attention is, that these souls were seen, not under *the golden* altar of incense, but under *the brazen* altar of sacrifice ; *i.e.*, the altar on which the animals that were offered as whole burnt-offerings were consumed, and at the foot of which their blood was poured out. Moreover, the apostle *heard* them cry with a loud voice, "How long, O Lord, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on those that dwell upon the earth?" And he *saw* white robes given to them, and they were told that they must "*rest* yet a little time longer, until the number of their fellow-servants and brethren, who *were about to be killed* as they had been, should be filled up." Such were the things which the apostle saw when the Lamb loosed the fifth seal. Not anything, let it be observed, depicted or written in the book, as would surely have been the case had this book been a book of prophecy, containing in itself the revelation of the decrees and purposes of God, but a vision the scene of which was the temple, and the circumstances of which it was *impossible* could be either written or depicted. And what, then, did these things signify ?

That these souls under the altar, abstractedly considered, are martyrs, is too obvious to require any laboured proofs. Their position, lying under the altar of burnt-offering, where, as has just been observed, the blood of animals slain in sacrifice was poured forth, is sufficient evidence of this. But what martyrs are they ? and why are they presented to us just at this juncture ? The following is the reply I would give to these inquiries.

I conceive that these souls under the altar are to

be regarded as the representatives of all those who suffered as witnesses for the truth during the times of Heathen persecution, from its commencement under Nero to its conclusion under Dioclesian; and the object of their being presented to the eye of the apostle on the opening of the fifth seal appears to me to be twofold: 1st, to foreshow the persecutions which the Church would endure under Heathen emperors; and 2dly, those which it would afterwards suffer under nominally Christian princes. For that two distinct companies of martyrs are here referred to is manifest. The souls now seen under the altar are one company; their brethren, who were "about to be slain as they had been," are clearly another company, separated from them by an interval of time, and distinguished from them also, I should say, by a difference in the circumstances under which they would suffer. The words, "the souls of those that *had been slain*," imply that the slaughter had ceased, that the persecution was not going on at that period to which the vision belongs. Now, there was no entire cessation of Heathen persecution from its first commencement under Nero, until after the fury of Heathen enmity had wound itself to the highest pitch, and had at length vented itself under Dioclesian. This, therefore, is the period to which this seal must be referred. And it is evidently retrospective. That is to say, the martyrdoms it foretels as future in St. John's time had already taken place when the seal was opened. For the souls seen under the altar when this seal was opened had *already* been slain. They must, therefore, have been slain during the time that the four horsemen seen under the former seals were traversing the earth. And this

confirms the interpretation before given of "the great sword" put into the hand of the rider on the red horse, as signifying not only the sword of civil and foreign warfare, but of religious persecution; and also of "the wild beasts of the earth." (ver. 8.) Nor is there any difficulty in assigning a reason for these souls being presented to us just at this juncture. It implies that the three angels respectively, of war, famine, and pestilence, would cease to desolate the Roman earth just about the time that the sword of persecution would return to its scabbard, and that the interval of peace to the empire would be an interval of repose to the Church. How exactly this part of the prophecy was fulfilled will be shown in the notes on c. vii. v. 1.

But let me now call the reader's attention to another point—the cry of these martyr-souls, and the reply given to it. "How long," say they, "O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on those that dwell upon the earth?" And did these holy men who laid down their lives for Christ's sake entertain bitter and vindictive feelings towards their murderers? No: we know on the contrary, that, like their Divine Master, they loved them and prayed for them. What means then this cry for vengeance? Here we see the dramatic character of this book, and may learn a useful lesson in regard to the interpretation of it. It is not the martyred saints themselves who utter this cry, but it is their *souls*, their *blood* shed by impious hands, and the insult and wrong done to their Lord through them which, like Abel's blood, cry unto him from the ground for vengeance. And let the reader notice two things in this cry: 1st, the words, "How long?" and, 2dly, the character of the expostulation. The words, "How long?" imply that

these martyrdoms had occupied a considerable space of time, and, consequently, that it is not the victims of Dioclesian's persecution alone that are concerned, but the martyrs of the three first centuries generally. And, as respects the second point, what I would observe is, that this cry is not to be regarded simply as a cry of vengeance, as an imprecation of temporal judgments upon the inhabitants of the world, but as a prayer for the establishment of Christ's kingdom upon earth as opposed to all others. As if it had been said, "How long, O Lord, wilt thou suffer thine enemies to triumph and bear rule? How long dost thou delay the manifestation of thy power and the establishment of thy kingdom?" This is the import of the expostulation, and the answer returned to it is in accordance with it. For "white robes are given to them," and they are told that they must rest (*i.e.*, wait patiently in their present state) "yet a little season until their brethren, who must be killed like themselves, should be fulfilled." Now, what means this presentation of white robes to these souls, notwithstanding they remain still lying under the altar? And why, notwithstanding the presentation of the white robes, are they told that they must yet wait a little season before their petition can be granted?

Here are two interesting subjects of inquiry, involving in them, if I mistake not, the decision of another important question connected with the interpretation of the prophecies of this book.

With regard then to the first, the

Presentation of the white robes,—the symbolical meaning of this act, abstractedly considered, is obvious. The white robe is the symbol of righteousness, and its presentation to an individual by a judge, or other official person, would be tantamount to a public declaration of

that individual's innocence ; and, supposing him to have been falsely charged and unjustly punished, it would be a mark of honour and, in some degree, a compensation for the evil treatment he might have suffered. Such, then, must be the meaning of the symbol in the case before us, which is to be taken, as Vitranga justly observes, not *dogmatically*, but *prophetically*, as intended, *i.e.*, not to teach us anything concerning the state of separate spirits, but to foreshow some remarkable fact connected with the primitive martyrs which would occur at this period. And what then is that fact ? It is that at about this period, just at the time when Heathen persecution would cease, great honour would be shown to those holy men who had been the subjects of it ; they would be publicly acknowledged to have been innocent of the charges brought against them ; and thus, even before the resurrection and the day of judgment, the very people by whom they had been put to death would pronounce them to have been guiltless, and give honour to their memory.*

As to the other point, the resting of these martyr-

* Whether this may not also be a prophetic intimation of that excessive and idolatrous reverence which about this time began to be paid to the martyrs, may admit of question. I am inclined to think it is. Vitranga's remarks here are deserving of attention : "Significatur hoc emblemate, 1o. Deum intermedio hoc tempore, sua curaturum providentia, ut causa horum martyrum in Ecclesia publice justificaretur ; 2do. Martyrum horum quo tempore Deus in Ecclesia causam illorum justificavit, magnam in Ecclesia fore *gloriam*. Agnoscendos enim illos esse in Ecclesia, et deprædicandos veluti consortes regni et gloriæ Christi." "By this emblem is signified, 1st. That God in the intermediate time would provide that the cause of these martyrs should be publicly justified in the Church ; 2dly. That the glory of these martyrs, at the time that God would thus vindicate their cause, should be great in the Church. For that they would be acknowledged in the Church and prayed to as the partakers of the kingdom and glory of Christ."—(Com., p. 273.)

souls for a "little season" until some others, their brethren, should be slain, the questions to be determined are, first, what that "little season" is; and, secondly, who those other brethren are. Now I have already stated that Heathen persecution ceased under Dioclesian in the year 313. The "little season," therefore, must date its commencement from that time. But when does it end? Certainly not until persecution shall have ceased altogether. Not until the whole number of Christ's witnesses shall be completed, and the blood of the last martyr which shall ever bedew the earth shall have been shed. It is not the will of God that one portion of his Church should be made perfect in blessedness without the other. As it is written, "These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they *without us* should not be made perfect." (Heb. xi. 39, 40.) This "little season," therefore, is that whole period which would intervene from the era of the primitive martyrs until the coming of Christ to take to Him his great power and reign. (See c. xi. 15—18.)

But who then are those *other* brethren who would form that second company of martyrs, and for whom these first witnesses are told they must wait? Who can they be but those holy and devoted men who in after-ages refused to worship the Beast and his Image, just as their predecessors had refused to burn incense to the statues of the Roman Emperors, and were on that account slain even as they had been? This is the only satisfactory interpretation of which the passage admits. If we seek not for this second company of martyrs in the annals of Romish persecution, we shall seek for them in vain elsewhere. In fact, the Apocalypse itself directs us

to this interpretation. For in c. xx. 4, we have the two companies united in one, and made fellow-sharers together of the millennial glory : " I saw the souls of those that had been beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God ; and those who had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, and they lived and reigned with Christ the thousand years." Now here there is evidently the same distinction made as in the passage before us. Those *that had been beheaded for the witness of Jesus* are a different company from those who had *not worshipped the beast*. The former are those very souls whom the apostle now saw lying under the altar, the victims of Heathen persecution ; the latter are those with whose blood he was afterwards to see the great harlot drunken, and whose martyrdom is distinctly foretold in the thirteenth chapter, where it is said that power was given unto the beast " to cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed." The vision, therefore, of this seal is a deeply interesting one, and, short as it is, comprehends many important particulars. It foretels the martyrdom of God's faithful servants both by Pagan governors and the rulers of the Romish Church, and it plainly intimates that when this latter number shall be complete, then will the prayer of this petition be answered ; then will the Lord " take to himself his great power and reign." *

* The only objection that can be urged against this view is that the words " for a little season " may seem to imply that only a very short period would elapse between the first martyrdoms and the final glorification of the martyrs. But we must remember that " one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." Throughout this book the declaration of the Lord concerning his second advent is, " Behold I come quickly." And in the Gospel of St. John we find that he uses this very expression, " a little while," in speaking of the interval

FULFILMENT.

The history of the primitive martyrdoms is now so familiar to every reader of the Scriptures that I do not think it necessary to enter largely into the historical proofs connected with the subject; particularly as this has already been done in part in commenting upon the epistle to the Church of Smyrna. (See notes, c. ii. S—11.) That multitudes of Christians suffered death during the three first centuries of the Christian era simply because they avowed themselves to be believers in Christ, is a fact too notorious to be for a moment disputed. It was, however, in the reign of Dioclesian, in the year 303, that the last and severest, and indeed only *general* persecution began. This persecution lasted for ten years, and was carried on, according to the historians of those days, with a degree of Satanic malice which almost exceeds belief. The following extracts from two contemporary writers may give the reader some idea of the sufferings of the Christians, and of the feelings by which their persecutors were actuated:—

“Had I,” says Lactantius, “a hundred tongues, and a hundred mouths, and a voice of iron, yet could I not describe all the forms of torture, nor hastily enumerate even the names of the punishments which impious judges inflicted throughout all the provinces upon righteous and innocent men.”* “Who,” says Eusebius, “is able to number the multitudes of martyrs who suffered in all the cities and provinces of the empire? The prisons were everywhere filled with bishops, minis-

between his first and second coming: “Yet a little while,” he says, “ye shall see me, *and* a little while, and ye shall not see me.” (c. xvi. 16.) There is then no solid ground of objection on this head.

* De Mort. Pers., e. xvi.

ters, and deacons. Some were led in troops to be beheaded. Some were torn by tigers or tossed by bulls. Multitudes had their right eyes plucked out and the empty places seared with hot irons. Others were thrown headlong upon the ground and pounded as in a mortar. Many were slowly consumed by fire. Many drowned in the waters. I myself," says this writer, "being present, saw with my own eyes a vast multitude led to execution, some of whom were burnt and others beheaded, until the sword became blunt and the tormentors were wearied." *

It is needless to multiply quotations on this painful and revolting subject. As to the number of those who were thus put to death it is impossible to estimate it with any degree of accuracy, but that it was very great there can be no question.† Thus then was the prophecy of the fifth seal, as regards the first company of martyrs, fulfilled. The case of the martyrs of the second company will be more fully considered hereafter. (See c. xiii. and xvii.)

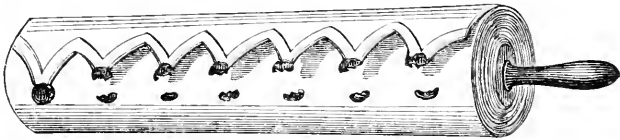
CHAPTER VI. 12—17.—THE SIXTH SEAL.

The imagery employed to symbolize the events that were to happen under this seal is of so grand and terrific a character that at a first perusal our thoughts are

* Hist., l. viii., *passim*.

† Gibbon estimates the whole number at only ten thousand. But his calculation is founded upon two most uncertain data. The one is, that Ensebius has accurately stated the exact number of martyrs who suffered in Palestine at ninety-two, and the other that Palestine being about a sixteenth part of the Eastern empire, it is reasonable to believe that that country produced at least a sixteenth part of those who suffered death within the dominions of Galerius and Maximin. This last assumption is perfectly gratuitous. The probability is, that the number of martyrs was at least ten times that stated by Gibbon.

immediately turned to the day of judgment, and we assume at once that nothing less can be here foretold than the coming of Christ and the end of the world. A little reflection, however, must soon convince us that this is a wrong impression. Let the reader realize to himself the actual state of the book at this period of the prophecy. It may be represented by the following diagram :—



Here, it will be observed that the seventh seal remaining unbroken, the book also continues unrolled, and not *one line* of the writing within consequently can be read. Now, in whatever light we regard this book, whether as a book of prophecy or as a covenant deed, this circumstance seems to me quite conclusive against the assumption that the day of judgment is the subject of the sixth seal. For is it to be supposed for a moment that the final consummation of all things would be thus symbolically exhibited to the apostle before the book itself could be *opened at all*, or one syllable of its inner contents be read? I think then we may assume it as an incontrovertible point that none of the events of this seal can be *subsequent* to those which take place under the seventh seal. Whatever may be the events here foretold, this I think is certain, that they precede in order of time those which take place under the seventh seal. If this principle be once departed from, we open a door for the exercise of the imagination which must involve everything in doubt and uncertainty.

But if the day of judgment be not the subject of this

seal, what is? There is not, as I trust I shall be able to show, so much difficulty in giving a satisfactory reply to this inquiry as might at first sight appear. Let the reader consider,—

1st. The chronological position which this seal occupies. According to the view given of the five preceding seals, the fifth seal brought us to the close of the Heathen persecutions, *i.e.*, to the year 313. Now, regarding the successive loosing of the seals as intended to show the gradual process by which Christ would take possession of the redeemed earth, it follows that the events of the sixth seal must commence about the period just mentioned. The date of the seal then being thus in a manner determined for us, let us consider,—

2dly. The imagery employed to signify the things which would take place under it. By a figure not unfrequently used in Scripture, the whole Roman empire is considered as a universe, having its sky, sun, moon, and stars; its seas also, and dry land, its islands, rivers, &c., the former representing the seat of government and the ruling powers, the latter the people at large. We find the same figures employed Isaiah xiii. 10 and Ezek. xxii. 7. Now the apostle is supposed to be contemplating this symbolical universe, when suddenly, on the opening of the sixth seal, that terrific change of scene takes place which is here described.

There was a great earthquake, *i.e.*, a convulsion of nature, as we should say; a great and general movement. The sun and moon were as in a moment eclipsed (for this is evidently the thing intended; they were not destroyed, they did not disappear altogether, but the sun was obscured, and the moon assumed that dull blood-red colour which it has when suffering an eclipse); and the

whole sky, the whole political heaven, all the authorities and official persons in Church and State (to use a modern phrase) seemed to disappear, as a roll or chart disappears when rolled together. The mountains and islands also were moved out of their places, and amidst these convulsions of nature St. John saw the inhabitants of the Roman world, high and low, rich and poor, hastening hither and thither in great terror, and calling upon the rocks and mountains to hide them from the face of him that sat upon the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.

Now, independently of the fact just mentioned, namely, that the seventh seal still remained unloosed, what is there here that accords with the representations given elsewhere of the day of judgment? Are the dead raised? Is any throne of judgment placed? Is the Lord revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire? Is the earth burnt up? Are the righteous pronounced blessed, the wicked punished? Is there, in short, any one thing described as seen or done which we are told will be seen and done in that great day when the Lord shall sit on the throne of his glory and all nations shall be gathered before him? True it is said, "There was a great earthquake;" but do we not read in c. xvi. 17 of a far *greater*, and how then can this be identical with that? and if not identical, can it be the last? * True there are some who are represented as crying out in terror, "Hide us from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of his wrath is come." But are these concomitants of the day of judgment? Will there be any

* I would direct the reader's especial attention to this circumstance. It seems to me sufficient of itself to refute every scheme which assumes that the events of the sixth seal belong to the judgment-day.

attempt then made to escape the righteous retribution of the Lord? Besides, who are these that proclaim that the day of the Lamb's wrath is come? Is it the Church? Is it those who afterwards, when the seventh angel sounds, speak, saying, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ?" No, nothing of the kind. There is no voice from heaven, no universal hallelujah, as in c. xix., announcing and celebrating the arrival of their King, but a cry only of his enemies, who *suppose* from what they see around them that that day must be at hand.

But how then are these things to be interpreted? There is really no difficulty whatever in the explanation of them. An earthquake, in the symbolical language of prophecy, is a revolution, a change in the government of the world whether ecclesiastical or political; it may be either, as circumstances indicate. What, therefore, is here foretold is a great revolution, an entire change in the government and in the political and civil aspect of the Roman world, and that by the instrumentality of the Christian religion. For the cry, "Hide us from the wrath of the Lamb," shows that it is the enemies of Christ that speak, and that their discomfiture and removal from the seat of power are the subject of the prediction. And did then anything of this kind take place about the period before mentioned? A rapid survey of the state of the Roman Empire, and of that remarkable change which took place in it at the commencement of the fourth century, will afford the best answer to this inquiry.

At the period just mentioned the empire of Rome was divided into two grand divisions, the eastern and the western, and was governed by two chief independent

rulers, called Augusti. The name of the one of these was Constantine, of the other Licinius.* In the first instance both of these were Pagans. In fact, everything when Constantine came to the Imperial throne was Pagan. The emperors themselves, the magistrates, the generals were Pagan. The temples, the priests, and all the ministers and all the rites and ordinances of religion were Pagan. The people, as a body, were Pagan, and devoted to Pagan rites and superstitions. The laws and statutes of the empire also were Pagan, being based on the principles of Heathen religion and morality. So that, although Christianity had at this time spread far and wide, and pervaded more or less all ranks and classes of men, yet it was no more the religion of the Roman Empire than it is of the empire of China at this day. Such then were the circumstances under which Constantine ascended the Imperial throne of the West. But although by profession a Heathen, he was not an enemy to Christianity. His father, Constantius, had shown favour to the Christians, and Constantine himself had always treated them with kindness. It was not, however, until the year 316 that he openly declared in their favour. The circumstances which led to his conversion are related by Eusebius, who was admitted to familiar intercourse with him, and wrote his life. Having stated that Constantine, being about to engage in an arduous war against the tyrant Maxentius, and being dissatisfied with Polytheism, had prayed to God that he would reveal himself to him, and teach him the true religion, he proceeds thus: "Whilst the Emperor was thus earnestly praying to God, a Divine

* I pass over here the previous contests between Constantine and his other opponents, Maximin and Maxentius, as they will more properly come under consideration in the exposition of c. xii.

and wonderful vision appeared to him, which would be scarcely credible if he himself had not related it. But seeing that this victorious Emperor did with an oath confirm it to be true, when he related it to me, intending to write his history, long after when taking notice of me he admitted me to familiar conference with him, who can doubt the truth of his relation? When the sun had reached his meridian height, so that it was a little past noon, he said that he beheld the sign of a cross vividly figured in the air, or sky, with an inscription in it containing these words,—‘*In hoc vince*’ (By this conquer). And that he himself and his whole army, which was marching with him, wondered at so strange a prodigy.”*

He adds, that Constantine being perplexed in his mind, and unable to understand the meaning of the vision, as he was thinking on what he had seen, fell asleep, when Christ appeared to him with the former sign of the cross, and commanded him to make a figure like it and bear it in his banner whenever he went to battle. From this time then Constantine may be regarded as the champion of Christianity, and Licinius and his coadjutors as the champions of Heathenism. A contest of some years’ duration was carried on between them, which terminated

* “Life of Constantine,” lib. i., c. 22. Most modern writers affect to treat this story with contempt, as being either a pious fraud (query, if a fraud at all, ought we not to say *impious*?) on the part of the Emperor, or a pure invention of Eusebius. But, considering the extraordinary revolution Constantine was destined to effect, I cannot see why we should *à priori* doubt the fact any more than the appearance of the angel with the drawn sword to Joshua when about to take possession of Canaan. I do not mean, of course, that the two narratives rest upon equal authority; but that the two events connected with both miraculous appearances were of equal importance must, I think, be at once admitted. The conversion of the Roman empire to Christianity was not a less important event than the conquest of Canaan.

in the final and complete triumph of the former. Now, whatever may have been the personal character and private motives of Constantine, that this was not *merely* a contest for political power, but a contest in which religion was greatly concerned; a contest, in fact, between Paganism and Christianity, is evident from a speech of Licinius addressed to his soldiers previous to their engaging with the army of Constantine. This speech is recorded by Eusebius, and is so remarkable a one, and so strikingly illustrative of this portion of the Apocalypse, that I am induced to give the greater part of it. I do not think my readers will require any apology for its insertion. Having, the historian tells us, called his friends and principal officers into a place *esteemed by them sacred*, in which were many images of the gods, according to the custom, and *having lighted up wax candles* and offered the usual sacrifices, he thus addressed them:—

“My friends and companions in arms, these are our country’s gods, whom both we and our ancestors have long religiously worshipped. But he whom we are going to engage, blinded by error, in violation of the laws of his country, worships a strange god under whose banner he intends to fight, and in the confidence of whose assistance he intends to make war, NOT ONLY AGAINST US, BUT AGAINST OUR GODS. Now, therefore, it will appear which of us is in error. For if we obtain the victory, then we shall know that it is our gods that have assisted and preserved us; but if Constantine’s god give him the victory, seeing that we are so many more than he, then may we indeed with reason think that his god is the true god, and then shall we forsake for ever these gods to whose honour we have lighted

these tapers, and give to Constantine's god the honour due to him."*

Thus spoke the champion of Paganism. The result is soon told. Victory after victory attended the standard of Constantine, until at length, in the year 323, Constantine became sole Emperor, and Christianity was firmly established as the religion of the empire. And now, therefore, everything was changed. The temples of the Heathen gods were pulled down, and Christian churches rose in their places. Christians were appointed generals, magistrates, and provincial governors. And idolatrous rites and sacrifices, though not peremptorily prohibited, were gradually and silently abolished.† In short, the empire was altogether transformed. The cross was everywhere exalted, and Heathenism was everywhere cast down to the ground.

And was not this, indeed, a GREAT EARTHQUAKE? A great religious and political movement? sufficiently great to justify the language here employed in describing it? Was not the glory of the Heathen heavens then eclipsed? Was not its *sun darkened*, and did not all its *stars*, its princes, its priests, its captains and rulers, fall from their high places, the sky of their exaltation where they once shone so brightly, to the earth? For, let me remind the reader, that in contemplating the imagery of this prophecy we must divest our minds of all narrow personal views. We must not think of Constantine, or any other individual, as specifically referred to; but we must regard the thing abstractedly; not as an historical

* Life of Constantine, lib. ii., c. 5.

† Eusebius says, "that he made Christians the governors of provinces, and prohibited those who were not Christians from sacrificing to idols." — *Life of Constantine*, lib. ii., c. 43.

narrative, but as a highly wrought symbolical, dramatic representation of the expulsion of Heathenism from the Roman empire, and the establishment of Christianity in its stead. Viewed in this light, the terror which is described as seizing upon “the kings of the earth, and the rich and the great men, and their calling upon the rocks to hide them,” &c., presents no difficulty. It has, indeed, been objected, that as Constantine did not employ force to compel men to become Christians, such language as the above is not suitable in the mouths of the Heathen with reference to their condition under his reign. But ought we to look for strict matter-of-fact accuracy in a symbolical representation like this? As well might we maintain that in order to justify St. Paul’s language in Rom. viii. 23, we ought to hear the groans and travailing cries of the creation. All that we can look for, and all that is ever intended in such cases is, that events corresponding in their general character with the prefigurations are taking, or will take place. And might not the worshippers of idols, and especially the priests of the idol-temples, well be represented as in a state of perturbation and dismay when they saw their temples in ruins, their idols dashed in pieces, and the sacrifices they had been accustomed to offer to them forbidden by the edict of a mortal man? And might they not well dread the wrath of him whose word they had treated with contempt, whose followers they had hated and persecuted, and whose Deity they had denied?*

A calm and attentive consideration of all these circum-

* Eusebius intimates that this was literally the case with Licinius. “Afterwards,” says he, “when Licinius understood the great and unspeakable power of the cross, he commanded his soldiers that they should not fight against it, nor look towards it.”—*Life of Constantine*, lib. ii., c. 16.

stances, must, I think, convince us that there is nothing overstrained or exaggerated in this act of the Divine drama, in which such persons are seen hiding themselves in terror, and calling upon the mountains and rocks to “screen them from the wrath of the Lamb.”*

CHAPTER VII. 1—8.

BEFORE entering upon the subject of this chapter, I would remind my readers that the seventh seal yet remains UNLOOSED. This is a point which has not, I think, been sufficiently attended to by the generality of commentators. It seems to me to be intended plainly to intimate that the contents of this chapter are not a continuation of the prophetic narrative, but *retrospective* and *supplementary*, carrying us back to the first opening of the seals, in order to bring before us some important circumstances in the condition of the Church, and thus filling up what was wanting to complete the prophetic history. For such, it will be found on a careful examination, is the structure of this wonderfully accurate and methodical book. It contains, in fact, throughout, a double narrative, the one ecclesiastic and secular, the other purely ecclesiastical; the one, being the

* If the reader should still entertain any doubts as to the correctness of the foregoing interpretation of the sixth seal, I would have him refer to the twelfth chapter, where he will find the same event foretold under somewhat different imagery, and where, in the notes, he will find further historical information given on the subject. I would also have him compare Isaiah xiii. 9—13, and Ezek. xxxii. 7, in both of which places he will find the overthrow of an earthly kingdom presignified under the same terrific imagery as that which is here employed.

history of the world in connexion with the Church, the other, that of the Church alone. And thus the history is divided, in a manner, into separate chapters, running in distinct parallel columns; the secular being given first, and the ecclesiastical, or, rather, spiritual, afterwards. This is so important a principle of interpretation, that I hope the reader will not be impatient if I endeavour to develope it a little more fully.

Assuming, then, that the seals, the trumpets, and the vials are chronologically consecutive,* *i.e.*, that the events of the seals precede those of the trumpets, and the events of the trumpets those of the vials, it will be found, that after the prophetic history, according to this scheme, has proceeded to a certain point, it seems to stop short and is broken off; and other events, which in some instances are clearly not a continuation of the historic chain, are introduced. Thus, in the present instance, the first six seals having been opened in succession, and the history, having been carried on up to this point in a series of symbolic acts and representations, here stops short; and the agents appointed to carry on the future acts of the drama, are told to wait and give time for the representation of something which had been omitted, or, rather, could not be introduced in the former scenery. So, after the first six trumpets have sounded, and the ecclesiastico-secular history has

* Although I speak of the seals, &c. being consecutive, I do not mean by this that each seal, and each vial, &c., must follow the other at regular intervals. The manner in which the symbols belonging to the four first seals were brought before the eye of the apostle, implies rather that they would be contemporaneous. And so it will be seen hereafter that the four first trumpets and the four first vials, if not strictly contemporaneous, follow each other in quick succession, and combine to bring about one result.

proceeded without interruption up to that point, the narrative again breaks off, and the episode, if I may so speak, follows of the angel standing on the earth and on the sea, and of the two witnesses. Again, after the seventh angel has sounded, and the anticipatory song of triumph has brought us to the consummation of all things, the prophetic narrative once more *goes back*, and beginning from the beginning, fills up by a variety of important communications what was wanting to make the history complete.

With these preliminary remarks, I proceed to the interpretation of the passage before us. The terrific occurrences of the sixth seal having passed away, and the earth and the sky being restored to their usual appearance, proving surely, that they had not been burnt up by the fire of the last day,—the apostle saw four angels, or messengers of God's wrath, standing at the four extremities of the Roman world, holding the four winds, and restraining them from blowing upon the earth, the sea, and the trees; and he saw another angel coming *up from the east*, having the seal of the living God in his hand; and he heard him cry with a loud voice to the four angels who stood prepared to let loose the tempestuous winds upon the earth, to continue to restrain the winds until he had sealed the servants of God in their foreheads.

Now let me here again remind the reader, that St. John had not future events related to him as in a narrative, but he had them acted out before him as in a drama, in a series of symbolical representations. The Revelation, indeed, as regards this third part of it, may be described as a prophetic history, conveyed in a series of living pictures, with a few explanatory words inter-

dispersed here and there to assist in the interpretation of them. What, then, means the picture now presented? I think that these four angels are here introduced solely to show that there is a break in the prophetic narrative. The blowing of the four winds is to be the next symbolic act in carrying on continuously the prophetic history, but the angels of the winds are directed to restrain them until another act specifically mentioned has been performed. The other act, therefore, must be prior to the blowing of the four winds, and must be done *during the time that the events of the preceding seals are in the course of fulfilment*.* Let this position be well considered, for much depends upon it. I wish nothing to be taken for granted without proof. I would have every assertion, and every position well weighed, and thoroughly sifted.

Let it then be observed, that *winds* signify, symbolically, hostile armies, which, passing through a country like furious hurricanes, ravage it, and leave ruin and desolation behind them. These ravages the apostle was about to have presented to him, but previously he is to have his mind cheered and refreshed by a view of the state of the Church, and the progress of the Gospel amongst both Jews and Gentiles, but more especially the latter, during the three preceding centuries. This act, therefore, of the angel's restraining the winds, has no

* Daubuz well remarks: "A third mistake of his (Mede's) is this, that he has thought that the visions of the seventh chapter, which consist of the sealed servants, and palm-bearing company, belong to different periods, so that with him the first servants belong to the times of the trumpets, and the palm-bearers to the millennium. But all this is false, for the whole belongs properly as it is placed, to the sixth seal, and the promises there made in the future, are such as are accomplished at the opening of the seventh seal."—*Com. in loco*.

reference to any *events* between the close of the sixth and the opening of the seventh seals ; (I do not see how it can, for it is a purely negative act), but only to the *thread of the prophecy*, which is here broken off, and not resumed until the seventh seal is opened, so that the whole of this chapter, like chapter x. and part of chapter xi., may be considered as a sort of episode,—a break in the action of the drama,—intended, as was before said, to supply some important information which had been omitted. And important, truly, and deeply interesting is that information. Seeing that the angel of death, bringing with him slaughter by war, persecution, famine, and pestilence, was to go forth upon the Roman earth, almost at the same time that the Lord, by the word of the Gospel, would go forth conquering and to conquer, St. John might well be anxious to know what would be the internal condition of the Church at this period, and what progress Christianity would be making in the conversion and salvation of both Jews and Gentiles. This, then, is what is now made known to him. He sees an angel ascending from the east, putting *a seal* upon the servants of the living God, to mark them out and distinguish them from their fellow-men as his. Now this angel is unquestionably the Lord Jesus Christ, and the seal is the Holy Spirit, by whose gracious transforming influences the Divine image is restored to the soul, and believers are sealed “until the day of redemption.” (Ephes. i. 13 ; iv. 30.) The import of this symbolical act, therefore, is obvious. Its object is to show not only that “the Lord knoweth those that are his,” but to make known to the apostle, and through him to the Church, the result, not merely ecclesiastically and externally, but as regards the spiritual condition

and eternal salvation of men ; to show, I say, the result, in the highest sense of the words, of the preaching of the Gospel during the period to which the first six seals have reference. And here then comes the grand inquiry, namely, as to who these sealed ones are ? The questions connected with this inquiry are : 1. Whether these sealed ones from the twelve tribes are to be understood of the literal or spiritual Israel ; 2. Whether the sealing extends to all who are mentioned in this chapter, or only to the one hundred and forty-four thousand Israelites. Most commentators, considering this act of sealing to be *prospective*, intended not to mark out, but to *preserve* the sealed from the judgments that were coming upon the earth, identify these sealed ones with the one hundred and forty-four thousand in chap. xv., and consequently confine the sealing to the twelve tribes, which they think represent the spiritual Israel, the "remnant according to the election of grace," who were to be preserved during the coming apostasy. I have before stated my reasons for thinking that this sealing must have reference to something supposed to be already past, and not to anything future, and I will now explain why I would understand the names of the twelve tribes literally, and also why I would extend the sealing to the innumerable multitude afterwards mentioned.

With regard then to the first point, if it had been said merely, "There were sealed of all the tribes of Israel one hundred and forty-four thousand," I should have been inclined to think, that as the word *Jews* in the Epistles to the Churches is put figuratively for believers, so the expression, the tribes of Israel, might be employed figuratively here. But the specification by name of the several tribes, in conjunction with other circumstances, appears

to me to be an intimation that the account of this sealing is to be viewed almost in the light of an historical record. The apostle did not see the angel going through all the tribes of Israel and sealing them ; but he heard the number of the sealed proclaimed. And the manner in which this is related, just as in c. xx., where we have the first resurrection described, seems to me to imply, that what we read is to be understood in a literal sense. The symbolic style and language is dropped, and that of matter-of-fact narrative is adopted. My own impression therefore is, that this transaction is intended to show how small would be the number of converts from amongst the Jews up to the period of the final establishment of Christianity in the empire, and then that even individual conversions would cease altogether. The number, one hundred and forty-four thousand, indeed, taken by itself is a large number, and we might hence be led at a first glance to draw an inference exactly the reverse of that just stated ; but when it is considered that all the tribes of Israel comprised many millions, and that this number of the sealed relates to a period of three hundred years, it is obviously a very small number.

It will be observed that the names of two of the tribes, Dan and Ephraim, are omitted. Various reasons have been assigned for this omission, but none of them are, to my mind, satisfactory. It has been said that both these tribes were leaders in idolatry, and that this is probably the reason why their names do not appear. But although this might account for the substitution of Joseph for Ephraim, does it account for the omission of Dan altogether ? Vitringa argues from this circumstance, that the names of the tribes must necessarily

have a mystical bearing, since it is not to be conceived that all the members of any one tribe would be excluded altogether from the benefits of Christ's redemption, although he admits the great difficulty of giving anything like a satisfactory explanation of the omission. I should rather say, that this circumstance shows that the names of the tribes are to be understood *literally*; because it is only by regarding this as a literal matter-of-fact statement, that we can assign any good reason for it. In that case, a reason at once suggests itself: either the tribe of Dan had ceased to exist, and therefore there could be none sealed from it; or, having been greatly addicted to idolatry, there were none of God's people found in it. On either of these matter-of-fact grounds, but, as it appears to me, on no other, may the omission be accounted for.*

As to the second question, whether the sealing extends to the great multitude which no man could number afterwards seen by the apostle, I think there can be no doubt it does. That is to say, this great multitude must be regarded as sealed ones, as well as the hundred and forty-four thousand. For, although there is no express mention of their being sealed, yet the manner in which the vision opens—with an intimation, that is, that the continuous history was about to be interrupted, in

* It may be objected, that if the names of the tribes are to be taken literally, so must the numbers sealed. And I would answer, Why not? We know that the number of elect Jews must be a definite number, and that that number, whatever it may be, was known to and determined by God. And why, then, should it not be exactly *twelve* thousand from every tribe, just as it was exactly *seven* thousand in the days of Elijah? It is our not knowing the power of God, and the perfectness of his foreknowledge, and the exactitude of his arrangements, which creates our doubts in these cases.

order that an account may be given of those who were to have this seal of the living God put upon them, implies, that all those who are afterwards mentioned had received the impress of this seal. In fact, the whole vision is manifestly one; and the great multitude which no man could number, make eventually but one company with the definite number of the hundred and forty-four thousand. But who then are this great multitude? Who can they be but the members of the Church of the three first centuries who are now brought before the eye of the apostle celebrating their victory over their cruel foes and persecutors? For it may be observed here, as with reference to the souls under the altar, that this passage is to be viewed, not as a doctrinal statement, but as a symbolic prophecy, intended to show to St. John and his fellow-servants the results of the preaching of the Gospel amongst Jews and Gentiles during the period just mentioned. For I cannot agree with those commentators who would identify the hundred and forty-four thousand of this chapter with that company amounting to the same number in c. xiv. It seems to me that the contradistinction between the limited number of one hundred and forty-four thousand and the multitude *without* number, implies a similar contradistinction between the individuals of whom these companies are respectively composed; and that if the one be composed literally of every nation, and kindred, and tongue, the other must be composed literally of Jews alone.

But what then is the general import of this sealing and palm-bearing vision? It is, as has already been intimated, to foreshow the purposes of God in regard to his ancient people, in connexion with the progress of the Gospel and the establishment of the Christian

Church. As a Jew, St. John would be anxious to know what would become of his own people, his kinsmen in the flesh, after the Gospel should have been preached to all nations. He would naturally inquire, Will they in time all be converted, or will the great body of them still continue in unbelief? And if so, will they cease at length to exist altogether, and their very name be blotted out? Now this vision answers all these inquiries. It shows that the number of God's elect from amongst the Jews, in the first instance, would be comparatively small; but it shows, notwithstanding, that they would still be preserved a separate people, for the express purpose, as it afterwards appears, of performing a conspicuous and important part in building up and completing the Church of God. For we have no further mention of the tribes of Israel, or anything relating to them, until we come to the vision of the twenty-first chapter, where we are told that the names which were written on the gates of the new Jerusalem were the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. Now this circumstance, which will be more fully commented upon in its proper place, plainly intimates that the twelve tribes will exist at that period of the prophetic history, since they will constitute not only a part of the Church, but the very gates of entrance to it.

The apostle then could not fail to understand the general import of this vision, as regarded his own kinsmen. He could not fail to see in these hundred and forty-four thousand that "remnant according to the election of grace" spoken of by St. Paul (Rom. xi. 5), which God had reserved to himself from amongst his ancient people. Nor could he very well be at a loss to comprehend the meaning of the corresponding great

multitude. It would seem indeed as if at first he was at a loss to understand who they were and whence they came. For when the elder asked him for information concerning them, instead of replying to his question, his answer was, "Sir, THOU knowest." As if he had said, "I have rather need to be instructed on this point by thee, than thou by me; tell me therefore who they are." But why was this? What means this dialogue between St. John and the elder, and that too on a subject in regard to which we might suppose the former could need no information? This is a point not touched upon, that I am aware of, by any commentator; but I am inclined to think that this little circumstance, like every other in this remarkable book, has a meaning, and that by no means an unimportant one. The question, let it be observed, is, why St. John should be represented as being ignorant who this palm-bearing multitude clothed in white robes were, especially seeing that, as I suppose, they had the impress of the seal of the living God on their foreheads? Now, the meaning of this circumstance I take to be this: St. John here, as he does indeed throughout the Apocalypse, evidently sustains the character of a symbolic person. He looks upon the scene before him, and speaks, not as an individual, as the Apostle John, but as the representative of a body;* and that body he here represents is, I conceive, the ancient Jewish Church. Just as in c. v. 4, he looked and acted as the representative of mankind. The attendant circumstances in both cases indicate the character he sustains. For as there

* This is the view also of Mr. Elliott and other commentators, and cannot, I think, be disputed. (See c. v. 4; x. 8.)

he wept as man's representative that man should remain unredeemed, so here, as the representative of the ancient Jewish Church, he requires to be instructed in that mystery which, in the language of St. Paul, had been "hid from ages and generations," "that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ." (Ephes. iii. 1, 2; Col. i. 26.) In this character, then, it is that he applies to the elder for information; and since these elders represent probably the heads of the twelve tribes and the twelve apostles, will it be considered a mere groundless fancy if we recognise in the elder who gives the answer the one great apostle of us Gentiles? Viewed in this light, the meaning of the colloquy between St. John and the elder becomes plain. John, as the representative of the ancient Jewish Church, is surprised to see an innumerable multitude, composed of individuals of every nation, standing before the throne of God, intermingled with the hundred and forty-four thousand sealed ones from the tribes of Israel, and participating in all their privileges and all their blessedness. I say, he looks with surprise upon the spectacle, and is at a loss to comprehend it. For we know how strongly opposed the Jews as a body were to the admission of Gentiles to their privileges, and how slow even the apostles were to understand and receive the fact that such was the purpose of God. John needed, therefore, in the above character, an instructor in this mystery, and such an one he found in the elder. He was told that those who now stood before the throne of God as justified, righteous persons, were those who had been made righteous, not by the works of the law, not by any inherent righteousness of their own, but by

the atoning blood and justifying righteousness of Christ : “ they had washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb ; ” and therefore, although Gentiles, they were found amongst the redeemed of the Lord, being sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, even as the others. (Comp. Acts x. 44—47.)

Thus far, then, all is clear. But how shall we, in accordance with this hypothesis, explain the description given of the blessedness of these palm-bearers ? Is it not the final blessedness of the righteous which is here described ? And if so, how does this consist with the idea that the leading feature in the vision is the internal history of the Church during the first three centuries, concluding with its triumph over Heathenism ? But is not this assuming the very point that ought first to be proved ? Is it so clear that the *final* state of blessedness is that which is here described ? I think not. In the forty-ninth chapter of Isaiah (ver. 9), we meet with language almost identical with this, and that, too, in connexion with the same subject, the casting away of the Jews and the bringing in of the Gentiles, and yet the prophet is describing not the final blessedness of the righteous, but the privileges and blessings of the Gospel dispensation. Let the reader mark the correspondence between the language of the prophet and that of the apostle, bearing in mind that the subject is the first advent of Christ and the blessings of the Gospel covenant:—

“ They shall feed in the ways,

“ And their pasture shall be in all high places.

“ 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.”

Now here the parallelism is complete. The only thing wanting is the clause respecting the wiping away of all tears. But this, too, we find in a similar connexion in c. xxxv.* There is no necessity, therefore, for applying this description to the final state of blessedness. Rather, the marked discrepancies between this description and that in c. xxi., show that the states described are not the same.† And what, then, is the direct bearing of this vision? What mean these palms and white robes, and the song of triumph, and the detailed blessedness? Surely they all prefigure one and the same thing—viz., the sudden, great, and unlooked-for triumph of the Church over its enemies, after the last deadly, and, as it was supposed, destructive assault in the days of Dioclesian. This was *the* great tribulation—the tribulation foretold in the epistle to the Church of Smyrna (see c. ii. 10), out of which these palm-bearers had come. And therefore have they the palm-branch, the emblem of victory, in their hands, and white robes, the symbol of innocence and legal justification, for their attire. Their accuser, “which had accused them night and day, is cast down.” (c. xii. 11.) His charges have been proved false, and all his wicked machinations defeated, and being cleared from guilt in the sight of men and angels, they are clothed with robes of innocence, and sing the song of victory.

* In the poem of Lactantius, also, to his treatise on the “Deaths of the Persecutors,” we have these identical words. Speaking of the peace which followed on the accession of Constantine, he says: “Now hath God wiped away the tears of the mourners, having destroyed the combination of the wicked.” *Deus—nunc mærentium lacrymas, extinctâ impiorum conspiratione, detersit.*—De Mort. Per., c. i.

† Among other differences, there is this in particular: *here*, the righteous are before the throne of God; *there*, God comes and dwells amongst them.

Summary of the Sealing and Palm-bearing Vision.

This vision, then, embraces two grand leading subjects in the internal history of the Church, the first relating to the Jews, and the second to the Gentiles. With respect to the former, it shows that the number of believers amongst them, even in the infancy of the Church, would be comparatively small, and that that small number being completed before the opening of the seventh seal,—*i.e.*, before the middle of the fourth century,—they would from that period as a body be rejected altogether, and conversions from amongst them entirely cease. With respect to the latter, the vision plainly foretels the conversion and salvation of a multitude innumerable. It assumes that whilst the sword of persecution would be slaying its victims by thousands, the Lord, by his word and by his Spirit (for he is both the rider on the white horse and the angel from the east, having the seal of the living God), would be gathering in his elect from amongst all nations, and adding to the Church daily such as should be saved.

FULFILMENT.

That the foregoing prophecy thus interpreted was to the letter fulfilled, is too much a matter of notoriety to require any laboured proof. According to our Lord's directions, the apostles, when they went forth to preach in his name "repentance and the remission of sins," began at Jerusalem. (Luke xxiv. 47.) And in the first instance they preached not in vain. Multitudes of Jews became obedient to the word, and being converted, received the Holy Spirit of promise. But

after the lapse of a few years their number continually and rapidly diminished, until at length, in 133, as we have already seen, the primitive Judæo-Christian Church ceased to exist. But just in proportion as the number of converts from amongst the Jews decreased, that of the Gentiles increased; and when at length there was no Church that could be called Jewish, or any which contained in it any converts from Judaism, then were these Gentile Churches scattered all over the earth, and the multitude of true spiritual believers in them, we may confidently hope, immensely great—literally without number. “Who,” says Eusebius, “can suitably describe those *innumerable crowds* and thronging multitudes throughout all the cities who frequent the places dedicated to prayer.”* And even two centuries earlier than the period to which Eusebius refers, had Pliny, the Roman Proconsul of Bythinia, complained to his Imperial master “that the temples were *desolated*, and the victims could find no purchasers;”† so widely was the new religion spread, and so firm a hold had it taken on the minds of the Heathen. It is impossible, indeed, for us to form, I believe, an adequate conception of the vast multitudes from amongst the Gentiles who, during the three first centuries, were translated from the kingdom of Satan into that of God’s dear Son. They were truly “a great multitude, which no man could number.” And a consolatory reflection it is, in contemplating the corruptions of the Church in after-times, that we have scriptural ground for entertaining the hope that so vast a company of true believers had previously been brought to glory.

* Hist., l. viii., c. i.

† Pliny’s Let., l. x., epis. 97.

CHAPTER VIII. 1—6.

Programme of the Seventh Seal.

Upon the opening of the seventh seal there was silence (a perfect stillness) in the heavens, or symbolic sky, for about the space of half an hour. During this silence, or firmamental stillness, the following transactions took place: First, the apostle saw seven trumpets given to seven angels, which were standing before God. Then another angel, with a golden censer in his hand, came and stood before the altar of incense, and much incense being given to him, he presented it, with the prayers of *all the saints* upon the altar which was before the throne, and the apostle saw the smoke of the incense ascend before God as an acceptable offering out of the angel's hand. After this, the angel took the censer, which was now emptied of the incense, and filled it with fire from the altar, and the apostle saw him cast this fire down upon the earth. On this there followed loud and awful sounds, as the voices of those that speak in anger, accompanied by thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake.

Now there are five points here which demand distinct and specific consideration. 1st, The half-hour's silence; 2d, The giving of the trumpets; 3d, The incense-offering of the angel with the golden censer; 4th, The casting down of fire from the altar on the earth; 5th, The voices, thunderings, &c., which followed. I would ask the reader's accurate consideration of these points.

But first let me call attention to a peculiarity in the construction of the Apocalypse, before noticed, of considerable importance to the right understanding of the book which now for the first time presents itself. The

peculiarity to which I refer is this, that upon the opening of the seventh seal, and the sounding of the seventh trumpet, and the outpouring of the seventh vial, we have given us a sort of programme or epitome of the events to happen under that seal, or trumpet, or vial, and which are afterwards about to be acted out in detail. To be convinced of the truth and importance of this remark, it will be sufficient only just to glance at the *immediate* results in each case which follow respectively the acts referred to. On the opening of the seventh seal the transactions contained in the first six verses of the chapter take place. But that these verses are only the *programme* of the prophecy contained under the seventh seal is almost self-evident. There is nothing specific, nothing like prophetic *details* in them. And yet that the general prophecy,—I refer especially to the prophetic intimations in the fifth verse, in which the effects of the altar-fire cast upon the earth are described,—I say, that these general prophetic intimations relate to the whole period of the seventh seal *up to the time* of the sounding of the seventh trumpet, but *not beyond* it, is manifest from hence, that the very first act performed after the seventh seal is loosed, is the giving of the trumpets to the seven angels. Hence I think it is beyond controversy clear that all that follows until the first trumpet sounds is but a general programme of the events which would ensue after their sounding.

So when the *seventh trumpet* is sounded (c. xi. 15—19), we have, in the first instance, no details of the woe connected with this trumpet, but we have a triumphant song of God's servants rejoicing in the establishment of his kingdom upon earth; and then there follow, as in this place, lightnings, and thunderings, and an

earthquake, with the addition of great hail; showing that these five verses are but the programme or epitome of the prophetic announcements of the seventh trumpet.

Again, upon the outpouring of the seventh vial, we have a similar condensed programme of the events to happen under it, which events are minutely and fully acted out afterwards in detail in the eighteenth and nineteenth chapters.

Now, I would earnestly recommend this peculiarity to the reader's most attentive consideration. Let him convince himself of its reality and truth by a careful examination of the places to which I have referred. We will now proceed to the consideration of this programme of the seventh seal.

1. The first point to be determined is the meaning of the half-hour's silence. That this intimates a period of repose from the wars, tumults, and slaughter, and political convulsions, which followed the opening of the five former seals, is so natural and obvious an interpretation, that I think it must at once approve itself to the mind of every unprejudiced person. The *firmamental*, or *atmospheric stillness* which now prevailed was manifestly emblematic of a time of great peace following upon a period of war and disturbance. The only two points, it appears to me, on which any question can be raised, are, when this silence begins, and how long it lasts. But that this silence begins from the moment of the opening of the seventh seal, and therefore immediately after the closing of the sixth, is to my mind perfectly clear. "And when he had opened the seventh seal," says the apostle, "there was (ἐγένετο) silence in heaven." The silence, therefore,

was simultaneous with the loosing of the seal, or rather, it was immediately consequent upon it.*

The other point is one of more difficulty. It might, perhaps, be deemed sufficient to say, that the half-hour signifies a *very short* period; but I am inclined to think that it has a more definite meaning. For this half-hour's silence, it should be observed, was not a period *announced prophetically*, like the duration of the locust-woe, or any other of the prophetic periods in this book, but it was a period which actually transpired. There *was* this solemn stillness for the space of half an hour, this pause in the action of the drama, and the entranced apostle was conscious of the pause, and judged the space it occupied to be about that time. The duration of this half-hour, therefore, must be computed according to the duration of the whole prophetic vision. That is to say, reckoning the period of the whole vision as occupying one day of twelve hours long, then the half-hour will be the twenty-fourth part of the whole; and, consequently, supposing the whole period of time involved in the prophecy to be two thousand years, or somewhat less, then the half-hour will answer to the space of about

* It is truly astonishing that a mind so grammatically accurate as Mr. Elliott's should have allowed itself to be so biassed by a prepossession in favour of a particular theory as to give its assent to so forced and unnatural a translation as that which he proposes of this passage. He would render the verb in the pluperfect thus: "And when he opened the seventh seal *there had been* silence in heaven," &c.; as if the half-hour's silence had intervened between the close of the prophecy of the sixth and the commencement of that of the seventh seal. But the examples he adduces in favour of this forced rendering are by no means conclusive. Take, *e.g.*, John i. 10, "He was in the world, and the world *had been* made by him." (ἐγένετο δι' αὐτοῦ.) Surely the use of the pluperfect here involves a contradiction. The proper translation of ἐγένετο, supposing it to be a pluperfect, would be, "had existed," but this would imply that the world did not exist when our Lord came into it.

eighty years. This, then, either a little more or less (for the very phrasology employed shows that great exactitude is not intended), is, I imagine, the period during which we must assume the predicted cessation from civil strife and foreign invasion would last. And it may, perhaps, be as well, before proceeding further, to turn at once to the page of history, with a view to ascertain whether any political calm such as is here described did occur at the period to which we refer,—the opening of the seventh seal. Let it, then, be borne in mind, that the final overthrow of Licinius, the champion of Heathenism, took place in the year 323, and the death of Constantine, who from that period became sole Emperor, in 337. Now, how do contemporary historians describe the state of the empire during that period? Let us first hear the testimony of Eusebius :—

“These wicked men being taken away, and the power of tyranny extinguished, and THOSE TEMPESTUOUS CLOUDS WHICH HUNG OVER THE EARTH HAVING PASSED BY, THE WORLD NOW BEGAN TO ENJOY THE FAIR SUNSHINE OF PROSPERITY, and all those parts which were subject to the Roman Empire were united together, and became one body, of which the Emperor was the head and universal governor; and the new religion being exalted, spread abroad her bright beams to illuminate and give light to those that sat in darkness and the shadow of death. *So that all former miseries being forgotten*, men celebrated the praises of the conqueror in joyful hymns, ascribing glory to God; and whilst they rejoiced in their present felicity, they looked forward with confidence to its continuance.”*

* Life of Const., l. ii., c. xix, Saltostall's Translation, 1637.

Thus does Eusebius describe the state of the Roman Empire during the latter part of the reign of Constantine ; and is it not remarkable, that in describing the condition of the world at that period he should use language almost identical with that of St. John when speaking prophetically of the same period ?

The words of Lactantius on this subject are even still more striking,—

“The Lord,” says he, “hath heard thy prayers, my beloved Donatus, which every hour of the day thou pourest forth in his sight, and the prayers also of our other brethren, who by a glorious confession have sought for themselves an everlasting crown, according as their faith hath deserved. Now, the clouds of former times being dispersed, A CALM AND JOYFUL SERENITY gladdens the minds of all men. Now, after the furious hurricanes of so terrible a storm, the AIR IS AGAIN STILL, and the wished-for light hath shone forth. Now, God being appeased, hath lifted up his afflicted and prostrate servants with his heavenly help. Now, having brought to nought the combined attacks of impious men, he hath *wiped away the tears* of the mourners.”*

Thus do these two contemporary historians depict the times immediately succeeding that sudden and unlooked-for overthrow of Heathenism foretold under the sixth seal ; and so exactly do the figures and terms they employ

* I think it worth while, for the satisfaction of the reader, to give the words of the original : “ Audivit Dominus orationes tuas, Donate carissime, quas in conspectu ejus per omnes horas tota die fundis, cæterorumque fratrum nostrorum qui gloriosa confessione sempiternam sibi coronam pro fidei suæ meritis quesiverunt. Jam quasi discusso transacti temporis nubilo, mentes omnium pax jocunda et serena lætifiect. Nunc post tantæ tempestatis violentos turbines *placidus aer* et optata lux refulsit,” &c.—*De Mort. Pers.*, c. 1.

agree with those of the prophecy, that we might almost fancy they had it in their eye. It is certain, however, that neither Eusebius nor Lactantius thought at the time they were writing of the Apocalyptic vision, although had they been showing its fulfilment they could scarcely have found language more appropriate. But did this calm continue for the space of seventy or eighty years? No; nor were the things which the apostle saw whilst the half-hour's silence lasted calculated to convey the idea that it would. The various preliminary circumstances here introduced intimate, that although the great and terrific outburst of Divine wrath by which the firmamental stillness would at length be broken, would not take place until towards the expiration of the half-hour, yet *preparation* would be made for it some time previously, and there would be manifest indications of its approach. These preliminary circumstances we must now consider in the order before stated.

2. *The giving of the Trumpets.*—It should be observed that these trumpets were given to the angels in the sight of the apostle during the half-hour's silence, implying, I conceive, that although no trumpet-blast would be blown until the expiration of that prophetic period, events would occur too plainly premonitory of the judgment that would follow upon the blowing of the trumpets. But what mean these trumpets? What is their symbolic import viewed in connexion with the opening of the seventh seal? For we must never lose sight of the fact, that the sealed book is a covenant deed, and that the seventh and last seal being now loosed, the deed can be read; and now, consequently, is the time, we might suppose, when the right of the *Goel* to the redeemed inheritance should be publicly asserted and proclaimed.

And does not everything that took place on the loosing of that seal strictly accord with this idea, and wonderfully confirm the view we have taken of the sealed book? First, there is the half-hour's silence, just such as would occur in a crowded court after the last seal of an important document had been broken, and the clerk of the court was preparing to read aloud its contents. Thus is the Church represented as waiting in breathless expectation, as we say, to hear the covenant deed wherein its Lord's right to the redeemed earth is affirmed, proclaimed aloud.* Then there is the giving of the seven trumpets. Now, in order to the right understanding of this symbolic act, it may be proper to remind the reader of the uses of trumpets among the Jews. Trumpets, then, were employed by the express command of God on many occasions. They were used to call the Israelites to their solemn assemblies for worship or deliberation; to give the alarm in case of sudden danger; to collect the armies for battle, and to direct their marches. Trumpets were used also in seasons of gladness and festivity, and were blown over their burnt-offerings and sacrifices. (Numb. x. 1—10.) But the most interesting use of trumpets was on the occasion of the Jubilee, or year of release, when trumpets were blown throughout the land, and every man who had been sold into bondage returned to his own family, and every estate which had been alienated returned to the original possessor.† Now, in the

* This idea is not incompatible with the other view just taken of the half-hour's silence, because throughout this book we shall find that many of the symbols have thus a twofold application.

† "And thou shalt number seven Sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years. Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the Jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement

present instance, there is a reference, it may be, to all these uses of the trumpet, but the two most deserving of our notice as bearing most upon the point we are considering, are the declaration of war, and the announcement of the Jubilee.* Regarding the opening of the seven-sealed book as the act of the *Goel* claiming his right to the redeemed possession, there will be found to be a peculiar propriety in the delivery of these trumpets at this juncture, whether they be viewed as *war-trumpets*, or as *jubilee-trumpets*. For if as war-trumpets, then their delivery will imply a declaration of war against all who shall dispute the right of the Lamb to open the book and take possession of the inheritance; but if as jubilee-trumpets, then it will signify that the year of release is at hand, that the redemption of the purchased possession is about to be proclaimed, and that when all the seven trumpets shall have sounded, then will the ransomed world return to its original owner. And the subsequent prophecy shows, in fact, that the trumpets are to be regarded in this twofold light: the first six of them being war-trumpets, and bringing with them respectively, as each one is sounded, judgments upon those that "make war with the Lamb" (c. xvii. 13), and who "destroy the earth" (c. xi. 18); and the seventh announcing the

shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you, and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and every man unto his family."
—Lev. xxiii. 1—8.

* It is well remarked by Vitringa, that "those emblems which are employed in the Revelation are not simple, but of a mixed kind, and that allusion is made in them not to any one particular thing or rite of antiquity, but to many at once—*Non ad unam aliquam rem aut ritum singularem, sed ad plures simul alludi.*"—*Apoc. Exp.*, p. 330.

arrival of the great jubilee, the restoration of all the redeemed people of the Lord to the inheritance originally given to Adam, which having been forfeited by his transgression, is now recovered for them by the blood of the Lamb. (See c. xi. 15—18.) Such I take to be the import of the delivery of the trumpets just at this juncture,—an act, *the rationale* of which cannot be satisfactorily explained on the common hypothesis, that the seven-sealed book is a written book of prophecy, but the meaning and appropriateness of which, when that book is regarded as the covenant deed of redemption, becomes strikingly apparent.

3. The next point which demands attention is, the incense-offering of the angel with the golden censer. That this is no created angel, but the great “angel of the covenant” (Mal. iii. 1), is evident, from the simple fact that by him are presented the prayers of *all* the saints. For “there is but one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” And He is that great High Priest through whom alone we “come boldly to the throne of grace.” To suppose, then, that any other can be here intended, would be to contradict the universal tenor of the New Testament.* But why this incense-offering just at this time? Why is the Lord Jesus introduced to us at this epoch as presenting the prayers of the saints? It would seem to imply that the great fact of his sole mediatorship was beginning to be lost sight of, and that a disposition had arisen in the Church to substitute another mediator,

* Sir Isaac Newton states, that it was customary for any of the priests on other days to take fire in a *silver* censer from the great altar; but that on the great day of Atonement the High Priest did the same thing with a golden censer, which he alone used.—*Obs. on the Apoc.*, c. ii.

or other mediators, for him. It is difficult to explain this introduction of the Lord as the one great High Priest of his people on any other ground than that it is a prophetic warning against having recourse to other mediators, the very warning implying an attempt at their introduction. And was it then so? Had the Church even at this early period begun to mystify and nullify the fact of the oneness, sufficiency, and exclusiveness of Christ's priesthood and mediation? What reader of ecclesiastical history does not know that it had? Let two exemplifications suffice. Sulpitius Severus, an eminently holy man, and, as far as we can judge, a sincere Christian, writes thus towards the close of the fourth century, on the occasion of the death of the celebrated ascetic, Martin of Tours: "He will not, he will not fail us. He will be present with us when we discourse of him; he will stand by us when we pray; and that which he hath deigned to grant us to-day, that we should see him in his glory, he will often grant, and with his perpetual benediction he will protect us. This our only, our last hope remains, that what we cannot obtain ourselves, we may deserve through the prayers and intercession of Martin." *

About the same period, Pope Damasus writes thus of Felix, another supposed saint, according to the Romish acceptance of the term:—

* "Non deerit nobis ille; non, non deerit. Intererit de se sermoniantibus, adstabit orantibus; quodque jam hodie prestare dignatus est, videndum se in gloriâ suâ sæpe præbebit, et assiduâ benedictione nos proteget. Spes superest illa sola, illa postrema, ut quod per nos obtinere non possumus, pro nobis orante Martino mereamur." (Epis. of Sulp. Severus II.) I am indebted for the original of this extract to Mr. Elliott, who quotes it in the "Horæ Apoc.," vol. i., p. 309. For the translation I am alone responsible.

Concerning holy Felix.

“ Happy in body, mind, and soul, as well as in thy name.

“ Consecrated with the triumphs of Christ in the number of the saints.

“ Who givest all things to those that come to thee, and never sufferest any to go sorrowful away.

“ Preserved by thy guidance, inasmuch as I have burst the bonds of death,

“ I Damasus, a suppliant, pay my vows to thee in these verses.” *

Thus wrote two, not obscure and ignorant men, but illustrious members of the Church, on the subject of saint intercession at this period. And can we require any other proof that those great fundamental Gospel truths, viz., the oneness of Christ's offering and the exclusiveness of his intercession, had ere this begun to be put in the back-ground, and the merits of other mediators and the advocacy of other intercessors to be had recourse to, and thus the oneness and sufficiency of the priesthood of Christ to be made of none effect? For what can be more derogatory to his honour, or more completely subversive of that great fundamental truth, that “ by one offering He hath

*

———— De Sancto Felice,

Corpore, mente, animo, pariter de nomine Felix,
Sanctorum in numero Christi sacrate triumphis,
Qui ad te sollicitè venientibus omnia præstas,
Nec quendam pateris tristem repedare viantem,
Te duce servatus, mortis quod vincula rupi,
Versibus his Damasus supplex tibi vota rependo.

Pope Damasus, the writer of these verses, died in 384. See “*Horæ Apoc.*,”
Ibid.

perfected for ever them that are sanctified," than the idea that St. Felix or St. Martin, dead men, could by their merits and prayers obtain from Christ those favours which He would not otherwise grant to the holiest of his servants living on earth? * Most fearfully, therefore, was the need of the prophetic warning implied in this act of the incense-offering angel shown by the actual practice of the Church at the period to which this act belongs. Men began to present their prayers through other mediators; and therefore does the one only High Priest of our profession stand before God with the golden censer in his hand, ready to present the prayers of *all* those who come to God by him, and as if to warn them of the danger of having recourse to any other. But the warning was given in vain; hence

4. *The fire from the altar cast upon the earth.*—The reader will observe that the same censer was used in both instances. It was with that very golden censer, in which he had just before been offering the prayers of the saints that went up together with the smoke of the incense acceptably before God, that the angel now took the fire from the altar and cast it on the earth. And had not this a meaning? Assuredly it had, and that an awful and important one. Prayers had been offered, it appears, through

* This is the avowed doctrine of the Church of Rome, and earnestly contended for by her ministers, up to the present hour. Witness the following extract from a work entitled, "Mornings among the Jesuits at Rome," by the Rev. Hobart Seymour. 1849. Seeleys:—

"I asked, Why did you pray to the Virgin Mary, instead of praying to Jesus Christ? He answered, that it was their opinion, the opinion too of many of the Fathers, *that God hears our prayers more quickly when they are offered through the blessed Virgin, than when offered through any one else.*" (P. 105.)

other mediators than the one “great High Priest, Jesus the Son of God.” (Heb. iv. 14.) What then became of those prayers? Did *they* also go up with acceptance before God? No; the angel of the altar took those prayers, and filling his censer with fire from the altar, the emblem of God’s wrath, cast the fire together with those prayers upon the earth; as if indignantly rejecting petitions made in any name but his, and causing them to return with anger poured forth into the bosoms of the offerers. Let it not be supposed that this is a fanciful interpretation, founded upon a mere gratuitous assumption. We are not, indeed, expressly told that other prayers were offered, or that any prayers were mingled with the fire; but since censers were used exclusively for the offering of incense, and incense was the emblem of prayer, or that with which prayers were offered, it is but a reasonable inference that this fire taken with the censer from the altar has some reference to prayer; and that, in fact, this fire cast down upon the earth is significative of *prayer rejected*, as the smoke of the incense ascending up out of the same censer towards God was emblematical of prayer accepted. And viewed in this light, how striking and instructive is the whole transaction!

5. When the angel had cast down the fire upon the earth there followed voices, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake.—Now, I have already observed, that fire cast upon the earth from God’s altar can signify nothing less than the outpouring of his wrath upon mankind for their wickedness; and that the voices and thunderings, &c., which followed are but a general symbolic summary of those judgments with which he

was about to visit them. These words, therefore, are an epitome, or brief rehearsal, if I may be allowed the expression, of those results of the trumpet-soundings, which are afterwards more fully detailed. The only point in them to which I would direct attention is, the mention of an earthquake. An earthquake is invariably in this book the symbol of a revolution, or some great political or ecclesiastical change in the state of the world. Such a change then must be looked for under the trumpets, and we shall find it, if I mistake not, under the fourth.

CHAPTER VIII. 7—12.—THE FIRST FOUR TRUMPETS.

Before entering upon the consideration of the trumpets, I would request the reader's attention to the period of general history at which we are now supposed to have arrived. It will be remembered that the half-hour's silence has been explained to signify a period of about seventy or eighty years of comparative stillness in the Roman Empire, or exemption from the ravages of foreign enemies, commencing with the establishment of Christianity by Constantine in the year 324. Now, eighty years from this date brings us to the close of the fourth century; and it is therefore at about this period that we are to look for the beginning of the prophetic history contained under the trumpets. Let us then now, in the first place, endeavour to get a clear idea of the imagery employed to convey that prophetic history, and we shall then be qualified to pronounce upon its meaning and to trace its fulfilment.

We must remember, then, that St. John is still standing in the heavens, whither he had been called up when a door was opened in the sky. (Chap. iv. 1.)

From this elevated position he looks down upon the Roman earth, which is stretched out beneath him, and which presents to his eye, not a dimly-seen, confused mass, as so vast and extensive a surface, if it could be seen at all, would necessarily do to the ordinary vision, but an exquisitely-finished miniature landscape, in which not only the seas and rivers and cities are distinctly visible, but even the ships and trees and animals. This is the scene the apostle is supposed to be contemplating when the first trumpet sounds. Immediately upon which a tremendous storm of hail, coming out of the north mingled with fire and blood, covers a third part of the earth, and all the trees and grass as far as the storm extends are burnt up.

The second angel then sounds, and the apostle sees a great burning mountain, a vast volcano sending forth from its crater flames and smoke, moved from its base and hurled into the sea (the Mediterranean), a third part of which is forthwith converted into blood, and a third part of the fish and all the living creatures in it are seen floating upon its surface, dead, and a third part of the ships sailing on it are burnt up. Scarcely has the apostle had time to glance his eye over this terrific scene when a third trumpet's blast is heard, and immediately a glaring, meteor-like star is seen to fall from the skies, blazing like an immense torch, burning up every dry thing, and spreading desolation and destruction around, and which following the course of the rivers and springs makes their waters bitter and unwholesome, so that those who drink of them die. The fourth angel then sounds, and immediately the sun and moon appear to be partially eclipsed, a third part of them being darkened; a third

part of the stars also disappear; so that the skies, both by day and by night, seem to lose a third part of their light.

Such were the results which followed the sounding of the first four trumpets. And before attempting to fix their meaning, let me direct attention to one thing common to them all. I mean, the rapidity with which they follow each other. There is no pause, no intimation of any interval of rest between any of these trumpets. Now this circumstance, taken in connexion with the fact that each trumpet has its particular sphere of action, so to speak, the specified objects on which the judgments it announces fall, and those objects being only different parts of one symbolic whole, *i.e.*, the Roman earth, shows that these four trumpets, like the first four seals, and, as it will hereafter appear, the first four vials, relate to one event, in the accomplishment of which they are successive, if not simultaneous, processes. That event is generally supposed to be the destruction of the Western Roman Empire by the barbarous nations of the north, and to this view of the subject I give my full and unhesitating assent. An examination of the particulars of the prophecy will show the ground on which this opinion is founded.

The results which followed the sounding of the first trumpet were HAIL, BLOOD, and FIRE, and the burning up of *a third part* of the trees and the grass. Now there is no mistaking the *general* import of these terrific emblems. The apostle could not but understand as he looked down upon the awful scene that it portended bloodshed and desolation to that part of the Roman earth over which the fiery hail-shower mingled with blood extended. Nor would he be at a loss to comprehend the

specific symbolic meaning of the *hail*. He would understand that as hail cometh from the north, and this hail was the symbol of an invading army,* (the fire and the blood mixed with it would at once suggest this interpretation), it implied the quarter from whence the predicted scourge would proceed. So that the events foretold under this trumpet might be briefly expressed in literal language thus: The invasion of the empire by numerous hordes coming from the north of Europe, who would bring with them fire and sword, and lay desolate a third part of the Roman territories.

The results of the second trumpet's sounding, the burning mountain cast into the sea, the conversion of the sea into blood, and the destruction of the ships and of all living things, speak also for themselves. Had we been stationed where St. John was, and seen these things, being told at the same time that they had a symbolic meaning, and were prophetic of future events, we should, I think, at once have said, This burning mountain hurled thus violently into the Mediterranean sea can signify nothing less than the annihilation of the naval forces of the empire by the instrumentality of some mighty, ruthless conqueror from the south, whose course shall be marked with rapine and bloodshed, and who shall be as reckless of human life as he shall be destructive of the means of its defence.

The burning, meteor-like star of the third trumpet, which falls chiefly upon the rivers and fountains, and makes them bitter as wormwood, evidently has a different import. Its *burning as a torch* conveys still the idea of the ravages and desolations of warfare and conquest ;

* This application of hail used as a symbol is frequent in the Old Testament. See Isaiah xxviii. 2; Ezek. xiii. 11.

but its being *a star*, and its converting the waters of the *rivers and springs* into the bitterness of wormwood, would imply that the individual or power represented would combine the character of a warrior with some pretensions to that of a teacher of religion, and that under this latter character he would be the means of corrupting the clergy, and introducing by their instrumentality false doctrines into the Church destructive of the spiritual life of its members. I see not how this emblem is to be interpreted in any other way. If it had been said simply that the rivers were converted into blood, then I should have been disposed to acquiesce in the more general interpretation, according to which the thing prefigured is a great destruction of human life; but since it is said not merely that the waters were converted into wormwood-bitterness, but that *by drinking of them many men died*, and we know that in a literal sense nothing of the kind did or could take place, I am driven to the conclusion that as the bitterness is figurative, so the rivers and fountains are figurative; and if so, seeing that the seas represent the people at large, what can the rivers, which pour their fresh, sweet waters into the salt waters of the ocean, so aptly represent as *the clergy*, by whose instrumentality God has ordained that the bitter waters of the world (mankind at large) shall be made sweet? I think, then, we must give this interpretation to the symbol here, and, consequently, that whatever prince or commander we may suppose to be symbolized by the meteor-like star, we must connect with him the falling away from the truth of a large portion of the clergy.

With regard to the results following upon the sounding of the fourth trumpet, the obscuration of a third part of

the sun, the moon, and the stars, it is unnecessary to repeat what has already been said on the meaning of these symbols in commenting on the sixth seal. Referring the reader to that part of the commentary for my *reasons*, I shall assume here that they have the import there attributed to them, and, consequently, that this fourth trumpet announces the extinction for a time of the ruling powers of a third part of the empire.

But what are we to understand by this *THIRD* part? This is a question which has occasioned commentators no little perplexity. Some expositors, taking the earth and seas and rivers to comprise the whole terraqueous globe, explain the third part to signify the whole Roman Empire, which, they say, was to be involved, more or less, in the predicted calamities. But this interpretation is inadmissible for two reasons: 1st, because the *earth* throughout this book means the *Roman* earth, and not the world at large; and 2dly, because it is not true, in point of fact, that the Roman Empire occupied a third part of the whole earth. Others think that this third part refers to the natural tripartite division of the Roman world into European, African, and Asiatic. Others, again, that it means one of the thirds into which the empire was divided at different times when under three emperors, as Constantine, Licinius, and Maximin; or the three sons of Constantine, Constans, Constantine, and Constantius. But there are difficulties in the way of all these theories—difficulties, as it appears to me, not got over by Mr. Elliott, who, after having stated his reasons for rejecting the other divisions, assumes the trisection of the Roman world, which took place in the early part of Constantine's reign, to be that referred to. It would only, I think, weary the reader's patience to little profit to discuss at

large these various theories and the arguments by which they are supported. We have, it seems to me, a very easy and simple way of solving the question, and that is, by a reference to the Apocalypse itself.

In c. ix. v. 15, we read that the four angels which had been bound on the river Euphrates were loosed, in order that they might slay *the third part* of men. Now, by the almost universal consent of commentators, the third part of men here means that part of the Roman Empire which was conquered and taken possession of by the Turks. Consequently *this* third part is identical with the Turkish Empire, and in tracing on a map the boundaries of that Empire we shall be tracing that third of the Roman world which was politically slain by the establishment of that empire. Let us then take a map of the ancient Roman world and cut out from it the Turkish Empire. We shall find that we have taken away just about one third of the whole. We have, therefore, two-thirds remaining, one of which must be the third we are now in search of. But how are we to ascertain which? A reference to the former part of the ninth chapter will, I think, put this point beyond doubt. We there read of the sounding of the fifth angel, and of the coming up of an army of locusts, of whom it is said, among other things, that they were not to hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but "only the men who had not the seal of God in their foreheads." Now this prohibition respecting the grass of the earth, &c., clearly contradistinguishes the *locality* of this woe from that of the first trumpet, under which a third part of the trees and the grass were burnt up; and we may, therefore, I think, infer that the field of action over which these locusts extend is that third part of the

empire which remains after the other two are taken away. But these locusts are the Saracens, (I assume for the present that the generally-received interpretation of them is correct,) who overran Africa in the seventh century. If, then, we refer again to the map, and tracing the progress of the Saracens take away that portion of the Roman Empire which they conquered, we shall then have but one third remaining, which must consequently be the third to which the prophecy we are now considering relates. I do not see how this reasoning can be refuted or this conclusion gainsayed. The first four trumpets were to affect one-third of the empire: the sixth trumpet another; the fifth trumpet, therefore, must affect the remaining third: but the portions affected by the fifth and the sixth trumpets are clearly ascertained and determined: they are those conquered by the Turks and the Saracens; take away these, and the remaining third is the locality we seek, namely, that which is the field of operation under the first four trumpets. (See the map.)

Having, then, determined these questionable points, we may now make a summary of the prophecy of the first four trumpets, which is as follows:—

1. The desolation of a third part of the Roman Empire, taking Italy and Rome for the centre, by numerous hordes of savage invaders from the north, who would lay waste everything with fire and sword, shedding torrents of blood, and destroying in their course even the food of men and animals, so as to leave behind them a waste wilderness, in which nothing would be seen but dead bodies, smoking ruins, and barren fields.

2. The destruction of the naval strength of the same

portion of the empire, accompanied also with immense effusion of blood and loss of life.

3. The corruption of the clergy by the influence of some mighty conqueror, through whom the truth being adulterated and poisoned, many souls would be destroyed.

4. The extinction for a season of the ruling powers and principal men of the same third portion of the empire by the combined operation of the preceding causes.

Such are the heads of the events prefigured under the first four trumpets. Do the facts of history accord with the prediction and illustrate its fulfilment? Now the difficulty in giving a satisfactory answer to this inquiry consists not in finding such historical facts, for they are to be met with in every history of those times, but in condensing them within any reasonable compass, and presenting them in such a form as to make the correspondence between them and the apocalyptic prefigurations manifest, and thus carry conviction to the reader's mind. Perhaps the best method of accomplishing this will be to take these four headings in the order in which I have placed them, illustrating each of them as we proceed by suitable quotations from history. Let it be borne in mind that the period to which we suppose the first four trumpets to belong is from the latter end of the fourth century to near the close of the fifth; or, specifically, from the year 376, when the Goths first crossed the Danube, until A.D. 476, when the Western Empire became extinct. How do historians describe the events of that period?

1. As regards the desolations, &c. of the Roman earth.—On this head the following quotations from

Robertson may suffice. Speaking of the inroads of the barbarous nations from the north, he says, "Great bodies of armed men, with their wives and children, issued forth like regular colonies in quest of new settlements. The lands which they deserted were occupied by more remote tribes. These in their turn pushed forward into more fertile countries, and, like a torrent continually increasing, rolled on and *swept everything before them*. In less than two centuries from their first eruption, barbarians of various names and lineage plundered and took possession of Thrace, Pannonia, Gaul, Spain, Africa, and at last of Italy and Rome itself. The vast fabric of Roman power which it had been the work of ages to perfect, was in that short period overturned from the foundation."

"Wherever they marched *their route was marked with blood*. They ravaged or destroyed all around them. They respected no age, or sex, or rank. What escaped the first inundation perished in those which followed it. The most fertile and populous provinces *were converted into deserts*, in which were scattered the ruins of villages and cities."

"If a man were called to fix upon the period in the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most calamitous, he would without hesitation name that which elapsed from the death of Theodosius the Great (A.D. 395), to the establishment of the Lombards in Italy (A.D. 571). The cotemporary authors who beheld that scene of desolation, labour and are at a loss for expressions to describe the horror of it. The *Scourge of God*, the *Destroyer of Nations*, are the dreadful epithets by which they distinguish the most noted of the barbarous leaders, and they compare the ruin which they brought on the world to the havoc

occasioned by *earthquakes, conflagrations, and deluges*, —the most formidable and fatal calamities which the imagination of man can conceive.” *

“Ancient Italy, which the Romans rendered the seat of elegance, was cultivated to the highest pitch. But so effectually did the barbarians destroy all the effects of Roman *industry and cultivation*, that in the eighth century a considerable part of Italy appears to have been covered with forests and marshes of great extent.” †

Such is the estimate formed, and such the account given by this industrious and accurate historian, of the ravages successively committed by the Goths, the Vandals, and the Huns, during the period assigned to these four trumpets. And surely, if he had been writing a commentary on the apocalyptic prefigurations of the events of that period, he could hardly have employed more appropriate and expressive language. He says nothing, indeed, of the proportion mentioned in the prophecy, *the third part*. But if the reader will refer to the map of the Roman Empire which accompanies this Commentary, he will find that the provinces specified by him as those which chiefly suffered by the depredations of the barbarians, namely, Thrace, Pannonia, Gaul, Spain, Italy, and the western part of Africa, constitute, as near as may be, a third of the whole Roman territory. Thus far then the testimony of history is clear and satisfactory.

2. The destruction of the fleets of Rome. On this head the following extract from the index to the “De-

* “Hist. of Charles V.,” c. i. View of the State of Europe.

† Ibid. Note 5. The whole note is well worth perusal. The reader who wishes for further information may consult Gibbon, c. xxxiv., or Russell’s “Modern Europe.”

cline and Fall," under the word *Genseric*, speaks volumes :—

“Genseric, King of the Vandals, goes over to Africa.—Devastations of Africa by his troops.—RAISES A NAVAL FORCE AND INVADES ITALY.—SACKS ROME.—DESTROYS THE FLEET of Majorian.—His NAVAL depredations on Italy.—DESTROYS THE ROMAN FLEET under Basilicus.”

Now these are but the headings of a table of contents, yet, viewed in connexion with the prophecy under consideration, are they not significative and full of interest? Nor will the details to which they refer be found less to the point. Take, for example, the following :—“The discovery and conquest of the black nations, that might dwell beneath the torrid zone, could not tempt the rational ambition of Genseric: but he cast his eyes towards the sea: *he resolved to create a naval power*, and his bold resolution was executed with steady and active perseverance. The woods of Mount Atlas afforded an inexhaustible nursery of timber; his new subjects were skilled in the arts of navigation and ship-building; he animated his daring Vandals to embrace a mode of warfare which would render every maritime country accessible to their arms: the Moors and Africans were allured by the hopes of plunder: and after an interval of six centuries, THE FLEETS THAT ISSUED FROM THE PORT OF CARTHAGE again claimed the empire of the Mediterranean.” *

“The kingdom of Italy, a name to which the Western Empire was gradually reduced, was afflicted under the reign of Ricimer (A.D. 461—467) by the incessant depredations of the Vandal pirates. In the spring of each year they equipped a formidable navy in the port

* “Decline and Fall,” vol. vi., c. 36, p. 146.

of Carthage, and Genseric himself, though in a very advanced age, still commanded in person. When asked by his pilot what course he should steer, 'Leave the determination to the winds (replied the Barbarian with pious arrogance), they will transport us to the guilty coast whose inhabitants have provoked the Divine justice.' The Vandals repeatedly visited the coasts of Spain, Liguria, Tuscany, Campania, Venetia, Epirus, Greece, and Sicily, and their arms spread desolation, or terror, from the columns of Hercules to the mouth of the Nile."

"In the treatment of his unhappy prisoners he (Genseric) sometimes consulted his avarice and sometimes indulged his cruelty; and the massacre of five hundred noble citizens of Zant, or Zathynthus, whose MANGLED BODIES HE CAST INTO THE IONIAN SEA, was imputed by the public indignation to his latest posterity." *

On one occasion, "He manned his largest ships of war with the bravest of the Moors and Vandals, and they towed after them many large barks filled with combustible materials. In the obscurity of the night these destructive vessels were impelled against the unguarded and unsuspecting fleet of the Romans. Their close and crowded order assisted the progress of the fire, which was communicated with rapid and irresistible violence. Whilst they laboured to extricate themselves from the fireships, and to save at least a part of the navy, the galleys of Genseric assaulted them with temperate and disciplined valour, and many of the Romans who escaped the fury of the flames were destroyed or taken by the victorious Vandals." †

And was not then this Vandal conqueror fitly symbolized

* "Decline and Fall," vol. vi., p. 186.

† Ibid, p. 203.

by “ a burning mountain cast into the sea ? ” Can we desire a more exact correspondence between prophecy and the history by which it is illustrated than is thus exhibited ? And yet poetry supplies us with a still more striking illustration. In fact, it employs the very image used in the prophecy, and the poet seems as if he had borrowed the apocalyptic symbol only to throw light upon its meaning. The passage to which I allude is as follows :—

————— “ Hinc Vandalus hostis
Urget : et in nostrum numerosa classe quotannis
Militat excidium : conversoque ordine Fati,
TORRIDA Caucasos infert mihi BYRSA furores.” *—(Qy. *rigores* ? †)

Which may be thus translated :—

“ Here the proud Vandal, with his hostile bands
Poured from his many fleets, invades our lands ;
And BURNING BYRSA, changing nature’s laws,
The trembling chills of Caucasus doth cause.”

Byrsa, it may be proper to remark, was the name of the citadel of Carthage, the hill on which the city was originally built. ‡ The poet, therefore, adopts the precise

* This quotation is taken from the “ Decline and Fall,” vol. vi., p. 187. The passage is introduced thus :—“ The naval war of Genseric is described by Priscus, Procopius, &c., and in the three panegyrics of Lidonius.” (Avit. Carm., vii. 441—451 ; Majorian. Carm., v. 327, &c. ; Anthem. Carm., ii. 348—386.) In one place the poet seems inspired by his subject, and expresses a strong idea by a lively image :—

————— “ Hinc Vandalus hostis,” &c.

† This I have no doubt is the true reading. Caucasus being celebrated for the coldness of its snow-clad tops, there would be no sense in the phrase, “ Caucasian fury, or burnings,” particularly as set in opposition to the “ *torrida Byrsa* ; ” but nothing can be more appropriate than “ Caucasian tremblings ” in such a connexion.

‡ It derived its name from the ox-hide (*βυρσος*), with which, being cut into strips, Dido is said to have marked out the boundaries of her newly-acquired territory.

imagery of the prophecy, and compares THE VANDAL FLEETS TO A BURNING MOUNTAIN TRAVERSING THE SEAS, and causing the men of Italy to grow cold with terror. Further commentary on this remarkable passage is unnecessary. What makes the very singular coincidence in the metaphors the more striking is the exact agreement between the chronology of the prophecy and the history. The burning mountain which destroys the ships, &c. of the sea, comes *after* the hail and fire by which the products of the earth were burnt up; and so, accordingly, the depredations of the Vandals by sea followed those of the Goths by land, although both contributed by their combined action to bring about the great final subject of the prophecy—the extinction of the Western Empire.

3. The corruption of the clergy, &c.—On this head I would ask the reader's most careful and earnest attention to the two following quotations—one from the "Church History" of Archdeacon Waddington, the other from Gibbon. Taken together they will be found to contain a complete and satisfactory commentary upon the third trumpet according to the view above given of its meaning. Speaking of the progress of Arianism the former writer says:—

"Those—and they were few in number—among the western bishops who had openly deserted to the faith of Constantius were now concealed by obscurity or removed by death, and at the end of the fourth century the proselytes of Arianism formed an inconsiderable and a declining party. *Suddenly* it received a new and extraordinary impulse *from a quarter which could not have been suspected*, and from accidents which *could not be averted*, and which prolonged the history of that heresy beyond the duration which seemed otherwise to have

been assigned to it. During the course of the fifth century numerous tribes of barbarians, Goths, Huns, and Vandals, Suevi, and Alani, and Sali, overran and occupied the provinces of the West. Now it so happened that all these tribes, excepting probably the Sali, imbibed in the first instance the notions of Arius. This circumstance is thus accounted for. The Goths were directed in their religious creed by their bishop, Ulphilas, a man of great talents and influence. This prelate, in the course of two missions to Constantinople, returned the zealous proselyte of Arianism. This doctrine he rapidly propagated among his compatriots, and diffused it through the whole nation. The example of the Goths was respected by subsequent invaders and converts; and thus the tenets of Arius were disseminated *among the barbarian colonists in every province of the Western Empire.** “In the west Arianism would never have taken any deep root *except through the influence of the barbarian conquerors.* It was probably confined to the coasts of the victors, to their armies, and to such of the natives as were in most immediate intercourse with them.” †

With reference to the same subject the author of the “Decline and Fall” thus writes:—“The cruel and absurd enterprise of subduing the minds of a whole people was undertaken by the Vandals alone. Genseric himself in his early youth *had renounced the orthodox communion,* and the apostate could neither grant nor expect a sincere forgiveness. He was exasperated to find that the Africans, who had fled before him in the field, still presumed to dispute his will in synods and in churches. His Catholic subjects were oppressed by

* “Hist. of the Church,” vol. i., p. 100.

† Ibid, p. 103.

intolerant laws and arbitrary punishments, and the Arians were reproached with the frequent executions which stained the palace and dominions of the tyrant." *

Now these extracts establish two points. First, that the poison of Arianism was diffused in the Western Empire mainly through the influence of the barbarian conquerors. Secondly, that the Vandal chieftain (who, it should be observed, had been brought up in the orthodox faith,) was the principal cause of the prevalence of Arianism in Africa, which, perhaps, in this case may be the *third* especially referred to. But is Genseric, then, and his Vandals to be regarded as symbolized both by the "burning mountain" and the "blazing star?" I see no decided objection myself to this view. Certain it is that he did both destroy the Roman naval power and endeavour to propagate Arianism; and, that many of the worldly-minded, time-serving clergy were awed by him into compliance, and were induced, from motives of ambition, to teach doctrines subversive of the Gospel and destructive to the soul, is undeniable. Well, therefore, might he be likened to a "blazing star falling upon the rivers and fountains of water" (there may be an allusion here to his persecutions of the orthodox clergy, many of whose bishops he put to death), "and making them bitter as wormwood." How many thousands died spiritually by drinking of these empoisoned waters it is impossible to say; but that a large portion of the clergy, at least a third, were thus corrupted, is an indisputable fact. † Here, therefore, the evidence of history appears to be clear and satisfactory.

* Vol. vi., c. xxxvii., p. 280.

† Should any of my readers feel insuperable objections against the application of both symbols to one subject, I would suggest whether the

But it may be asked, is then Arianism so fatal an error that the imbibing of it necessarily involves spiritual death? I think we may answer without hesitation, it is. It may seem a small thing, indeed, to the natural man whether we believe that Christ is of *one* substance with the Father, or of *like* substance; but the difference is really immeasurably great; it is, in fact, the diverging point where saving faith ends, and Infidelity and Atheism begin. This is not the place for entering upon the discussion of so great a question as the true nature of our Lord; but of this I am fully persuaded, that the denial of his real and proper divinity lies at the root of all unbelief. It is the poisoned drop, scarcely visible to the naked eye, sent through the serpent's fangs, which speedily circulates to the furthest extremities and infects the whole system, causing numbness and stupor, and terminating finally in death.

4. The extinction of the ruling powers of the Western Empire.—On this head nothing more will be necessary than simply to state what actually took place. In the year 476, exactly one hundred years after the Goths first crossed the Danube and were received into the bosom of the empire, Odoacer, the Gothic General, compelled the Emperor Romulus Augustus (who thus,

Bishop Ulphilas, who appears to have fallen from the right faith and to have introduced Arianism amongst the Goths, which from them spread through all the Western Churches, may not be symbolized by the star which fell from heaven? In that case the blazing fire which accompanied the star, or rather formed a component part of it, would signify those fiery persecutions which were the result of the prevalence of Arian opinions. Vitringa thinks that Arius himself is the star, and that its fall from heaven answers to his exclusion from the Church by excommunication. I see no specific objection to this interpretation. That Arianism is the subject-matter of the prophecy I think, as Vitringa remarks, is clear beyond a doubt.

as the historian remarks, by a strange fatality, united in himself the names of the two great founders of the city and the monarchy) to lay aside the Imperial rank and power, and by a decree of the Roman Senate, these were transferred to Zeño, the then reigning monarch of the East, who now became sole Emperor. This great event is designated by historians, THE EXTINCTION OF THE WESTERN EMPIRE.

And thus, then, we see the prefigurations of these first four trumpets have been historically fulfilled. Nor can I think it possible that any man should attentively and seriously compare the history and prophecy together, and not be convinced, that if there be any truth in the history, the prophecy must be of God.

THE TRIPLE-WOE-ANNOUNCING ANGEL, VER. 13.

This is an important verse, and demands especial notice. After the sounding of the fourth trumpet, the apostle saw an angel flying in the mid-heaven, and heard him saying with a loud voice, a voice which echoed from one end of the earth to the other, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the voices of the trumpets of the three angels which are yet to sound." Now, we naturally ask, why this interruption in the prophetic prefigurations? Why this abrupt cessation of the trumpet-soundings, which up to this point had proceeded so regularly and followed each other so rapidly? There must be a reason for it, and a meaning in it; for the Scriptures say nothing in vain; and it behoves us therefore to search them out. This verse, then, appears evidently to be a chronological mark to guide us in the inter-

pretation of the succeeding prophecies. It implies two things: first, an *interval* between the sounding of the fourth and fifth trumpets; and secondly, that the three following trumpets would each one bring with it its own proper woe, distinct in its character, and separated by a considerable space of time. In this respect these three trumpets markedly differ from the four preceding. *They* evidently followed each other in quick succession, and they all had reference more or less directly to the accomplishment of one and the same end; but *these* are to be separated by long intervals, and the subjects of them are altogether distinct one from the other. Such is, *à priori*, the view we should be led to take of the chronological bearing of these three trumpets. And hence, therefore, arises this important inference, an inference to which I would direct the reader's special attention and have him keep in mind in seeking the meaning and interpretation of the remainder of the prophecy. It is this;—that we are not to look for the events of the fifth trumpet as following *immediately* upon those of the fourth. The intervention of this woe-announcing angel implies an interval between them. And further, that these *three* trumpets are of much longer duration, and occupy consequently a larger space in their historic fulfilment, than the *four* preceding. These are points deserving to be noted, not only as being necessary to the right interpretation of the prophecy, but as showing the wonderful chronological accuracy with which the book is written. If commentators had paid more attention to these chronological marks, we should not have had so many conflicting theories and discordant interpretations to perplex and

discourage us. (See c. ix. v. 12 ; c. xi. v. 14.) The reader will perhaps do well to refer at once to these two places.

CHAPTER IX.

THE LOCUST WOE. Vers. 1—11.

IN determining the meaning of the symbolic imagery of the fifth trumpet, our first object must be, as in every former instance, to get a clear idea in our minds of the imagery itself. What then did the apostle see upon the sounding of the fifth trumpet? He saw a star fall from the sky to the earth. But this star had no sooner reached the earth, than it became a *person*. For a key was given to it, and it opened with the key the bottomless pit. Now, the receiving of a key and the opening the door of a pit are obviously the acts of a person, of a living creature having hands, and could not be performed by a star. We may therefore assume, that since the apostle *saw* the key given and the pit opened, this star did assume the appearance, as well as perform the functions of a human being. But where did these things take place? In what part of the earth? This may be inferred from what followed. Upon the opening of the pit, there arose a thick smoke out of it, a smoke so dense and so widely diffused, that the sun and the air were darkened by it; and after the smoke had somewhat dispersed itself, there came out a swarm of locusts. Now this shows the locality of the vision. In all

the apocalyptic symbols it will be found that the strictest geographical propriety is observed. And we may assume, therefore, that these locusts issued forth from the quarter whence locusts usually proceed. But this is notoriously Arabia. There are locusts, it is true, in other countries; but the locusts of which we read in the Scriptures invariably proceed from thence.* And we may therefore, I think, without hesitation assume that the spot on which St. John saw the star fall, and whence the smoke afterwards issued, was the territory occupied by the descendants of Ishmael, the Arabs of the desert.

These locusts, however, were totally unlike ordinary locusts both in their appearance and nature. The common locust is an insect resembling the grasshopper, only much larger, and its food is exclusively any vegetable substance that is green and tender. But these locusts were expressly forbidden to injure the grass or anything green; they were to hurt only the men who had not the seal of God in their foreheads. Moreover, they were in shape like horses, and were clothed in armour, having breastplates of iron upon their chests, and crowns of gold upon their heads; they had also long black hair hanging down upon their shoulders, and their teeth were long and terrible, like the teeth of lions. In addition to all this, they had sharp pointed tails, armed at the extremity with a sting like the tail of a scorpion, through which they injected deadly poison, which they left behind them as they advanced. And, finally, they moved with great rapidity, their wings making a rushing sound, like the noise of chariot wheels rushing to the battle.

* See, *c.g.*, Ex. x. 13; Joel xi. 25.

Such were the things which now passed before the mind's eye of the entranced apostle.

Now we have already seen that the locality of the vision, at least at its commencement, was in all probability Arabia. Assuming this to have been the case, the following will be a general summary of the events thus prefigured:—

1. The appearance in Arabia, where the star was seen to fall, of a remarkable personage, professing to be a teacher sent from God for the enlightenment of his fellow-men, but whose doctrine would really come from beneath, and wherever it should prevail would darken the truth, and put out for a time the light of the Gospel.

2. The propagation of this doctrine by the instrumentality of armed warriors on horseback, whose characteristics would be, the vastness of their numbers (resembling in this respect swarms of locusts), the rapidity of their marches, their strength and skill in battle, and the fury of their attacks.

And can it be necessary for me to do more than mention the name of Mohammed and the Saracens, to show where we must seek the fulfilment of the prophecy? The almost unanimous consent of modern commentators in this case* is a strong argument in favour of the correctness of the application. An interpretation so generally and so unhesitatingly received must have some foundation in truth. And in point of fact, the agreement in every minute particular between the prophecy thus understood and the facts of history, is so wonderfully exact and striking,

* Excepting, of course, the Præterists and Futurists, who must be regarded as a distinct class by themselves.

that I can hardly think it possible that any person should carefully compare the two together and continue to entertain any doubt upon the subject. In confirmation of this view, I will first, for the sake of the general reader, give a rapid sketch of the history of Mohammedanism, and then consider the details of the prophecy.

Mohammed* was born at Mecca, in the year of our Lord 571. He was descended from the noble tribe of Koreish. His grandfather was the keeper of the Kaaba, or sacred stone, and Governor of Mecca. His father, Abdallah, died young, and left Mohammed when an infant to the care of his mother. Little or nothing authentic is known of his childhood or youth. His whole possessions when his father died are said to have been five camels and a female slave. At the age of twenty-five he became factor to a rich widow named Kadajah, whom, after three years, he married. This event was the beginning of Mohammed's greatness. Restored now to that position in society to which his birth entitled him, he appears to have conceived the twofold idea of establishing a new religion, and of raising himself to the supreme government of his country. † Accordingly, not long after his marriage, he was accustomed to retire for a length of time together into a cave on Mount Hera, near Mecca, where, with the assistance, as it is said, of

* This is the proper Oriental name, not Mahomet, or Mahommed.

† It is impossible for us at this distance of time to say, as a matter of fact, what Mohammed's motives and intentions originally were. But the probability is, that ambition was his ruling passion, and that, like Cromwell and Napoleon, he took advantage of a particular state of the human mind, and the peculiar circumstances in which his country was placed, which his sagacity enabled him to see were favourable to his purpose, and made them subservient to his ends.

a Persian Jew, named Abdia, and a Nestorian monk, called by Latin writers Sergius, he composed that portion of the Koran which he first published.* He was probably also assisted by his wife's cousin, Waraka, who was by profession a Christian, and a learned man, acquainted with the Hebrew, which it is said he could both read and write. Having then thus fully concocted his plans, and made every arrangement as far as human sagacity could foresee for carrying them out, he at length proclaimed himself the Prophet of God. His wife, Kadijah, is said to have been his first disciple. His second convert was his cousin Ali, a boy of eleven years old. His third, a slave of his named Zeid. For three years he made his converts in secret; but after this, as their number increased, he grew bolder, and began to preach publicly to those of his own tribe. At first, he met with the most violent opposition, but having gained over some of the principal men, with their assistance he raised an army, and having fought many battles and obtained many victories, was in the course of a few years acknowledged throughout Arabia as the apostle of God. The character of all his battles and conquests may be judged of by the first. It is called the battle of Beder, and may be thus briefly related: Mohammed had heard that a caravan richly laden and escorted by thirty men was returning from Syria to Mecca. He resolved to intercept it,

* Mohammed affirms that he received the Koran just as it is immediately from God. This assertion needs no refutation. The book refutes itself. On the other hand, it is admitted by all parties (although the thing seems almost incredible) that the Prophet could neither read nor write. If this were really the case, there can be little doubt that the story of the Persian Jew and Nestorian Christian is true. Mohammed alludes to it himself in the Koran. (See c. xvi.; also c. vi., p. 176.—*Salé.*)

and for this purpose placed a number of soldiers in ambuscade. But the Meccans being informed of his design, sent out a body of troops to meet the caravan, making in all 950 men. Upon this, the Prophet went out with his whole army, consisting at this time of only 313 men. Having joined battle, after a severe contest the Meccans fled, leaving seventy of their number dead on the field, and the caravan in the possession of the enemy. During the early part of the battle, while three champions on each side were fighting in single combat, Mohammed remained in a hut close by, violently beating his breast, and praying with much vehement and frantic gesticulation. At length, the three champions of the Meccans being slain, he rushed out from the hut, and casting a handful of dust towards the Koreishites, exclaimed, "May their faces be confounded." At which, it is said, they immediately fled. Mohammed remained three days on the field of battle, dividing the spoil. One-fifth (acting, as he pretended, by Divine revelation) he took for himself, the remaining four-fifths he divided amongst those who were present in the action; and this was the rule ever after observed.

Such was Mohammed's first victory. And it may be truly said with reference to it, *ex uno, disce omnes*. This first battle and victory was an exact prototype of all the mighty conquests that followed. No man of common understanding can fail to see the real motives of Mohammed and his followers on this occasion. There is, in fact, hardly any attempt at disguise even on the part of the Mohammedan historians themselves. To say that the motive was ambition mixed with fanaticism, is saying almost too much. Fanaticism is a mistaken zeal for religion. But it is very doubtful

whether in this case religion was at all concerned. Plunder and self-aggrandisement were so obviously Mohammed's objects, that it is indeed strange he should ever have been able to persuade the world that he had any other.

After this, many other battles were fought, with various success, although in general Mohammed had the advantage. At length, having obtained possession of Mecca, all Arabia submitted to him, and, with the exception of one province, which being by profession Christian, preferred paying tribute, acknowledged him to be the Apostle of God.

Mohammed died, June 8, A.D. 632, in the sixty-first year of his age, and the eleventh of the Hejira. His death is said to have been occasioned by eating of a poisoned shoulder of mutton three years previously, from the effects of which he never recovered. It is difficult to form a true estimate of the character of such a man. That he was endued with extraordinary talents, and, especially, that he possessed that peculiar and rare gift which enables a man to exercise a powerful influence over the minds of others, and while he wins their affections to command their respect, is evident from the works he achieved. No ordinary man could in the short space of twenty years have brought a whole nation like the Arabs to acknowledge him for their Prophet, and to submit to him as their ruler. But that he was really in any sense a religious man—that he was actuated by any real desire to glorify God or to benefit his fellow-creatures, is more than doubtful. We know from experience, as might be shown by many examples, how easy it is for a clever man to talk sublimely, and even piously on religion, in order to promote

his ambitious ends ;* and why should not Mohammed, with the same object in view, have composed a whole book like the Koran? In fact, as was before said, the Koran, to an enlightened mind, carries with it its own refutation. The best way to prove this will be to give a few specimens of it. Let the following, then, suffice. The first chapter is a short prayer, the second commences thus :—

“In the name of the most merciful God, A. L. M. † There is no doubt ‡ in this book ; it is a direction to the pious who believe in the mysteries of faith—who observe the appointed times of prayer, and distribute alms out of what we have bestowed on them, and who believe in that revelation which hath been sent down unto thee, and that which hath been sent down unto the prophets before thee, and have firm assurance in the life to come : these are directed by their Lord, and they shall prosper.

* “Bonaparte wished to persuade the Moslems that he was himself also an envoy of the Deity. With this view he affected the language of an inspired teacher, of which the following is a curious specimen :—

“On entering the sepulchral chamber in the pyramid of Cheops, ‘Glory be to Allah,’ said Bonaparte ; ‘there is no god but God, and Mohammed is his Prophet!’

“‘Thou hast spoken like the most learned of the prophets,’ said the Mufti who accompanied him.

“‘I can command a car of fire to descend from heaven,’ continued the French General, ‘and I can guide and direct its course upon earth.’

“Napoleon closed the conversation with this not very pertinent oriental proverb, ‘The bread which the wicked seizes upon by force shall be turned to dust in his mouth.’”—*Life of Napoleon* by Sir Walter Scott, vol. iv., p. 85.

† These letters are said by Mohammedan writers to have a mystical meaning, but what that meaning may be is not known.

‡ Or rather, *nothing of a doubtful character*,—i.e., it is all true from beginning to end ; a beginning which almost falsifies itself. It is like a man’s proclaiming his own honesty, which makes you immediately suspect him.

As for the unbelievers, it will be equal to them whether thou admonish them or do not admonish them,—they will not believe.”

“ O men of Mecca, serve your Lord who hath created you, and those who have been before you ; peradventure ye will fear him, who hath spread the earth as a bed for you, and the heaven as a covering, and hath caused water to descend from heaven, and thereby produced fruits for your sustenance.”*

“ If ye be in doubt concerning that revelation which we have sent down unto our servants, produce a chapter like unto it, and call upon your witnesses, besides God, if ye say truth. But if ye do it not, nor shall ever be able to do it, justly fear the fire, whose fuel is men and stones, prepared for the unbelievers. But bear good tidings unto those who believe, and do good works, that they shall have gardens watered by rivers ; so often as they eat of the fruit thereof for sustenance, they shall say, ‘ This is what we have formerly eaten of ; ’ and they shall be supplied with several sorts of fruit having a mutual resemblance to one another. There shall they enjoy wives subject to no impurity, and there shall they continue for ever.” †

“ How is it that ye believe not in God ? Since ye were dead, and he gave you life, he will hereafter cause

* This is an evident imitation of Jeremiah, v. 21 : “ Hear now this, O foolish people without understanding. Fear ye not me ? saith the Lord : will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea, by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it : But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart ; neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the Lord our God, that giveth rain,” &c. The immense superiority of the *really* inspired prophet needs not to be insisted on.

† Sale’s Koran, vol. i., pp. 4, 5.

you to die, and will again restore you to life; then shall ye return unto him. It is he who created for you whatsoever is on earth, and then set his mind on the creation of heaven, and formed it into seven heavens; he knoweth all things. When the Lord said unto the angels, 'I am going to place a substitute on earth,' they said, 'Wilt thou place there one who will do evil and shed blood? but we celebrate thy praise and sanctify thee.' God answered, 'Verily, I know that which ye know not;' and he taught Adam the names of all things, and then proposed them to the angels, and said, 'Declare unto me the names of these things if ye say truth.' They answered, 'Praise be unto thee, we have no knowledge but what thou teachest us, for thou art knowing and wise.' God said, 'O Adam, tell them their names.' And when he had told them their names, God said, 'Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of heaven and earth, and know that which ye discover and that which ye conceal?'"*

Such is a fair specimen of the character and teaching of the Koran; for the foregoing are not, in any sense, garbled extracts, but connected passages, containing, in fact, a summary of Mohammed's doctrine. That it needed no inspiration to write such a book will, to every Christian reader, be at once apparent. No one would deny that there are some sublime passages in the Koran: but so there are in the Book of Mormon; the sublimity, however, in both instances, is borrowed from the Scriptures, and in both instances is the forgery equally gross and manifest.

But to return to the narrative. Upon the death of

* Sale's Koran, vol. i., p. 6.

Mohammed, in 632, Abubeker was chosen his successor,* both in the prophetic office and in the command of the armies of the faithful. In 634 he invaded and conquered Syria. Jerusalem was taken in the winter of 637; and the mosque of Omar shortly afterwards rose on the site of Solomon's temple.†

During the same period Egypt also was subdued, and from thence the Saracens soon pushed their conquests to the western extremity of Africa; so that by the end of the seventh century the whole of the Roman Empire in that quarter of the globe was brought under their dominion. From Africa they passed over to Spain in 709, the whole of which they conquered; and, crossing the Pyrenees, they entered into France (730). Here, however, their career of victory was checked, they being encountered and defeated by Charles Martel, in the celebrated battle of Tours, in which three hundred

* This is, in fact, the meaning of the title KHALIPH; *the vicar, or substitute* for another, and hence, one who succeeds to the place of another. The Grand Sultan is now called, *The Shadow of God*, as if to imply that he is God's representative. It is surely a remarkable circumstance, that the two heads of what may be called "the eastern and western apostasies," should assume to themselves almost identical titles; for what is the Pope's designation of "Vicar of Christ and God's Viceroy upon earth," but in meaning precisely equivalent to *The Shadow of God*? It should be observed, also, that the Popes are called the *successors* of St. Peter, as the Khaliphs are *successors* of Mohammed.

† The following were some of the principal articles of capitulation:—
 1. The Christians shall build no new churches; 2. They shall not refuse the Mussulmans entrance into them, either by night or by day; 4. If a Mussulman shall be upon a journey, they shall entertain him gratis for three days; 5. They shall not teach their children the Koran, nor talk openly of their religion, nor persuade any one to be of it,—neither shall they hinder their relations from becoming Mohammedans; 6. If sitting, they shall rise up to the Mohammedans; 7. They shall not dress like the Mohammedans; 8. They shall not ride upon saddles, nor bear any sort of arms, nor use the Arabic language; 9. They shall not sell wine, &c.—
Ockley, p. 211.

thousand Saracens are said to have fallen. (A.D. 732.) This defeat put a complete and final stop to their progress in the West. Had they been victorious, it is impossible to say what might have been the consequences. Even at this distance of time we tremble to contemplate them. In the words of the Infidel historian, who seems almost to regret it is not so, "the interpretation of the Koran might now be taught in the schools of Oxford, and her pulpits demonstrate (?) to a circumcised people the sanctity and truth of the revelation of Mahomet." * But it was not to be. It was not the will of God that the light of truth should be altogether extinguished in the West. He who says to the waves of the sea, "Hitherto shall ye come, and no further," had put a bound also to the conquests of these furious fanatics; and when, therefore, they had reached the prescribed limit, their wonted courage failed them, they turned their backs, and fled.†

* This passage affords an example of that utter indifference to the truth or falsehood of *any* religion which characterized this dangerous writer. Why, then, it may be asked, refer to him so often, or even at all? I am indeed almost ashamed to do so. And yet, as has been elsewhere remarked, it is some satisfaction to cut off the head of Goliath with his own sword; and certainly no man can read the "History of the Decline and Fall," with the book of Revelation in his hand, and not be struck with the remarkable correspondence in their subject, divisions, and sometimes even metaphors and language. It would almost seem as if the Infidel had unconsciously adopted the inspired prophetic history for his model.

† The above summary is taken from Ockley's "History of the Saracens," Sale's "Introduction to the Koran," and Gibbon. The latter's history of Mohammed is usually considered a masterpiece of its kind; and if to *make light* of the most blasphemous hypocrisy, and throw an attractive veil of brilliant colouring over the grossest and most shameless licentiousness, are characteristics of fine writing, so it is. But to the Christian, the Infidel Gibbon's history of Mohammed must ever be a disgusting specimen of that hatred of Christianity for which he was distinguished, and that sensuality and grossness which appear to have been associated with every subject in his mind.

Thus, then, have we traced the origin and progress of Mohammedism, from its first rise at Mecca, in the birth of its founder in the year 571 (or 569), to the completion of its conquests in the West, up to the year 732. We have seen the Arab warriors issuing like a swarm of locusts from the thick darkness of error which their leader had cast over the truth, and steadily advancing westward, just in the track which locusts would pursue, until having completed the prescribed course, they are made to turn back and keep within the boundary appointed them.

It now remains that we consider the details of the prophecy; but before doing this, I would recommend the reader to refer to the map, and verify by ocular inspection the foregoing statements.

Ver. 1. "*I saw a star fall from heaven,*" &c.—It has been objected that this cannot apply to Mohammed, because a star falling from heaven must symbolize the apostasy of a Christian minister, whereas Mohammed was never a Christian at all. But this is a gratuitous assumption. We are nowhere told that the falling of a star from heaven always implies apostasy. In Isaiah xiv. 12, we have the phrase used to represent the fall of the Babylonian empire;* and why then should it not here signify the fall of an individual from that station which by nature he was fitted to occupy? Or, in other words, the application of great talents and extraordinary endowments, such as if properly employed, would have raised a man to the highest pinnacle of true glory, and made him shine as a star, to the accomplishment of low, grovelling, and selfish ends? Viewed in this light,

* "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning," *i.e.*, thou morning star.

I think Mohammed may very properly be called a star, as representing not what he *was*, but what he *might* have been. It should be borne in mind, also, that although Mohammed was never, properly speaking, a Christian, he professed to believe the facts and leading doctrines both of the Old and New Testament.*

“*And to him was given the key of the bottomless pit,*” &c.—The bottomless pit is hell, the dwelling-place of the author of all evil. The smoke that issued from this pit is a true symbol of Mohammedism, which brought a shade of midnight darkness over a large portion of nominal Christendom. It is impossible, in fact, to imagine a more exact type. The religion of Mohammed preceded his conquests; and a dense smoke arising from Arabia, and hiding the light of the sun, foreboding the coming of some awful judgment, would be but a true symbolization of the effect produced upon the minds of the inhabitants of Europe by the rise of the dark mist of Mohammedism, which they beheld from a distance, and trembled at. Mohammed opened the abyss and let out this symbolic smoke, when he began to preach at Mecca, and declared that the Koran, which he had

* Mr. Elliott's view is, that Mohammed is represented as a fallen star, because he was by birth a prince and rightful heir to the sovereignty of Mecca. But this is a mistake. Oekley indeed asserts that he was the eldest son of Abdallah, who was the eldest son of the President of the Caaba. But Sale has shown that he was not the eldest son by many, (see his Preliminary Dissertation, vol. i., p. 50,) and, therefore, any hypothesis built upon this assumption falls to the ground. Many modern commentators explain this star of the Bishop of Rome, and the darkness of that ignorance and error which overspread the Church from the commencement of the sixth century, chiefly, as they allege, through his instrumentality. But neither the Bishop of Rome, nor any other particular bishop, was the cause of that darkness; nor did the Saracens in any sense *issue* from it; they rather came *into* it, and deepened it; but certainly did not come *out* of it.

forged in the cave of Mount Heran, had been sent down to him from God.

“*And there came out of the smoke locusts,*” &c.—That these were symbolic locusts is obvious. They have, indeed, nothing of the locust about them but the name. Why, then, are they called locusts? To indicate, probably, their multitude,* the quarter from whence they came, and the duration of their ravages. In these three respects, and also in that they had wings, those terrific creatures which St. John saw issue from the smoke of the abyss resembled locusts; but in all other respects the description given of them is rather a description of the Saraccenic Arabs, than of any insect or animal in existence. This will be evident by an examination of the nine peculiarities by which they are distinguished, and which may be thus stated:—

1. In their general appearance they resembled war-horses.
2. They had golden crowns upon their heads.
3. They had the faces of men, but long hair like women.
4. They had teeth like lions.
5. They had breastplates of iron.
6. They had wings, which, as they moved, occasioned a sound like the rushing of chariots to the battle.
7. They had tails like scorpions, turned, that is, upon their backs: and they had stings in their tails.
8. They were forbidden to hurt the grass or any green thing; but only those men who had not the seal

* The Hebrew words for *locust* and *Arab* are nearly the same in sound. That for *locust* is *arbeh* (אַרְבֵּי). “*Sic dictæ,*” says Buxtorf, “*quod multe sunt;*” that for *Arab* is *Harbi* (חַרְבֵּי). Had, therefore, St. John written in Hebrew, the sentence would have sounded something like this: “*And I saw ARABS come out of the smoke,*” &c.

of God in their foreheads,—and these they were not to kill, but to torment.

9. Their power *to torment* was to continue five months.

Now we have to show that the Saracens answered to this representation. But first we must determine what part of this description is to be taken figuratively, and what literally. For that there is a mixture of the symbolical and the literal is, I think, manifest. No one will suppose that the lion-like teeth and scorpion stings are to be interpreted literally; and, on the other hand, the golden crown, and the long hair of women, joined with the faces of men, seem to be intended to be literally descriptive of certain peculiarities in the people or nation of which these locusts are the symbol. And as the *breastplates of iron* come in between the lion's teeth and the scorpion's stings, perhaps we may infer that they also are to be taken figuratively, as signifying, that is, not literal breastplates, but that fearless daring, and indomitable courage which may result either from conscious rectitude or enthusiastic fanaticism.* Thus, then, it would appear probable that the three first-mentioned characteristics of these locust-warriors are to be interpreted literally, the four next figuratively. And does this view agree with the application of the prophecy to the Saracens? I believe it will be found to do so in every point. The number and excellence of the Arabian cavalry, their high and richly-ornamented turbans resembling crowns, and their long black hair hanging in ringlets over their shoulders, are matters of fact in

* Thus St. Paul, "*Having on the breastplate of righteousness.*" (Ephes. vi.) The peculiar phraseology of the text also favours the idea that these breastplates are figurative. It is not said, they had on breastplates of iron, but *as it were breastplates*, &c.

regard to which we have the clearest testimony.* The very designation here used is given by Arabian writers to their turbans, which they call *diadems*.† Their extraordinary strength, also, and determined bravery (I speak of the ancient Saracens of the seventh and eighth centuries), their ardour and ferocity in battle, the extent and rapidity of their conquests as signified respectively by the lion-like teeth, and iron breastplates, and rapidly-moving wings of these symbolic locusts, are all things distinctly noticed by historians, and spoken of as remarkably characteristic of the Saracens and their conquests.‡ Within *ten* years after Mohammed's death

* Take, *e.g.*, the following, as quoted by Bishop Newton in his Commentary on this chapter: "Arabes mitrati degunt, aut (quære *et*) intonso crine: barba abraditur, præterquam in superiore labro. Alii et hæc intonsa." (The Arabians wear mitres, or have flowing hair, and have their hair uncut), their beard is shaven except on the upper lip. Some even never shave the beard. (*Plin. Nat. Hist.*, lib. vi., c. 28, sect. 32.) "Ecce subito equorum camelorumque sessores Ismaelite irruunt, *crinitis vittatisque* capitibus." Behold the Ishmaelites, who wear chaplets and the hair long, riding on horses and camels, make a sudden charge. (*Amnian Marcell.*, lib. 31): and Theodorus of Mopsuesta, commenting on Jer. x. says, "that the Saracens cut their hair from the forehead, but suffer it to grow long behind." (P. 664, Edit. Paris, 1681.)

† "It was a usual saying among them, that God had bestowed four peculiar things on the Arabs: that their turbans should be to them instead of *DIADEMS*; their tents, instead of walls and houses; their swords, instead of intrenchments; and their poems instead of written laws."—*Preface to Antar*, p. xi., quoted in the *Horæ Apoc.*, vol. i., p. 412.

‡ Whoever has read Ockley's History cannot but be struck with the almost incredible fury with which they appear to have fought. Take the following for an exemplification: "A celebrated warrior named Derar, going to reconnoitre the Christian army, a party of thirty men was sent out to seize him. When they advanced Derar ran away, and they pursued him. When he had drawn them some distance from the lines he faced about, and fell upon them *like a lion*. First, he ran one through with his lance, and then another, and fought desperately, till, of thirty, he had slain seventeen. Then the rest, being seized with fear, fled before him." (*History of the Saracens*, p. 119. Bohu's edition.)

we are told, "they reduced THIRTY-SIX THOUSAND cities or castles to obedience, destroyed FOUR THOUSAND CHURCHES, and built FOURTEEN HUNDRED moschs." * Well, then, might *the sound of their wings* be compared to "the sound of chariots of many horses rushing to battle."

7. Nor were the scorpion-like tails of these locusts less exactly verified in the Saracens. The sting of the scorpion is exceedingly painful, but, unless the creature be of extraordinary size, rarely causes death. So the Saracens, although they occasioned great terror to corrupt and degenerate Christendom, the men that "had not the seal of the living God in their foreheads," yet they did not *slay them politically*, as the Euphratean horsemen afterwards slew a third part of them; they only terrified them, and kept them in a constant state of anxiety and alarm. By their conquests of Egypt and Syria, indeed, they dismembered the empire; but these countries were never anything more than provinces; they were never the seat of Government; and the conquest of them, therefore, was rather like the cutting off of a limb than the wounding of a vital part. We may well conceive, however, the terror which the so near approach of such formidable enemies must have occasioned the degenerate Greeks and Latins. That many did in those days "wish themselves dead" (ver. 6), when they saw the miserable condition to which those who fell into the hands of Mohammedans were reduced, is highly probable. The sword, tribute, or apostasy, were the alternatives before them, and miserable indeed was their fate whichever they chose. Doubtless, many who adopted the latter alternative, and not a few did,

* "Decline and Fall," c. li., vol. ix., p. 361.

would have been glad if God had taken away their lives before they had been induced thus shamefully to abandon the religion of their fathers. The poison of Mohammedism was as the poison of a scorpion to their minds and consciences. It rankled within them, and caused excruciating pain to their souls,—for “a wounded spirit who can bear?”—but yet having once embraced it, there was no getting rid of it. They must continue Mohammedans as long as they lived.* The misery of such a state of mind must be greater than can be conceived.

8. The prohibition not to hurt the grass, &c., was verified to the letter in the Saracens, and constituted a remarkable peculiarity in their warfare. Every one knows that invading armies in former times spread desolation around them, and laid waste the countries they attacked by destroying the products of the earth. But it was a matter of religion with the Mohammedans not to injure fruit-trees or corn-fields, nor destroy cattle, or commit wanton destruction of property of any kind.† Their ostensible object was to propagate their religion; this was their *sting*, for they left the poison of it behind them wherever they came. As Ockley repeatedly observes, they seem to have been raised up by

* A man having spoken evil of Islamism, “Omar called him to him, and said, ‘Pray mind what I say to you; if any man makes profession of our religion, and then leaves it, we kill him; therefore, see you do not renounce Islamism.’”—*Ockley*, p. 209.

† Thus when Abubeker sent the first Saracen army into Syria he dismissed them with these words, “When you meet with your enemies, acquit yourselves like men, and do not turn your backs; and if you get the victory kill no little children, nor old people, nor women. Destroy no palm-trees, nor burn any fields of corn. Cut down no fruit-trees, nor do any mischief to cattle, only such as you kill to eat.”—*Hist. of Sar.*, p. 94.

God for this express purpose, that so they might prove a scourge to the professing Christian Church for the sins of its members.

9. The only other point that remains to be considered is, the duration of this locust-woe. *They had power to torment men five months.* Now it is not my intention to enter in this commentary into a discussion of what is commonly called the *year-day* question. This has been done so often and so ably by others, that I could only repeat the arguments already employed, and with which probably most of my readers are familiar.* I shall, therefore, content myself with simply stating the theory according to which I conceive the periods mentioned in the Apocalypse (with one exception) are to be computed, and the grounds on which that theory is founded. The theory then is this:—That *a day* stands for a year; *a month* for thirty year-days, *i.e.*, thirty years; *a year* for three hundred and sixty year-days, or days of a year long; *a time* for the same period, namely, three hundred and sixty years. Now, supposing a person to be commencing the study of the Apocalypse, and never before to have heard of this theory, he would naturally ask, On what authority does it rest? What grounds have we for imagining that time is computed in the Revelation according to this unusual manner? The grounds then

* This question is fully discussed in the "Horæ Apoc.," vol. iii., pp. 220—250. The chief opponents of the year-day theory are Mr. Maitland, Mr. Burgh, and Dr. Todd. None of their objections, in my opinion, have shaken the truth of the theory in the slightest degree. If names should have any weight, the preponderance is immensely in favour of the year-day. It may suffice to mention Mede, Sir Isaac Newton, Bishop Newton, Scott, Faber, Cuninghame, &c. But perhaps the best defence of the theory and refutation of Mr. Maitland is contained in Mr. Birks' work entitled, "A Dissertation on the Year-day System of Interpretation," &c.

on which the general principle is founded are briefly these :—

1st. That as all other things in this book are represented mystically and symbolically, it is not improbable, *à priori*, that time also would be so represented. That is to say, that a different nomenclature would be adopted from that in ordinary use.

2dly. That the various visions presented to the apostle being a sort of miniature representation of the events symbolically predicted by them, we might almost assume (at least it would be highly probable) that the periods those events were to occupy, provided any period were specified, would be spoken of in corresponding terms, and be designated by, as it were, a miniature period of duration.*

3dly. This view is confirmed by the fact that, supposing time in this book to be computed according to the ordinary meaning of words, events are described as having taken place within a specified period which could not very well have been accomplished within such period. As, for example, the slaying and exposure of the two

* The following remarks of Daubuz on this subject are very striking :—“This term (five months) is absolutely suitable to the whole allegory. The natural locusts were observed to last no longer. Now God, having decreed that enemies should ravage Christendom like locusts, and designing beforehand to give warning of that plague under that allegory, but that it should not be perpetual, has therefore limited the power of ravaging to the term of one hundred and fifty years. Thus the symbols and the event have some proportion both as to their qualities and the duration of their power to destroy. But if locusts were represented as lasting one hundred and fifty years, this would make a monstrous appearance; but when once we conceive that such insects may very well represent vast armies, and, on the other hand, that five months, or one hundred and fifty days, can make no such intolerable torment as these are represented to produce, we may well imagine that there is a mystery in these five months.”—*Prelim. Diss.*, p. 60.

witnesses (chap. xi. 7—11). Three ordinary days and a-half is too short a period to contain the things which are said to have been done in it. And what makes the argument from this passage the stronger is the mention of the half-day, which, if understood of a common day, is far too short a period to be worthy of specific mention at all.

4thly. There are several instances in the Old Testament in which a day unquestionably stands for a year; or, to speak more accurately, is made the symbol of a year. As, for example, in Numbers xiv. 32—34, where in pronouncing sentence upon the unbelieving Israelites, God thus addresses them:—“And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years; after the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years.” So Ezekiel was commanded to lie on his side an appointed number of days to prefigure the number of years during which the house of Israel and the house of Judah were to suffer for their iniquity, God himself explaining the meaning of these symbolic days, and saying, “I have appointed thee each day for a year.” (Ezek. iv.) But the most conclusive parallelism of all is that in Daniel ix. 21, where the period which was to elapse from the rebuilding of the city until the coming of the Messiah is distinctly called seventy weeks. Now seventy ordinary weeks would be only one year and a hundred and twenty-five days; and the event has proved that this was not the period intended. But if we turn the specified number into weeks of years, then we get four hundred and ninety years, the precise period which did actually intervene between the execution of Cyrus’s decree and the birth of Christ. This appears to

me to be the most satisfactory argument of all in favour of the year-day theory, because it is an argument derived from an indisputable precedent.

That a month of years is equivalent to thirty, and a year to three hundred and sixty is apparent from hence, that it is only according to this computation that those periods which are differently expressed, but which unquestionably are chronologically identical, can be made to agree with each other. Thus, the treading down of the holy city by the Gentiles, beyond all controversy corresponds in point of time and duration with the prophesying of the witnesses (c. xi. 2, 3); but the former was to continue forty-two months, the latter twelve hundred and sixty days. Now thirty times forty-two is twelve hundred and sixty, which shows that the month consists of thirty days. So the period of the Church's sojourn in the wilderness is expressed in one place by a time, times, and half a time, *i.e.*, three years and a half (c. xii. 14), and in another by twelve hundred and sixty days. (Ver. 6.) Now this latter period is just three hundred and sixty multiplied by three and a-half, showing this to be the number of days in the year according to the computation employed; and such was, in fact, the number of days in the Jewish year.

Assuming, then, that the year-day theory is correct, five months of years will be one hundred and fifty years, which is the period therefore, or thereabouts, during which the locust-woe was to last. I say, or *thereabouts*, because the method of computation employed evidently implies, as it appears to me, that great precision is not to be expected. Had it been said that these locusts had power to hurt for a hundred and fifty days, then in seeking for the fulfilment of the prediction

we must have looked for some woe on Christendom which continued exactly that number of years; but, as when we say five days we do not mean exactly one hundred and twenty hours, but only three days and part of two others, so five months of years may signify only three months and part of two others; just as we say of the locusts themselves, that they continue their depredations for five months, meaning that that is about the period they live. So here, these symbolical locusts continue five months of years; that is, not exactly a hundred and fifty years, but somewhere about that period, it may be ten or twenty, more or less.* With this view the facts of history wonderfully accord. Mohammed was born, as we have seen, in the year 569. In 609 he proclaimed himself a prophet, and in 622 the Hejira, the era of Mahomedanism, commenced. In 632 the Saracens issued from Arabia to enter upon their career of foreign conquests, when their power to hurt the men of Christendom may perhaps be said to have actually begun. In 732, however, exactly a hundred years afterwards, they received that memorable defeat at Tours by Charles Martel, which put an effectual stop to the progress of their arms in the West. Still they continued to torment the men of the Eastern or Greek Empire until the year 786, when the Caliph Haroun Al Raschid compelled Nicephorus to pay tribute.† After

* What makes this view the more probable is, that although the period is mentioned twice it is expressed both times in months. Now, had precise accuracy as to the continuance of this woe been intended I think we may assume that in the second instance the months would have been turned into days, as in the case of the witnesses (c. xi. 2, 3) and the woman's abode in the wilderness (c. xii. 6—14), in both which instances the specified period is expressed in two ways.

† My dates are taken from the chronological tables in the "Encyclopedia Metropolitana."

this the power of the Saracens gradually declined, and they no longer tormented "the men who had not the seal of God in their foreheads." Thus it appears that from their first going forth to torment until their power to hurt ceased, was a period of 154 years, which is sufficiently accurate to answer to the terms of the prophecy.*

Ver. 11.—This verse, with that peculiar point and brevity found only in the Scriptures, shows in few words who was the real originator of Mohammedanism, and guide and ruler of the Saracens. Their king is "the angel of the abyss," the prince of hell, "whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue he hath his name Apollyon."† Mohammed then was not the inventor of Islamism. He was, after all, but the instrument employed by the "father of lies" to proclaim and propagate a religion which, whilst it pretended to have the Word of God for its foundation, and had indeed a semblance of zeal for the truth, completely uprooted and destroyed that which it affected to honour and preserve.‡

* It is a curious coincidence worth mentioning, that Gibbon, in describing the extent of the dominion of the Saracens at the commencement of the eighth century says, that "their empire extended two hundred days' journey from east to west," but, adds he, "if we retrench the sleeve of the robe, as it is called by Arabian writers, the solid and compact dominion from Targana to Aden, from Tarsus to Surat, will spread on every side to the measure of FOUR OR FIVE MONTHS of the march of a caravan." (C. xli., *ad finem.*) It would seem as if this Infidel writer were fated unconsciously to adopt the language of revelation.

† Abaddon and Apollyon have both the same meaning; the one being the Hebrew, the other the Greek, for *destroyer*.

‡ Mohammed everywhere admits in the Koran that God spoke by Moses and the prophets and by Jesus Christ; but he says that the Scriptures, both of Jews and Christians, are altogether corrupt. He never however attempts to bring the slightest evidence of the truth of the charge.

The true author of the Koran and the leader of the Saracens was Satan, the same who afterwards appears as "the great red dragon," the persecutor of the sun-clothed woman. Do not Mohammedism and Popery, different as they may appear to a superficial observer, bear upon them evident marks of the same religion? I know nothing indeed more wonderful than the resemblance in their essential character, and as to their results, between the religion of Rome and the religion of Mecca. Both are based ostensibly on the truth, both pretend great zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of men, and yet both equally veil the glory of the Redeemer and deprive him of his crown. Both teach the perfectibility of man and the merit of good works. Both nullify the one mediatorship of Jesus Christ; the one by multiplying mediators, the other by denying that any mediator is necessary. Both do away with the sufficiency of the atonement; the one by the sacrifice of the mass, the other by making our own sufferings and works propitiatory. And lastly, both tend to draw away the thoughts and affections from Him who is the one true Head of the Church, the invisible ruler and guide of his people, by substituting a visible head in his place; the Roman Catholics, St. Peter, and his pretended successors the Popes; the Mohammedans, their false prophet and his successors the Caliphs. Both also, it may be said, equally dishonour the Word of God; the Romish Church by placing the traditions of men upon a par with it; Mohammed by the publication of the Koran. It is impossible to contemplate these facts without amazement. Popery has been called Satan's master-piece. And, so far as the nations of the West are concerned, it is. But Popery would not have suited the degenerate Oriental

Christians, and, therefore, to draw them away from their allegiance to Christ, "the destroyer of souls" invents a system better adapted to their genius and character, and under the pretext of delivering them from idolatry fastens the chains of error upon them more firmly than ever.

We naturally ask, Why were these things permitted? Why did God permit the impure and absurd fiction of Mohammed to prosper, and extinguish the light of the Gospel over so large a portion of the earth, and amongst so many nominal Christians? The answer to this inquiry will be found in 2 Thess. ii. 10—12: "They received not the *love* of the truth, therefore they believed it not, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. And for this cause did God send upon them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." The truth of the Gospel never perished from amongst a people but for their own fault. If a people love the truth, God will take care that it shall be preserved among them; but if, after the light of truth has shone upon them, they "love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil," then will God justly punish them for their sin by withdrawing the light altogether from them. This was the case with the Churches of Asia and Africa; and a solemn lesson does their destruction read to the Church of England. Those Churches were once, like ourselves, exalted to heaven by their privileges. But they abused their mercies, and did not walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they were called; therefore is the thick darkness of Mohammedism now spread over them.

The Chronological Position of the Second and Third Woes.
c. ix., v. 12.

“*One woe is past, and behold there come two more woes hereafter.*” — There is nothing more wonderful in the Apocalypse, or which proves more clearly its Divine inspiration, than the accuracy with which the chronological marks contained in it are worded. Let me now ask the reader’s attention to this point. It will be remembered that in the 13th verse of the preceding chapter we have an announcement of three distinct woes about to come upon the Roman earth after the destruction of the Western Empire. The first of these woes takes place under the fifth trumpet, and may be called *the locust woe*. The events of this woe having been represented in a sort of symbolical drama, there follows the announcement we are now considering, “*One woe is past, behold there come,*” &c. So, after the completion of the prefiguration of the second woe and its concomitant events, the narrative of which extends to the 13th verse of the eleventh chapter, we have another similar announcement in these words: “*The second woe is past, behold the third woe COMETH QUICKLY.*” Now let the reader observe the marked difference between these two announcements, as regards the predicted time when the respective woes would commence. The first says, “Behold there come two MORE WOES HEREAFTER;” the second, “Behold the third woe cometh QUICKLY!” Thus, then, we are taught, that whereas there would be but little or no interval between the end of the second and the beginning of the third woe, a long space of time would intervene between the first and second. How far this is verified in the

historical fulfilment of the succeeding prophecies, we shall see hereafter.

THE ANGELS BOUND ON THE EUPHRATES.—c. ix. 13--21.

The manner in which this woe is introduced is very remarkable, and deserves especial attention. The reader will observe that *after* the trumpet has sounded, the voice which gives to the four angels their commission is heard: "And the sixth trumpet sounded, and I heard a voice saying to the angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels," &c. Now, all this is very unlike that quick succession of events which followed on the sounding of the first four trumpets, and intimates very plainly that the predicted judgment would be long in preparing, and that some considerable interval would intervene between the cessation of the fifth and the commencement of the sixth woe.

Another point deserving of notice is, the quarter from whence the voice directing the four angels to be loosed, issues: "And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God." Now every little circumstance of this kind has a meaning. The voice of the martyrs came from under the altar, where they had been, in a figure, cruelly and unjustly immolated; and thus the altar had been wronged, and therefore did it cry out for vengeance. Abel's blood cried also from the ground where it had been spilt. This voice, therefore, from the horns of the altar would imply that some wrong had been done to it,—that, in some way or other, *the horns* more especially had been polluted and dishonoured,—that strange incense had been burnt upon the altar, and other blood than that of "the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world," had

been applied to them. Was this so? Now I shall have occasion to enter fully into this subject in commenting upon the last verse of the chapter. I would only here observe, that assuredly strange incense *had* been offered, and other blood than that which alone can take away sin, had been applied, when prayers were presented through human mediators called *saints*, and the works and sufferings of men were mixed up with the works and sufferings of Christ, and pleaded in conjunction with his meritorious righteousness and atoning passion. This, then, is why the voice commanding the angels of vengeance to be loosed comes from "the horns of the golden altar."*

A third circumstance calling for observation, is the locality whence these four angels, which had hitherto been held in check, are loosed. They had been fast bound on *the great river Euphrates*. Now, as the locusts, notoriously an Arabian insect, showed the quarter from whence that woe would proceed, and the hail, the symbol of the northern barbarians, pointed also to the direction from whence they would come, so the mention of the river Euphrates no less distinctly marks the locality of this woe, and it would be absurd, therefore, to look for its commencement in any other part of the world than in the vicinity of that celebrated river.

These things being premised, there now comes the question, who these four angels are? By far the majority of commentators agree in referring this sixth

* In the thirtieth chapter of Exodus will be found a particular account of this altar. It was applied to two uses: the burning of incense, and the application of the blood of the sin-offering to the four horns on the great day of atonement. Moreover, the incense was to be of a peculiar composition; no other might be burnt upon it.

trumpet to the Ottomans, or Turks; nor have I the slightest shadow of a doubt in my own mind as to the correctness of this interpretation. Indeed, all the leading circumstances in the history of the Turks and their Empire will be found to agree so accurately with the characteristics of these Euphratean horsemen, that the mere statement of them must be sufficient to carry conviction to every unprejudiced mind. The following summary is gathered from Gibbon and other authentic sources.

The Turkish Empire may be said to have had its beginning at the taking of Baghdad, A.D. 1057, by a Turkoman, named Togrul Beg, the grandson of the celebrated Seljuk, from whom his descendants were called Seljukian Turks; that is, about two hundred years after the Saracens had ceased to harass Europe: their first appearance thus agreeing with the chronology of the prophecy, which distinctly intimates the intervention of a period of some length between the fifth and sixth trumpets. Togrul Beg conquered Persia and Media, and ventured even to dispatch a herald to demand the tribute or obedience of the Emperor of Constantinople. Upon his refusal, he invaded the empire, and is said to have slain one hundred and thirty thousand Christians in Asia Minor. "Yet," observes the historian, "the arms of Togrul did not make any deep or lasting impression on the Greek Empire. The TORRENT ROLLED AWAY* from the open country, and the Sultan returned without glory or success from the siege of an Armenian city."†

* Let the reader observe that this is essentially the very metaphor employed, c. xvi. 12.

† "Decline and Fall," c. xlviii.

Alp Arslan (Valiant Lion), the nephew and successor of Togrul, passed the Euphrates at the head of his Turkish cavalry, and conquered Armenia and Georgia. In a pitched battle he defeated the Greek Emperor, Romanus Diogenes, whom the Empress Eudoxia had married, and invested with the purple for the defence of her capital. Strange, however, to say, Alp Arslan did not extort any city or province from the captive Emperor; so that, although his power was established, his dominions were not increased by the victory. He is said at this time to have given laws to the fairest part of Asia; twelve hundred princes, or sons of princes, are said to have stood before his throne, and two hundred thousand soldiers to have marched under his banners. He perished, however, by the hand of an assassin.

Alp Arslan was succeeded by his eldest son, Malek Shah, who surpassed his father in ability and reputation, and was considered the greatest monarch of his age. His empire extended east and west, from the neighbourhood of Constantinople to the confines of China, and from the mountains of Georgia on the north, to Arabia Felix on the south. But the most interesting of all his conquests was the city of Jerusalem, which fell into the hands of the Seljukian Turks about the year 1060, and continued in their possession until it was taken from them by the crusaders.

The unity and greatness of the empire of the Seljuks expired in the person of Malek Shah. After his death it was divided into *four* lesser sultanies, or dynasties, and the crusades having commenced about this time, the Turks were too much occupied in defending their own possessions to think of foreign conquests. It was not till the last year of the thirteenth century, shortly

after the crusaders had finally evacuated Palestine, that the Turks of the house of Othman (hence the name Ottomans) invaded the Greek Empire. "On the 27th of July," says the historian, "in the year 1299 of the Christian era, Othman first invaded the territory of Nicomedia; and the singular accuracy of the date seems to disclose some foresight of the rapid and destructive growth of the monster."* From this period the Greeks were constantly harassed by their fierce and persevering enemies, until at length, on the 29th of May, 1453, Constantinople was taken, and the Eastern Empire expired.

Such is an outline of the history of the rise and establishment of that power which, ever since the period last mentioned, has exercised so great an influence upon the destinies of European Christendom. Let us now see how far the details of its history correspond with the details of the prophecy before us, and justify the application we would make of it.

The particular points demanding investigation and proof are these: 1st, The number of the angels loosed, *four*; 2dly, The period for, or at which they are loosed; 3dly, Their characteristics; 4thly, The results and consequences of their being loosed.

1. "*Loose the four angels,*" &c.

Before entering upon the consideration of the number of these angels, it may be proper to remind the reader of the meaning of the word angel, as used in prophecy. An angel, then, in its largest and most general sense, is *a messenger*, any person or thing sent by God for the execution of his purposes. Whatever is made the

* "Decline and Fall," c. lxiv.

instrument of accomplishing the Divine will, whether it be for good or for evil, for preservation or destruction, is, in the language of prophecy, called an angel. All, therefore, that an angel necessarily means, is an instrumental or secondary agent employed by God for the accomplishment of any specific object. The angels, therefore, here referred to, are certain secondary agents which God was about to make use of for the punishment of the professing Church. Now, assuming these angels to be the Ottoman Turks, the question is, why are they spoken of as FOUR in number? There are two answers which may be given to this question. According to Mede, Bishop Newton, and many other expositors, the number four refers to the four sultanies into which the western portion of the empire of Malek Shah was divided towards the close of the eleventh century.* These four sultanies continued to exist as separate and independent dominions until the year 1299, when Othman, the founder of the Ottoman Empire, conquered them all, and having formed a new kingdom out of them, soon after attacked the Eastern Empire. Thus, it is contended, "the four angels were loosed;" for although the empire of Othman was one and undivided, yet it was formed out of the ruins of four other kingdoms, which were bound, or confined like a river within its own channel, by the crusaders, until the close of the thirteenth century.

Now, I do not myself see any really valid objection to this interpretation. It is certain that the four sultanies above mentioned existed throughout the two centuries during which the crusades were carried on, and that

* They were as follows: Baghdad, founded A.D. 1055; Damascus, 1079; Aleppo, 1079; Iconium, 1080.

when the crusades ceased, these four sultanies, being united under one head, invaded, and eventually destroyed the Eastern Empire.

If, however, this interpretation should not appear satisfactory, on the ground, that, although the empire of Othman was originally four distinct dynasties, it was but one when it became the instrument of inflicting God's judgments upon the eastern portion of European Christendom, we may explain the number in this manner. We may take it to denote generally a succession of invaders following one after the other, having one common object for the accomplishment of which they are sent. This, I am inclined to think, is the more consistent explanation of the two. The number four is one of those mystical numbers employed in Scripture to denote fulness and completeness. Ezekiel speaks of God's four sore judgments as comprehending *all* his judgments. And the four living creatures (c. iv.), whatever may be their symbolic import, evidently imply *completeness*: they are the whole of the body, or beings, or persons which they represent. We have also four horsemen (c. vi.); and the number of the series of trumpets, which, sounding in succession, end with the destruction of the Western Empire, is four. So, then, I think we may assume that the number in question is to be understood; as designating, that is, a succession of invaders, who would at length "kill the third part of men," or, in other words, overthrow the Eastern Empire. And thus, in fact, it was that its overthrow was accomplished; not by a sudden effort of one great conqueror, but by the repeated attacks of many. Orchan, the son of Othman, Amurath, Bajazet, and

Mohammed II. (the reader will observe the number), successively invaded the empire during a period of one hundred and fifty years. At length, Constantinople was taken, and a Mohammedan kingdom established in Europe.

2. The period for, or *at* which the angels are loosed. (Ver. 15.) “And the four angels were loosed which had been prepared for, (or, until,) the hour, and day, and month, and year.”* There is some difficulty in determining the precise meaning of the preposition (εἰς) in this passage. The question is, whether it denotes *duration of time*, or whether it merely marks *the commencement of a period*. In the one case, the sense would be, that the operations of the four angels would continue *so long*; and in showing the fulfilment of the prophecy we should have to prove that the Turkish woe lasted the specified period; in the other, the sense would be, that the predicted woe would have a remarkably precise and definite period of commencement; a period, the preciseness of which would be so peculiar as to be noted in history. Perhaps the original text may have been purposely so worded, under the guidance of the Spirit of inspiration, as to admit of both senses. And surely it is not a little remarkable that in either case we are not altogether left without an explanation in the facts of history. For supposing the hour, the day, &c., to denote a period of so long a duration, according to the computation before used in the locust-woe, this period will be as follows:—

* The A.V. is, “*which were prepared for an hour, and a day,*” &c. But this is manifestly not according to the Greek, which has the definite article before the word *hour*, and which, therefore, is understood before all the others. See the text, p. 28.

	Years.	Days.
The year	360	
The month	30	
The day	1	
The hour	0	15
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total	391	15

This, then, was to be the duration of the woe, supposing the preposition to have reference to duration.

Now the Turkish Empire originated, as we have seen, in Togrul Beg, about the year 1062. If, then, we add 391 to this date we shall come to 1453—the very year in which Constantinople was taken.*

I cannot, however, say that this explanation quite satisfies my mind. The manner in which this period is expressed in the Greek conveys the idea rather of a precise point of time at which some event which had been long in preparation would happen, than that of a duration of time made up of a year, a month, &c. I am inclined, therefore, to take the former view of the

* Mede dates the commencement of the Turkish woe from the taking of Baghdad, 1057, and reckoning 365 days to a year, according to the year-day theory, he makes the period 396 years, which brings us exactly to the taking of Constantinople, 1453. But the number of days in the prophetic year being determined in the prophecy to be 360, I do not see on what possible ground we can make it here 365. Bishop Newton would date the commencement in the year 1283, because in that year the famous city of Kutahi was taken from the Greeks. "Compute," says he, "391 years from that time, and they will terminate in the year 1672: and in that year Mohammed the Fourth took Carmeniac from the Poles. Whereupon Prince Cantemir has made this memorable reflection: "This was the last victory whereby any advantage accrued to the Ottoman state, or any city or province was annexed to the ancient bounds of the empire." (Prince Cantemir's Hist., b. iii., c. 12, sect. 18, 19, quoted by Bishop Newton.) It does not, however, appear to me that either of these events were of sufficient importance to be the subject of prophecy.

passage, as intimating, that is, that these instruments of God's judgments would be a long time preparing, until, at the precise moment appointed by him, they would be let loose for the accomplishment of his purposes. And certainly the event wonderfully corresponds with this view of the passage. For the Ottomans, as we have seen, long threatened Constantinople before they actually besieged and got possession of it; whilst at the same time, as if on purpose to verify the terms of the prophecy, the precise day of the year on which they first set their foot on the territory of the empire is the subject of historical record. This precision is so unusual, that it gave occasion to the historian to speak of the "SINGULAR ACCURACY OF THE DATE," as indicating something remarkable in the power to which it relates.* And who can read this comment of the sceptical historian on the fact, and not be struck with the extraordinary agreement between the sentiment it expresses and the "singular accuracy" with which time is spoken of in this part of the Apocalypse? On the 27th of May, 1299, Othman first invaded the territories of the empire, and on the 29th of May, 1453, a day which had been fixed upon by the astrologers as favourable to the enterprise, did his successor, Mohammed II., storm and take Constantinople. Thus, then, were these angels of God's wrath preparing until the precise year, and month, and day, and hour appointed by him arrived, and then they accomplished the work for which they had been prepared.†

There is, however, yet another view that may be taken

* See the quotation from Gibbon, p. 343.

† I think it right to state that both Mede and Bishop Newton suggest a somewhat similar explanation to the above.

of this remarkable passage. Possibly it may have a prospective as well as a retrospective bearing, and be intended to mark the epoch of the termination of the Turkish Empire. Now supposing we reckon that that Empire commenced with the taking of Constantinople in 1453; add 391, and this will bring us to the year 1844. And, although that year be past, and the Sultan still reigns in Constantinople, yet every one acquainted with European affairs, must feel that he retains his throne only by sufferance, and that a single campaign may at any time wrest the reins of power from his hand, and drive him out of Europe for ever. Whether this shall be one year or ten years hence, or more, no human foresight can determine; but that his days are numbered, and that in the year, and month, and day, and hour appointed, he will come to his end, may be considered as certain.

3. We come now to the characteristics of these four angels. These are unmistakable. The apostle tells us he saw immense troops of cavalry issuing forth from the neighbourhood of the Euphrates, the horses having the heads of lions, and the riders seeming to be* clad in breastplates of the colour of fire, purple and brimstone. Moreover, there came forth from the mouths of the horses fire, smoke, and brimstone, by which the third part of men were slain. And further, the tails of these horses were like serpents, and had heads; and were capable, like the tails of the locusts in the preceding vision, of injecting deadly poison. And what, then, were the characteristics of the Ottoman troops which

* The Greek is, *ἐν ὄρασει*, which implies that they *seemed* to have such breastplates because of the fire and smoke which went before and surrounded them.

conquered the Greek Empire and captured Constantinople? They were precisely those just mentioned. They came in vast multitudes from the banks of the Euphrates, and consisted chiefly of cavalry.* They were like lions in fierceness and strength, and in their mode of warfare were proverbially reckless and cruel. They employed enormous pieces of artillery in their sieges, and by their means battered down the walls of Constantinople.† And, lastly, like the Saracens, they left behind them the poison of Mohammedanism, and thus slew the *souls* of those spiritually whose bodies their swords and cannon had not killed. And this is why it is said of them, that “their power is in their mouth and in their tails.” By the fire, smoke, and brimstone, which come forth from their mouths, they kill men’s bodies; and by the poison ejected from their tails, they kill men’s souls. Is it possible to conceive a more exact symbolic representation of the actual facts of history than is thus given in the prophecy? Could St. John

* “All the troops of Othman had consisted of loose squadrons of Turkoman cavalry, who served without pay and fought without discipline.”—(*Decline and Fall*, c. lxiv., vol. xi., p. 435.)

† “Among the implements of destruction he (Mahomet II.) studied with peculiar care the recent and tremendous discovery of the Latins; and his artillery SURPASSED WHATEVER HAD YET APPEARED IN THE WORLD.” “A founder of cannon, by name Urban, a Dane or Hungarian, had deserted to the service of the Moslems. ‘Canst thou,’ said Mahomet, ‘cast a cannon capable of throwing a ball of sufficient size to batter the walls of Constantinople?’ ‘I am not ignorant of their strength,’ was the reply, ‘but were they more solid than those of Babylon, I could oppose an engine of superior power.’ On this assurance a foundry was established at Adrianople; and at the end of three months Urban produced a piece of brass ordnance of stupendous and almost incredible magnitude: a measure of twelve palms is assigned to the bore, and the stone bullet weighed above six hundred pounds.”—See *Decline and Fall*, c. lxxviii., vol. xii., p. 197.

have guessed at these things? Could he have foreseen that the destruction of the Eastern Empire would be effected by instruments of warfare unknown in his days, and utterly unlike any then in use, which, nevertheless, he graphically describes?

4. The only point that remains to be considered is, the result of the loosing of these angels. "By these was the third part of men killed." A single glance at the map which accompanies this Commentary will show at once how this part of the prophecy was fulfilled. It will be there seen, that, supposing the whole ancient Roman Empire to be divided into three parts, that portion conquered by the Turks formed as nearly as possible a third part of it, as did that which was ravaged by the Goths another third; and the reason why these are spoken of as *a third*, is obviously because there was besides another portion, which escaped the devastations both of Goths and Turks, but was completely overrun by the Saracens, and which may, therefore, be considered as tacitly referred to as the other third, although it is not expressly so designated. The accuracy of the prophetic language thus applied and interpreted, is truly wonderful, and must carry conviction to the mind of every person who will take the trouble to investigate the subject with care and candour.

I would only further observe, with regard to the expression, "to slay the third part of men," that this slaying is to be taken in a political sense; it can, in fact, be satisfactorily explained in no other; as having reference, that is, to the destruction of the political power of the third part of the Roman Empire. It will be remembered that, speaking of the locust-woe, it is said, "to them it was given that they should *not* kill them;" and

accordingly the Saracens did not destroy either the Eastern or the Western Empire. They overran, indeed, a large portion of the ancient Roman territory; but the seat of power, Constantinople, escaped them; nor was it until the restraining barrier of the Latin kingdom in Jerusalem was removed, that its destruction was accomplished. Then the Ottoman Turks burst like a furious torrent upon the Eastern capital; the Greek Empire was destroyed, and thus the third part of men was slain.

Ver. 20.—*And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not,*” &c.—THE REST of the men who were not *killed* by the two preceding plagues are unquestionably the inhabitants of that portion of the ancient Roman Empire which escaped the destroying sword both of Saracens and Turks, and who continued still to retain the name and profession of Christianity.* And is this verse then a true description of them? Was nominal Christendom ever in the condition here described? Here again we must refer to history. Let it be borne in mind that the period referred to is from the ninth to the end of the sixteenth century, and that the sins specifically laid to the charge of professing Christendom are, MURDERS, SORCERIES, FORNICATION, THEFTS, AND IMAGE WORSHIP. These are serious charges against any body of professed Christians, and ought not to be rashly made. I proceed then to bring undeniable proofs of the justness of the accusation. The first witness I shall adduce is an eminent member of that very Church against which the charges are more

* A glance at the map will show at once what nations and countries of Europe this included.

specifically made. The Cardinal Fleury in his discourses on ecclesiastical history, has the following remarks on the state of the Church at the period referred to :—

“THE THREE VICES WHICH MADE THE GREATEST HAVOC IN THE WESTERN CHURCH (*i. e.*, the Church of Rome) IN THESE UNHAPPY TIMES WERE, THE INCONTINENCY OF THE CLERGY; THE OUTRAGE AND PILLAGING OF THE LAITY; AND SIMONY, TO WHICH BOTH OF THEM WERE ADDICTED.” *

Now, there is something to my mind startling and irresistibly convincing in this testimony. Here we have an orthodox Roman Catholic writer charging his own Church specifically with those very sins with which we say it is charged in the passage before us! For what is the *incontinence* of the clergy, what—the *outrages* of the laity, what—the *pillaging* and *simony* of both laity and clergy, but “the fornication, and murders, and thefts,” of which “the rest of the men” did not repent?

Let us now hear another witness, the impartial and candid Robertson. Having alluded to the crimes and vices of the higher clergy, he proceeds thus: “Though the inferior clergy were prevented by their poverty from imitating the expensive luxury of their superiors, yet gross ignorance and low debauchery rendered them as contemptible as the others were odious. The severe and unnatural law of celibacy to which both were subject, occasioned such irregularities, that in several parts of Europe the concubinage of priests was not only permitted but enjoined. Long before the sixteenth century, many authors of great name and authority

* Discourse III., s. 13.

give such descriptions of THE DISSOLUTE MORALS OF THE CLERGY AS SEEM ALMOST INCREDIBLE.” *

“ The scandal of these crimes was greatly increased by the facility with which such as committed them obtained pardon. A deacon guilty of *murder* was absolved for twenty crowns. A bishop or abbot might assassinate for three hundred livres. Any ecclesiastic might violate his vows of chastity even with the most aggravating circumstances for the third part of that sum. Even such shocking crimes as occur seldom in human life were taxed at a very moderate rate.” (*Charles V.*, b. ii.)

Can any further testimony be required? When murder, robbery, and licentiousness were in a manner thus legalized, who can estimate the amount of crime committed? †

One other charge, however, remains to be proved, the worship of devils. Were the members of the Church of Rome ever guilty of so gross an enormity as this? Assuredly not, in the sense in which we understand the word *devils*. To accuse the Roman

* Thus, *e.g.*, Bishop Burnet, in his account of the visitation of the monasteries, states, that “ Dr. Leighton having suddenly forced his way into the Abbot of Langden’s house, found a woman with him who passed in and out as a younger brother; and in the Abbot’s coffer there was a habit for her.” He adds, “ But for the lewdness of the confessors of nunneries, and the great corruptions of that state, whole houses being found almost all in a state of pregnancy; for the dissoluteness of abbots and the other monks and friars; for their unnatural lusts and other brutal practices, these are not to be spoken of, much less enlarged upon. I have seen an extract concerning one hundred and forty-four houses, that contains abominations in it equal to any that were in Sodom.”—*Hist. of the Reformation*, vol. i., b. iii., p. 219.

† The reader who requires other proof may consult Gibbon, Mosheim, Milner, Waddington, or D’Aubigné, or any other historian of those times. In fact, the thing is so notorious that the production of evidence is almost unnecessary.

Catholics, or any other sect of Christians, of worshipping what we mean by devils, *i. e.*, evil spirits, would indeed be a monstrous falsehood, and palpably absurd. We bring no such charge against them. But what we do charge them with is, the worshipping of *the souls of good men deceased*, under the name of saints, and thus rendering to them that honour which belongs to God alone. We affirm, moreover, that this worshipping of saints is the very thing here referred to and denounced; in short, that the worship of dæmons and the worship of saints are one and the same thing.

This is a subject of so much interest and importance, that I feel bound in justice to the Roman Catholics themselves, as well as for the information of the Protestant reader, to enter fully into it. We are continually accused by Roman Catholics of bringing false charges against them, and of attributing to them doctrines and practices which they abhor and detest. Amongst these, that of saint-worship, as corresponding with and equivalent to the ancient worship of dæmons, is one. This charge the Roman Catholics repel with indignation; and there are not wanting Protestants who would regard such a charge as unjust and preposterous. I feel, therefore, called upon to show the grounds on which it rests. The two propositions I shall endeavour to establish are these:—

1st. That the dæmons of the Gentiles were an inferior kind of deities, some of whom were supposed to be exclusively of heavenly origin, but the majority of whom were mere men deified after their death, and then regarded as mediators and secondary agents between the higher gods and mortals.

2dly. That the saints of the Church of Rome are

also a species of semi-deified men, and that the honour and reverence paid to them is precisely that which the Heathen paid to their demi-gods.

In proof of the first position, the following quotations from Heathen writers on the origin and offices of dæmons are deserving of the reader's attentive consideration:—

First, Hesiod, the most ancient of poets, says: "The men who lived in the golden age became after they were dead, by the will of Jupiter, GOOD DÆMONS, watching over the earth, the guardians of mortals, the overseers of good and evil works, inhabiting the air, going all about the world, the givers of riches. Such is their kingly office." *

To the same effect, Plato, in his dialogue entitled "Cratylus," says: "Hesiod, and a great number of the rest of the poets, speak excellently, when they affirm that good men when they die attain great honour and dignity, and become DÆMONS" (*δαιμονια*, the very word translated *devils* in the place under consideration). And in the fifth book of his "De Repub." he says: "All those who die in the field of battle are to be esteemed *dæmons*, and their SEPULCHRES should ever

* Ἄνταρ ἐπεὶ κεν τοῦτο γένος κατα γᾶιν καλυψέ,
 Τοὶ μὲν δαιμονες εἴσι, Διὸς μεγάλου δια βούλας,
 Ἔσθλοι, ἐπιχθονιοὶ, φυλάκες θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων
 Ὅι ρα φυλασσοῦσι τε δίκας καὶ σχετλια ἐργα

—Hesiod, *Ἔργ. καὶ Ἡμερ.*, l. i. 120.

For this and the other quotations I am indebted to Mede; although, singular enough, he does not give either the name of the poem, or the book from which it is taken. I have, however, compared the passage with the original, and find it perfectly correct. See Mede's Works, folio, b. iii. p. 628—*Treatise on the Apostasie of the Latter Times*. The whole treatise is a most valuable work, and well worth the perusal of those who wish to understand the true origin and character of saint worship. It has been lately published by the Reformation Society in a cheap form.

after be served and adored as the sepulchres of dæmons."

Again, in his "Symposium," the same writer says, concerning the office of dæmons: "Dæmons are reporters and carriers from men to the gods, and again from gods to men; of the supplications and prayers of the one, and of the injunctions and rewards of devotion from the other."

Apuleius also says, to the same effect: "Dæmons are MIDDLE POWERS, by whom our *desires* and *merits* pass unto the gods; they are carriers between men on earth and gods in heaven; hence of prayers, thence of gifts."

Now, these extracts prove beyond all controversy, that the Heathen regarded *dæmons* not as devils, or evil spirits, but as the souls of good and great men appointed by Jupiter to be the means of conveying the prayers of mortals to him, and his gifts to them. They were, in fact, precisely in their eyes what the saints are in the eyes of Roman Catholics, that is, not gods, but mediators between men and the supreme Deity.

That the word *daemon* has occasionally the same sense in the New Testament, is evident from the way in which it is used, 1 Tim. iv. 1, where the phrase, "doctrines of dæmons," translated in the English Bible, "doctrines of devils," can mean only, as Mede has abundantly proved in his "Treatise" on this text, "doctrines *concerning* dæmons;" *i. e.*, not doctrines of which devils are the authors, but of which they are the *subjects*, doctrines teaching that dæmons, or the souls of good and great men, are to be honoured and worshipped.

Having, then, thus proved the first proposition, I proceed to establish the second,—namely, that the saint worship of Roman Catholics corresponds precisely with the dæmon worship of the Gentiles, and is, in fact, only the same thing under a different form. For this purpose nothing more will be necessary than to institute a comparison between the two. Who were the dæmons of the Gentiles? The souls of dead heroes, legislators, and philosophers. Who are the saints of the Romish Church? The souls of dead Christians, eminent for their wisdom and piety. What were supposed to be the offices of dæmons? To intercede for men with the superior gods, and thus to obtain for them health, riches, and other favours. And what is the supposed office of saints? To intercede with Christ and the Father on behalf of Christians, and to procure for them pardon of sin and temporal blessings.* In what light did the Gentiles regard dæmons, and what honour did they give them? They regarded them as greatly inferior to those who were by birth and generation properly called gods, but as superior to any living men, and they gave them a certain kind of worship, although not exactly the same as that which they gave to the supreme

* So early as the sixth century, we find Chosroes, King of Persia, writing thus to Sergius the Martyr: “When I was at Beramias, I made humble suit to thee, holy Sergius, that thou wouldest come and help me, and that Sira, my wife, might conceive. At which time, O holy Sergius, thou didst appear unto me in my sleep, and toldest me the third time that Sira had conceived. Wherefore, because thou grantest such petitions, I commanded that the rest of the sum should be put up to minister necessities to thy holy house, that thou, O holy Sergius, mightest help both me and Sira, and that we and all others throughout the world may put our trust in thy power, and believe in thee.”

Chosroes, who wrote this, it is true, was a Heathen, but Evagrius, who relates the story, was a Christian, and yet he highly commends the letter as containing “godly sentences.”—*Eran. Eccles. Hist.*, b. vi., c. 20.

god.* And in what light do Roman Catholics regard saints, and what is the nature of those honours which they give them? Do they not regard them as greatly exalted above the ordinary race of men, and, although inferior to Christ and the Father, as the creature must necessarily be inferior to the Creator, yet as entitled, if not to Divine worship, to something so like it, that it is difficult for any ordinary mind to distinguish between them?

Nothing, then, can be more exact than the parallel between the dæmons of the Gentiles and the worship offered them, and the saints of the Church of Rome and the worship presented to them. Strange and incredible, therefore, as it must appear at a first blush to the English reader, to say that the worship of dæmons is the worship of saints, such, nevertheless, is the fact. The dæmons of ancient Rome are the saints of modern Rome; and St. George, and St. Patrick, and St. David, and St. Martin, are but Hercules, and Romulus, and Castor and Pollux, with *other* names. Nor did the judgments inflicted upon Christendom bring about repentance. It is notorious that to this day the worship of saints prevails in the Church of Rome as extensively as ever, and is sanctioned and defended by the highest authorities amongst them.† Well, then, might it be

* Homer, *e.g.*, always represents Jupiter as the supreme god, to whom all others are subject, and he is accordingly addressed in a different style from all others.

“Father Jupiter, greatest and most glorious.” “*Ζευ πατερ ἰδηθεν μεδεων, κυδιστε, μεγαυστε.*”—*Iliad*, l. iii., 320.

† I have in my possession an Italian tract, published at Rome in the last century, the very title of which is sufficient to prove that the worship of saints is still what it was. It is a thin quarto volume, bound in vellum, with the following title-page:—

“RELAZIONE DELLO SCUOPRIMENTO, E RECOGNIZIONE FATTA IN

said, that “the rest of the men which were not slain by these plagues, repented not that they should not worship dæmons, nor images of gold and silver and stone, which can neither see nor hear.”

O that Protestants could be brought to view these things in a more serious light than, it is to be feared, the generality of them do. How fearful a sin is the Church of Rome guilty of in thus seducing the professed servants of God into that very offence which brought destruction upon the ancient Jewish Church! Some persons may argue,—Admitting that there is no great difference between the dæmon-worship of the Heathen and the saint-worship of the Roman Catholics, yet, can there be any very great intrinsic evil in that which was sanctioned and defended in ancient times by the wisest and most

ANCONA DEI SACRI CORPI DI S. CIRIACO, MARCELLINO E LIBERIO, PROTETTORI DELLA CITTA E RIFLESSIONE SOPRA LA TRANSLAZIONE, ED IL CULTO DI QUESTI SANTI!! In Roma Nella Stampiera Di Giovanni Zempel. MDCCLVI. Con Licenza De' Superiori.”

That is, *An account of the discovery and recognition made in Ancona of the sacred bodies of Saints Ciriacus, Marcellinus, and Liberius, PROTECTORS OF THE CITY; and reflections upon the TRANSLATION AND WORSHIP of these Saints. Rome: Printed by John Zempel. 1756. With permission of the superiors.*

This tract was written by the Bishop of Ancona, and is dedicated to Pope Benedict XIV. Amongst other things, the author says, “He feels confident His Holiness will receive with his usual clemency these memorials, the object of which is to *promote and increase* THE WORSHIP (culto) AND GLORY of these saints.”

I have also two other tracts, the title of one of which, in English, is, “A Miraculous Cure which took place in Rome, the 3d December, 1765, at the intercession of St. Luigi Gonzaga, of the Society of Jesus.” This tract begins thus: “Among the many miracles which are every day published of S. Luigi Gonzaga, behold one which will cause true pleasure to his devoted servants, and entirely remove the doubts of the most backward to believe.” And having then related the miracle, than which nothing can be more absurd, it concludes by saying, that the account is published “for the glory of God, and to increase the devotion of his admirers towards the MOST GLORIOUS S. LUIGI GONZAGA.”

virtuous of philosophers, as Socrates and Plato, and in our days by such men as Fenelon, Quesnel, and Pascal? But let us beware of this sophistry. What have we to do with the opinions and practices of men when we have the clear light of God's Word to guide us? Can that be a harmless error which that Word classes with murder, fornication, and theft? Does not that Word tell us, that "there is but one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus," by whom alone we can come to the Father? And if the worship of saints tends, as it inevitably must, to obscure this great truth, and to turn the thoughts to other mediators and intercessors, and thus keep out of sight the one great and only Mediator, can it be innocent?"* Great, then,

The third tract is a narrative of a similar date and character. But why refer to documents a century old? What can be clearer than the language of the present Pope? The following is the conclusion of his first Encyclical Letter:—

"And that the most merciful God may more readily hear our prayers and grant our desires, let us have recourse to the intercession of the Most Holy Mother of God, the Immaculate Virgin Mary, our most sweet Mother, our Mediatrix, our Advocate, our firmest hope, the source of our confidence, and whose protection is most powerful and most efficacious with God. Let us *invoke* also the prince of the apostles, to whom Christ gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven—whom he chose for the foundation-stone of his Church, against which the gates of hell shall never prevail, and his co-apostle Paul, and *all the saints* of heaven, who, already crowned, possess the palm, that **THEY MAY SHED DOWN** upon all Christian people the treasures of Divine mercy."

Thus writes Pope Pius IX. in his first Encyclical Letter, given on the 9th day of November, in the year 1846. And yet Roman Catholics say they do not worship the saints. What, then, *is* saint worship?

* As a further exemplification of the nature of saint-worship, I give the following extract from a book much in use amongst Roman Catholics, entitled, "The Devotion of the Sacred Heart of Mary." London: Printed by Keating and Brown, Duke Street:—

"O Holy Mother of God, GLORIOUS QUEEN OF HEAVEN AND EARTH! I choose thee this day for my Mother, my Queen, and my Advocate at the throne of thy Divine Son." See also the Litany of the Blessed Virgin:

is the guilt of the Church of Rome in persisting still in encouraging her members in these idolatrous practices. Well, surely, may the Lord say of her, "I gave her time to repent of her fornication, and she repented not." (See the Epistle to the Church of Thyatira, and the Commentary, c. ii. 20.)

CHAPTER X. 1—4.

THE ANGEL STANDING ON THE EARTH AND SEA.

Who is this mighty angel who, with one foot on the earth and the other on the sea, and all the ensignia of Divinity about him, seems to claim to himself universal supremacy and dominion? Surely, I can imagine the reader to say, there can be no question here? This mighty angel can be none other than the great angel of the covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ himself? And I admit that, at a first glance, this is the impression which the symbolic picture now presented to us is calculated to produce. We say, "We have here manifestly no finite created being; it is the embodiment, under the name and form of an angel, of the Creator of all, and Lord of all." But although such is undoubtedly the primary impression produced on the mind by this remarkable symbolization, a closer and more careful

It begins thus: "We fly to thy patronage, O Holy Mother of God! Despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us from all dangers, O thou ever glorious and blessed Virgin!"

consideration will, I think, awaken doubts as to whether this angel be indeed what he appears to be. For obvious as may seem the resemblance between this angel and the Great Head of the Church, there are circumstances in the vision which render the carrying out of such an application exceedingly difficult; which, I may say, in fact, do not on this hypothesis admit of a satisfactory explanation. There is, indeed, no portion of the Apocalypse that has occasioned commentators more perplexity, and given rise to a greater variety of interpretations, than this, and that solely, as I believe, because they have set out with the assumption that this mighty angel must be a symbolical representation of our blessed Lord.* But, as I have just hinted, are there not circumstances here which may well excite our suspicions as to the correctness of this assumption? True, this angel bears about him all the characteristic marks of the Lord himself. There is the rainbow around the head, and the sun-like countenance, and the feet as of fire, just as in the vision of the first chapter, all which things seem clearly to identify this angel with him who, in the character of the Great High Priest of the Church, walked in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. Yet, can it be Christ who now appears? Are we not told that "the heavens must receive him till the time of the restitution of all things" (Acts iii. 21), and that "when he shall appear his people will appear with him in glory?" (Col. iii. 3.) Will he not come "with the clouds of heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance

* Thus Daubuz says, "When I set upon the study of this sacred book, I found the symbols of this chapter to be not so obvious as those of the rest."—(P. 454.)

on them that know not God?" (2 Thess. ii. 7.) How, then, can this mighty angel be He, seeing that he descends from heaven alone, without any of the accompanying circumstances above mentioned, and that, too, long before the time appointed for the restitution of all things? Are we to look for an intermediate advent? Or is this mighty angel but the symbolization of some individual who would be sent by him to be his representative, and speak in his name? But in that case would there be so exact a personification of the Lord himself? Would the Great Head of the Church despoil himself of all the emblems of Divinity to put them upon his representative, and thus give his glory to another? These considerations may well, I think, awaken our doubts as to whether this mighty angel be either Christ himself or his *appointed* representative.

But we shall find, as we proceed, still greater difficulties in the way of such a supposition. In the after-details of the vision, the apostle four different times receives directions as to certain things he is to do. He is forbidden to write the things which the seven thunders utter—he is commanded to go and take the little book from the hand of the angel—he is told that he must prophesy again concerning nations and tongues—and a reed like a rod being put into his hand, he is told to measure the temple. But by whom are these several directions and commands given? Not by the angel, but by *a voice from heaven*.* It is a voice from heaven forbids St. John to write the utterances of the seven

* According to the English version, indeed, the commission to prophesy and the direction to measure the temple come from the angel, but it is now universally admitted, on the authority of the most ancient MSS. and versions, that our translation is made from an incorrect reading of the text.

thunders, which, let it be observed, are the echo of the lion-like cry; it is the voice from heaven, which tells him to go and take the book out of the angel's hand, &c. Now, is it conceivable, that if this angel were Christ a voice from heaven would direct the apostle in these several instances what to do, and not the angel himself?

Again, I have just said that the seven thunders are the echo or response to the lion-like cry; they are the cry, as it were, taken up and repeated, and, therefore, in a manner identical with it; consequently, the prohibition to write the utterances of the seven thunders, involves a prohibition to write also what the cloud-clad angel had uttered. But twice afterwards the apostle is directed to write what he had heard, *because they were the true sayings of God*. May we not, then, infer that this lion-like cry, and the utterances of the seven thunders, were not the true sayings of God, and that is why they were not to be written? But if so, how can the angel be Christ?

Further, this angel appears in *a cloud*, which is the symbol of the Divine glory, but then there is a peculiarity about this cloud which seems to imply that it has a specific meaning. It is not the angel's throne, or chariot, but it is his *garment*. He is *clothed with a cloud*. And what can this signify but that the cloud hides his true character? His face and feet and hands only are seen; the rest of his body is hidden by the cloud. He is shrouded, as it were, in mystery.*

But it is the circumstances connected with the little book which seem to me most clearly to demonstrate

* In c. xi. 22, the two witnesses ascend to heaven in this cloud, whilst the angel still remains standing upon the earth and the sea, showing that their ascent is connected with the discovery of his true character.—See the Commentary.

that this mighty angel is not in any sense a symbolization of Christ. He appears with a little book open in his hand, and the apostle is directed by a voice from heaven,—the angel does not himself invite him,—to go and *take* the little book out of the angel's hand. And he accordingly goes and *demand*s the book, which is given him with apparent reluctance, and he is warned that though sweet in his mouth it will make bitter his bowels; and so it proves. Now is not every circumstance here calculated to awaken the suspicion that this angel is not what he appears to be? That there is something of imposture and falsification about him? Why else the voice from heaven? And if he were Christ himself would the apostle go and boldly demand the book? Does his mode of asking for it indicate that reverence which he ever showed in addressing his Lord? And then as to the book itself, what means its sweetness in the mouth and bitterness in the stomach? Why was it sweet when only *tasted*, but bitter when *digested*? Does not this look as if there were something of falsification about that also? as if it were not a genuine document, but a forgery, having the bitterness of falsehood garnished over with the sweetness of apparent truth? I commend these things to the reader's attention. I have never yet met with a satisfactory explanation of them.*

* The generality of commentators regarding this little book as a book of prophecy, and a sort of codicil to the seven-sealed book, explain its sweetness and bitterness as implying that, although the act of receiving Divine communications is sweet, the substance of them is bitter, as being denunciations of God's judgments upon the wicked. But how is it then that in the parallel case of Ezekiel there is no mention of bitterness, although his roll was written over with "mourning, lamentation, and woe?" Mr. Elliott, who takes the little book to be the New Testament,

But what, then, are we to think? If this cloud-clad angel be not Christ, nor any divinely-appointed representative of him, who or what can he be? What but a false Christ—an Antichrist?—One, that is, who puts himself in the place of Christ, and proclaims himself to be, though falsely, his substitute and representative, and in this character assumes dominion over the earth, and demands the homage of all mankind? Yes, it must be so; this mighty, colossal, cloud-clad angel is nothing more or less than a counterfeit Christ, and the little book which he holds in his hand is but an imitation of the seven-sealed book opened by the Lamb, but which he pretends is a genuine deed, giving him a clear and indisputable title to the world's inheritance. Here I think we have found the key to the true meaning of this mysterious vision. Assuming that this angel is the symbolization not of a reality but of an imposture, everything becomes easy of explanation.

Proceeding upon this general hypothesis, let us test the truth of it by the examination of details.

The first point to be determined is the chronology of the vision.* To what period in the prophetic drama

explains the *sweetness* of the intrinsic excellence of the word itself, the *bitterness* of the afflictions which the bringing its truths to light involved. But does this answer to the facts of the case? Was not the book *itself* first sweet and then bitter? Dr. Wordsworth, who also thinks the little book represents the Bible, explains its sweetness and bitterness thus: "The book is sweet as honey; for as the Psalmist says, 'O how sweet are thy words,' &c. But it embitters his belly—that is, the natural man (!). The preaching of God's Word to a thankless world will bring sorrow with it to the natural man!"—*Lectures on the Apocalypse*, p. 238.

* The importance of fixing the true chronological position of this vision, in order to its right interpretation is obvious. Until we have done this, in fact, we can have no sure ground to go upon; and I think it is from neglecting this point that so many commentators have erred in their exposition. Mr. Elliott, *e.g.*, at once sets aside Vittinga's interpretation

does this angel belong? Is his appearance subsequent to that of the two woe angels of the preceding chapter, or is he a cotemporary with them? Or, does he come in between them? The latter, will, I think, upon examination, be found to be his true position. It is not said, "*After these things, I saw an angel,*" but, "*And I saw another angel descending,*" &c., plainly intimating that this angel appears upon the scene of vision simultaneously with either one or the other of the two preceding, or, at least, that his actings come in somewhere during the course of theirs. Now it will be remembered that there is a remarkable hiatus in the predicted operations of those angels; a gap of some two or three hundred years between the end of the first woe (the Saracenic), and the commencement of the second (the Turkish). Is it not then probable that this mighty angel who now suddenly appears upon the scene, comes in at this interval, and that the gap in the symbolic narrative, especially seeing it was pregnant with important events, is filled up in some part of his history?*

of the seven thunders because, he says, it is quite out of place, as referring to events long preceding the Reformation." ("Horæ Apoc.," vol. ii., p. 102.) This, however, is not quite fair. It is assuming the very point in dispute. Mr. E. himself, indeed, in the preceding page, clears Vitringa from this apparent inconsistency. "Vitringa," he observes, "does not explain the vision of this chapter of the Reformation, so that his interpretation of the seven thunders does not involve that chronological inconsistency." (Note 3.) Strange that in the very next page he should adduce it as the only reason for rejecting Vitringa's explanation! Mr. Elliott's views of this chapter will be found stated at large in my "Analysis of modern Commentaries."

* I would ask the reader's particular attention to this point. Nothing is more wonderful in the Apocalypse, as has been before remarked, than the precision with which time is noted; and I cannot doubt, therefore, that had this angel's appearance been intended to refer to the events subsequent to those of the two preceding woe-trumpets, there would have been some intimation to that effect.

The four angels, it should be observed, are said to have been bound on the great river Euphrates, but we are not told how, or by what agency, they were bound;—may we not look for that agency in this mighty colossal angel? and may not the voice he utters, and the seven thunders which respond to it, be the instrumentality whereby the four Euphratean angels were restrained for a season from hurting? I think we shall find this to be the case, and that this view is confirmed in a most remarkable manner by historical facts.

Assuming, then, that the descent of this mighty angel took place somewhere between the cessation of the first woe (*i. e.*, of the conquests of the Saracens), and the loosing of the four angels (the Turks), who were bound on the Euphrates; that is to say, in the course of the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries, we have to show that the various particulars connected with this angel's appearance were then fulfilled.

And first, then, as to the angel himself. In order to establish our hypothesis, it must be shown that at the period just mentioned there was an individual whose pretensions and assumptions corresponded in all respects with the prefiguration; an ecclesiastical person (for he could be no other), who affirmed himself to be Christ's representative, and as such claimed the homage of all mankind; who in his official capacity assumed to himself the functions and prerogatives of Deity; who, setting his foot on earth and sea, asserted that they both belonged to him, and were at his disposal; who, with the rainbow, the emblem of the Divine mercy around his head, pretended to the power of forgiving sins, and of dispensing, according to his pleasure, the treasures of heavenly grace; and, finally, who, with feet as pillars of

fire, proclaimed himself to be the executor of God's wrath upon the wicked, the punisher of the rebellious and disobedient. And is it, then, a fact, that precisely at the interval before mentioned, there appeared in the Church an ecclesiastic who did put forth all these pretensions, and claim for himself all these prerogatives? Incredible as it must seem to those who have never before studied the subject, such was, indeed, the case. It was *just at the time above specified* that the Bishop of Rome, who had long been aiming at universal supremacy, shot up to a giant-like stature, and lifting his head to the skies, stood like a mighty colossus, bestriding sea and land, as Lord of all.* A rapid glance at the history of the Popedom about this period will be sufficient to show that these assertions are strictly true.

The author of absolute Papal supremacy was a monk of Clugni, named Hildebrand.† This remarkable man, afterwards so famous as Gregory VII., was elected to the Popedom in 1073; and no sooner had he attained this high dignity than he set about carrying into execution the vast schemes he had formed for the aggrandizement of the Papal See. This was nothing less than to make the Bishop of Rome the arbiter of the world, and virtually the most absolute and despotic ruler upon

* For the propriety of the metaphor we may appeal to the authority of our great dramatic poet, who thus describes one who aimed at universal sovereignty:—

“Why man he doth bestride the narrow world,
Like a Colossus, and we petty men
Walk under his huge legs, and peep about
To find ourselves dishonourable graves.”—*Julius Cæsar*.

† Not that we are to date the commencement of the Papacy from this period. Its foundations had been laid centuries before. I speak only of its complete development. (See this subject more fully considered, vol. ii., on c. xiii.)

earth. As the representative of Christ he claimed dominion over all ranks and classes of men, and affirmed that the Roman Pontiff was not only independent of all human authority, but above all kings and princes, and that even the Emperor himself held the Empire only as the fief of the Church.* Claims so baseless and extravagant seem scarcely credible, yet they were not only put forth, but acted upon.† Being displeased with the Emperor, Henry IV., because he refused to submit to his authority on some trifling points, this haughty Pontiff *summoned* him to Rome to answer to certain charges made against him by his subjects. And when Henry treated this summons with contempt, what did he do? He instantly called a Council and declared the contumacious monarch to be deprived of his kingdom! In a full assembly of one hundred and ten bishops he pronounced the excom-

* "That ambitious monk (Gregory VII.) devoted his life to the execution of two projects: 1. To fix in the College of Cardinals the freedom and independence of election; and for ever to abolish the right or usurpation of the emperors, and the Roman people. 2. To BESTOW AND RESUME the Western Empire as a fief or benefice of the Church, and to extend HIS TEMPORAL DOMINION OVER KINGS AND KINGDOMS OF THE EARTH."—Gibbon; *Decline and Fall*, c. 49, vol. ix., p. 199.

† "The views of Hildebrand," says Mosheim, "were not confined to the erection of an absolute and universal monarchy in the Church, they aimed also at the establishment of a civil monarchy, equally extensive and despotic. His purpose was to engage in the bonds of fidelity and allegiance to St. Peter, *i. e.*, to the Roman Pontiff, all the kings and princes of the earth, and to establish at Rome an Annual Assembly of bishops, by whom the rights and pretensions of princes were to be examined, and THE FATE OF NATIONS AND KINGDOMS TO BE DETERMINED."

"That Hildebrand laid this audacious plan is undoubtedly evident both from his own epistles, and other authentic records of antiquity. The nature of the oath which he drew up for the Emperor of the Romans, from whom he demanded A PROFESSION OF SUBJECTION AND ALLEGIANCE, shows abundantly the arrogance of his pretensions."—*Mosheim's Eccles. Hist.*, translated by Dr. Maclaine, cent. xi., part ii., c. 1, § 10.

munication of the Emperor, and accompanied the anathema by the unqualified sentence, "THAT HE HAD FORFEITED THE KINGDOMS OF GERMANY AND ITALY, AND THAT HIS SUBJECTS WERE ABSOLVED FROM THEIR OATH OF FEALTY."*

And what was the result of this extraordinary contest? Forsaken by his nearest friends, and terrified at the results of the anathema which had been pronounced against him, Henry repaired to Rome, and humbly besought to be admitted into the presence of the Pontiff. But this was too great a favour, after what had occurred, to be granted all at once. Determined to assert his authority over the kings of the earth, Gregory kept the Royal penitent waiting like a menial at the gates of his castle. For three whole days did the proudest monarch in Europe, clad in penitential garments, continue his fast and his penance before the walls, and under the eyes of Gregory.† Admitted at length into the presence of his Holiness, he was conditionally absolved; but having soon again offended, upon the Pope's sole authority he was formally deposed, and the Crown of Germany conferred upon another.

Thus, then, we see how this haughty Pontiff assumed

* "Waddington's History of the Church," p. 281. The following are the words of the sentence: "Petrus Apostolorum Princeps, &c., &c. Hæc fiducia fretus pro Ecclesiæ tuæ honore et defensione, ex parte omnipotentis Dei, Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti, per tuam potestatem et auctoritatem, Henrico Regi, filio Henrici Imperatoris, qui contra Ecclesiam tam inaudita superbia insurrexit, totius regni Teutonicorum, et Italiæ contradico, et omnes Christianos A VINCULO JURAMENTI quod sibi fecère vel facient, ABSOLVO; et ut nullus ei sicut Regi serviat, interdico. Dignum est enim, ut, qui studet honorem Ecclesiæ tuæ imminuere, ipse honorem amittat quem videtur habere," &c.—Paul. Bernried, cap. 75, Pagi. Vit. Greg. vii., § 42. Quoted by Waddington, Hist., p. 282.

† "Waddington's History of the Church," p. 282.

to himself the sovereignty of the earth, disposing of thrones and sceptres at his will, as if the world were his and the fulness thereof.*

But it may be said, this was the madness and extravagance of an individual, and such claims and such acts, therefore, are to be imputed to the man, not to his office—to Hildebrand, not to the Pope. But no, it was not so. It was as Pope, as Sovereign Pontiff, that Hildebrand spoke and acted; and his successors in office have shown that in their official capacity they claim the same authority, and exercise the same powers. What prerogative of Deity is there that the Popes have not, at different times, assumed and exercised? Is it God that “setteth up one and putteth down another?” is it He that giveth the kingdom to whomsoever he will? But have not a succession of Popes, from Gregory’s days to ours, claimed the power of disposing of kingdoms? Did not Pope Alexander, as the vicegerent of Christ, give the whole of the newly-discovered Continent of America to the King of Castile, expressly affirming in the grant, that all countries and kingdoms were placed at his disposal?† And one hundred years later, did not Pius V. declare our Queen Elizabeth

* “Many more examples might be alleged of the frenetic ambition of Gregory. Had the success of that Pontiff been equal to the extent of his insolent views, all the kingdoms of Europe would have been this day tributary to the Roman See, and its princes the soldiers or vassals of St. Peter, in the person of his pretended vicar upon earth.”—*Mosheim*, part ii., c. i., § 10.

† “As the Inca drew near, Father Vincent Valverde advanced with a crucifix in one hand and a breviary in the other; and in a long discourse explained to him the doctrine of the creation, &c., the appointment of St. Peter as GOD’S VICEGERENT UPON EARTH, the transmission of his apostolic power by succession to the Popes, and the donation made to the King of Castile by Pope Alexander, of all the regions in the New World.”—*Robertson’s America*, book vi. Anno 1532.

deprived of her kingdom, and her subjects absolved from their allegiance, asserting in the Bull of deprivation that God had appointed him his representative, and given him full power to plant or to destroy princes, nations, and kingdoms, at his will?*

What law of God or man is there which the Bishop of Rome has not on different occasions assumed the power of dispensing with? Has he not erased the second commandment from the decalogue, and, whereas that says, “Thou *shalt not* make and bow down to any graven image;” he says, “Ye *may* make graven images, and bow down to them?” Has he not virtually annulled the fourth commandment, by permitting men to make that day which God has said shall be kept holy, a day of licence and dissipation?

And what shall we say to the whole system of indulgences? Does not the Pope here exercise the prerogative of Deity? “Who can forgive sins but God only?” And yet the bishops of Rome claim the power of remitting the punishment due to sin for thousands and ten thousands of years!

Again, who can know what is in man but he that searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins? Who can tell whether this man or that deserves the title of a saint in that peculiar and distinctive sense in which the term is used in the Church of Rome, but he who is the King of saints? Yet the Roman Pontiff presumes to decide authoritatively in this case, and, as if he were endued with the infallibility of omniscience, commands the world to venerate the man whom he pronounces blessed!

Need I say more? Have I not already adduced abundant proof that the Roman Pontiffs assume and

* See the translation of the whole Bull, appended to this volume.

exercise the functions and prerogatives of Christ, and, as his vicars and representatives, claim the very authority and power which belong to him? And why then should we hesitate to admit that this cloud-clad angel, notwithstanding that he bears about him so many external indications of divinity, is but a symbolization of the great usurper of Messiah's throne? Does the reader ask for other evidence of a fact so paradoxical and astounding? I would refer him then to Rome itself. I would bring before him Rome's own representation of her bishop, and I would ask whether it does not seem as if by a strange infatuation she had herself directed us to the true interpretation of this vision. In the Genoese arc, between the Castle of St. Angelo and the Vatican, there is a picture which is thus described by a devoted Roman Catholic:—"In the mid-sky, beneath two branches of palm-trees, stands the POPE; below is seen a bow—that is, *a rainbow*—(*eioe*, IRIS), and beneath the bow, mountains, rivers, plains, trees, men, and women, and a sentence written, which says, '*The world hath been unveiled to light; THE KING OF GLORY HATH GONE FORTH!*'" In the arc of the Florentines there is another symbolical painting, and what is its description?—"Here the Pope is represented with ONE FOOT ON THE EARTH AND THE OTHER ON THE SEA; and in his right hand he has a key, with which he opens heaven, and in his left another key, whilst opposite to him is seen the noble city of Florida raised up in the air, and beneath this legend, '*I am lifted up because I see committed to thee the dominion of earth, and sea, and heaven.*'" There is yet a third picture, in which the Pope is represented in the character of a shepherd fishing; and having lighted *a great fire*, as casting into it the bad fish he has drawn in

his net and returning the good into the river, and underneath the legend, “Non desinam usque ad unum;” *I will not leave off till not one is left*; thus assuming to himself the power of separating between the good and bad, and of consigning to the flames all those whom in the exercise of his infallibility he may judge unworthy to live! *

Now these pictures require no comment. Here we have the very symbolization of the prophecy adopted by the human artist and applied to the Pope. For in the first painting the Pope himself, as the legend beneath shows, appears as the *sun*, and the *rainbow* of his mercy surrounds him. In the second, not only have we the Pope in the very attitude of the cloud-clad angel, but the motto beneath declares its meaning. In the third, the fire burning at his side, into which the bad fish are cast, shows that whilst he claims the Divine prerogative, of which the rainbow is the emblem, and “has mercy on whom he will have mercy,” he assumes also the more awful attribute of inflexible justice, and with his feet as pillars of fire, “treads down the wicked.”

Thus it appears that nothing is wanting. The Vatican itself supplies the counterpart of the apocalyptic picture. And as then we gaze upon this mighty colossal angel bestriding the earth and sea, and compare with it Rome’s own representations of her bishop, how can

* I give the description of these pictures on the authority of an Italian writer named Penni, who wrote a detailed account of the installation of Leo X., and who is quoted by Mr. Elliott in his “*Horæ Apocalyptiæ*,” vol. ii., p. 55, whence the above extract is derived. Mr. E. asks, “Have we not in these two pictures the very counterpart to the opening emblems of the vision before us?” Assuredly we have; and I cannot therefore but be surprised that he should notwithstanding think that this mighty angel represents primarily Christ, and the Pope only in the way of *allusive contrast*. See the analysis of the “*Horæ*” in the Appendix.

we fail to see in him the type of that marvellous usurper who calls himself the Vicar of Christ and Vicerent of God upon earth?

We come now to the consideration of THE LION-LIKE CRY AND THE SEVEN THUNDERS. “*And he cried with a loud cry as when a lion roareth, and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.*” Now what are the ideas which this imagery naturally suggests? First of all, what is the idea connected with the roaring of a lion—a lion not roaming about in search of prey, but standing still, and roaring, therefore, with rage and indignation? It is that his prey has been taken from him, and he roars for help to recover it. And then, what the idea connected with thunder? It is proverbially “the voice of the Lord.” It is God, as it were, speaking from heaven. It would seem, then, if our hypothesis be correct, that this prefiguration represents the Roman Pontiff, after having established his claims to universal supremacy, as uttering a loud cry, calling for help to recover certain possessions which have been violently taken away from him, and as receiving apparently a response to that cry from heaven, and obtaining the help he so earnestly demands.* And are there any circumstances in the history of the Papacy about this period which correspond with these prefigurations? No doubt, after what has been said, THE CRUSADES will at once occur to the mind of the reader as seeming to verify the prediction; and it is indeed astonishing with what

* This is surely a far more natural interpretation of the symbolization than that of Daubuz (followed by Mr. Elliott), who explains the lion-like cry of the voice of the Reformers, as if Christ, speaking through them, would vindicate his rights. But where, in that case, would be the propriety of the angel's attitude, which clearly implies the assumption of territorial dominion?

exactness those remarkable expeditions answer in every minute particular the requirements of this mysterious prophecy. Let it be observed that the prophecy represents the Roman Pontiff standing as Lord of the world upon the shores of Italy, looking towards the Holy Land,* calling upon Christendom to arise and help him to recover certain possessions which have been wrested from him. The call is taken to be the call of God, and responded to seven times. But the whole thing is a delusion, and, therefore, neither what the angel utters nor what the seven thunders utter is to be written. Such is the prophecy, and what are the facts of history?

During the seventh and eighth centuries a large portion of Christendom, including the Holy Land and the city of Jerusalem, had been wrested by the Saracens from the hands of Christians, and fresh armies of the followers of the false prophet were preparing to attack Constantinople itself, and from thence perhaps pass on to the capital of the West. It was, then, precisely at this period, just as the four angels who were destined eventually to slay "the third part of men" were springing into existence, that the Crusades were projected, and for the space of two hundred years kept the four angels bound on the river Euphrates.

Towards the latter end of the year 1095, just after Hildebrand had established the supremacy of the Papacy

* His *left* foot was upon the land, his *right* foot upon the sea, and supposing him therefore to have been standing upon the Italian coast near Rome, he must have been looking towards Palestine. But that he *was* standing near Rome, I infer from the comparison of ver. 9 of this chapter with ver. 1 of chap. xiii. The apostle, when he saw the beast rise out of the sea, was evidently standing where he stood when he took the little book out of the angel's hand.

in the plenitude of its power, the Bishop of Rome assembled a council at Clermont to deliberate, amongst other things, respecting THE RECOVERY OF THE HOLY LAND FROM THE HANDS OF THE INFIDELS. The second sitting of the council was held in the market-place of Clermont. There the Pope, raised upon a lofty throne, with Peter the Hermit at his side, surrounded by his Cardinals and an immense concourse of the clergy, set forth in affecting terms the desolations of the Holy City, and called upon the warriors of Christendom to arise and wrench it from the hands of the unbelievers. Scarcely had he concluded his address, when the whole assembly rose as one man and shouted with a loud voice, "GOD WILLS IT; GOD WILLS IT." "Yes," replied the Pontiff, "God indeed does will it; it is HE that has dictated to you the words I now hear; let them henceforth in all your combats be your war-cry."*

Such were the circumstances under which the first crusade was resolved upon. And is it possible to conceive a more exact verification of the prophecy? The Pope, as the representative of Christ, cries with a lion-like voice to the assembled representatives of Christendom, "Come, and help me to regain that we have lost." The multitude respond as with a voice of thunder, and which the Pope himself interprets to be the voice of God, "We will; God bids us go." And this was repeated seven times, just the number specified in the prophecy. Seven times did different Pontiffs utter the lion's roar to arouse the nations of Christendom, and seven times did the kings and princes of Europe respond

* "Abregé de l'Histoire des Croisades," par F. Valentin. Tours, 1815. See also "Decline and Fall," vol. xi., c. 58.

to the cry, and, under the full impression that “God willed it,” descend like a terrific storm of thunder and lightning upon the coasts of Palestine.*

In corroboration of this view, I would ask the reader’s attentive consideration of the following historical statements, written, let it be observed, without the slightest intentional reference to the fulfilment of prophecy:—

“The report of the Council of Clermont wafted a cheering gale over the minds of Christians. There was no nation so remote, no people so retired as did not *respond* to the Papal wishes. This ardent wish not only inspired the continental province, but the most distant islands and savage countries. The frame of society was convulsed and seemingly dissolved, and as the *will of heaven* is not uncommonly pleaded to justify the extravagance of man, the phenomena of the physical world were pressed into the same adventure; meteors and exhalations pointed out the road to Jerusalem, and the most ordinary signs of nature became portents and prodigies. The first burst of *the storm* fell upon some miserable Jews who were living under Christian pro-

* The order and dates of the Crusades are as follows:—

1. The first, which was the only successful one, and of which Godfrey of Bouillon may be considered the leader, commenced A.D. 1096.
2. The second, under the Emperor Conrad III., 1147.
3. The third, under Frederic Barbarossa, 1189.
4. The fourth, under Philip of France and Richard of England, 1191.
5. The fifth, under Baldwin of Flanders and Dandolo the Venetian, about 1204.
6. The sixth, under Andrew, King of Hungary, 1217.
7. The seventh and last, under Louis IX., King of France, 1248. Louis died in Tunis, in 1270, and in 1290 the Christians were finally expelled from the Holy Land.

The above is from Vitringa. Gibbon also enumerates seven Crusades, but he gives a somewhat different list of the leaders in each. Vol. xi., c. 58.

tection. It then *rolled* onwards, and the follies, the sufferings, and the crimes which marked the progress of the first Crusade have not ever been equalled in the history of human madness."

"The banner of the cross was finally planted on Mount Zion, amidst unparalleled horrors; but, *Deus et Vult*, IT IS THE WILL OF GOD, was the watchword and the battle-shout of the Christians: it overpowered the prayers of the women and the screams of their dying children." *

It is needless to pursue these illustrations any further. The results of the crusades are well known. After having captured Jerusalem, a *Latin* kingdom was established there, and Godfrey de Bouillon elected king. But Jerusalem was soon retaken by the Turks; and after six ineffectual attempts to regain it, attended with indescribable crimes and sufferings, the Holy Land was at length, in the year 1291, again abandoned to the Infidels. Thus, at the expiration of two hundred years from the Council of Clermont, after the treasures of kingdoms had been expended, and TWO MILLIONS of lives sacrificed, in these fruitless expeditions, undertaken under the strongest conviction that a voice from heaven had originated them, the nations of Europe had the mortification to see all their hopes disappointed, and their fancied inspiration clearly proved by the event to be a delusive imagination.

Thus, then, as it appears to me, the mystery hanging over this part of the Apocalypse is cleared up. The reason why the lion-like cry and the responsive voices of the seven thunders are mentioned, but yet forbidden

* See Dean Waddington's "Hist. of the Church," p. 432. His summary of the Crusades is exceedingly interesting.

to be written in detail, becomes obvious. The Crusades were events of too much importance and interest to be altogether passed over in the prophetic history; * yet, inasmuch as they were undertaken upon false principles, and their issue was so disastrous, and the religious fervour with which the nations of Europe were then agitated, though mistaken for inspiration, was nothing more than the effect of gross and selfish superstition, therefore were they forbidden to be recorded as a part of the history of Christ's Church. And well indeed would it be for the honour of the Christian name, were the transactions of these miscalled "holy wars" buried in eternal oblivion.

THE ANGEL'S OATH.

Vers. 5—7.—It will doubtless have struck the reader that the circumstances related in these verses present a formidable objection to the foregoing interpretation. For the angel's oath, it may be argued, is evidently a solemn appeal to the true God, and the prophecy contained in it a true prophecy; and how, then, can it be supposed that this mighty angel represents a mere pretender to Christ's prerogatives, like the Bishop of Rome? In that case, would such an oath and such a prophecy have been put into his mouth? But this

* Is it indeed for a moment to be supposed that they would be altogether passed over? On this point, let me ask the reader's attention to the following observations of Dean Waddington. "We feel called upon," says he, "to take some notice of the Crusades, to *justify* the pretensions of this work, which would *vainly* assume the pretensions of an Ecclesiastical history, if it should pass *in entire silence* over the most amazing phenomena which ever proceeded from the abuse of religion." (P. 456.) Certainly: and can we then think that these phenomena have been passed over in entire silence in the divinely inspired Church history of the Apocalypse?

difficulty, which I grant at first sight appears almost insurmountable, admits, I think it will be found, of a satisfactory solution. The Gospel of St. John (c. xi. 51) affords a case of a similar kind, and singularly illustrative of that before us. Caiaphas, the High Priest, standing up in the Council of the Jews, had said: "Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." Now, what is the evangelist's remarkable commentary on these words of Caiaphas? "And this," says he, "spake he not of HIMSELF: but being *High Priest* that year, *he prophesied* that Jesus should die for that nation," &c. Thus, then, it appears that Caiaphas, although himself a godless and wicked man, was nevertheless inspired in his official capacity of High Priest to utter one of the most sublime and interesting prophecies ever spoken by human lips. And why then should not the Roman Pontiff, as the then acknowledged head of the Christian Church, in like manner be employed by God as a suitable channel through which to communicate his purposes? Who, in fact, so fit an instrument in such a case as he who assumed to himself the title of Vicar of Christ upon earth, and whose claims at that period were almost universally admitted? Why should not the Roman Pontiff utter true prophecies as well as Balaam (to whom he is likened, see c. ii. 14) and Caiaphas? What makes this parallelism the more striking is, that in both instances he who utters the prophecy speaks against himself, and foretels, in a manner, the cessation of his own office, and the destruction of his power. Caiaphas, in declaring that it was expedient that one man should die for the people,

unconsciously proclaimed that the time was come when an earthly High Priest would be no longer required. And so the acknowledged head of the Christian Church, the Pontifex Maximus of Christendom, in predicting the finishing of the mystery of God, announces his own downfall.

But what means this oath, and why is it introduced at this particular epoch?

As regards the meaning of the oath, something will depend upon the translation. And here is no little difficulty. The original Greek, it must be admitted, is of doubtful meaning, and may with some show of probability be rendered in various ways. That the English reader may be able to form some idea of the critical difficulties connected with the text, I shall first give the several other translations that have been proposed, and then state briefly my reasons for preferring that which I have adopted.

The Authorized Version is, "that there should be time no longer: but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery," &c. But this is faulty in two respects. The Greek word *χρονος* never has in Scripture the abstract meaning here assigned to it, as if it signified, *i. e.*, *time*, as opposed to eternity; nor can the phrase, *ὅταν μελλῃ σαλπίζειν*, signify, *when he shall begin to sound*. Mr. Tregelles' translation is, "There shall be no longer delay; but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he should be about to sound." And to much the same effect Mr. Elliott: "And swear that time shall no further be *prolonged*; but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, at what time he may have to sound, the mystery

of God," &c. But neither of these renderings are exactly in accordance with the original text. I cannot find that there is any good authority for translating *χρονος*, as Mr. Tregelles does, *delay*; it is never used in that sense elsewhere in the New Testament; nor does Mr. Elliott's periphrasis of the word *ἔτι*, *no further be prolonged*, appear to me justifiable. Although, therefore, I was once disposed to adopt the rendering of Tregelles, I am inclined to fall back upon that which has been proposed by many other translators, and was adopted in the first edition of the "Horæ" by Mr. Elliott: viz., "And sware—that the time shall not be yet, but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he should sound, the mystery," &c. This, upon the whole, appears to me to be the most satisfactory translation of this confessedly difficult passage, as being more in accordance with the Greek than any other that has been proposed,* and suiting best the context. For in the "*but*" there is an evident reference to a premature anticipation of the event which it is declared should take place under the sounding of the seventh trumpet, and not *till* then.

Assuming, then, that we have got the right translation, the import of the prophetic oath will be this:

* That *χρονος* may signify definitely the time when an event is to happen, may be proved by numberless examples. Thus we read, Matt. ii. 7, *τον χρονον του φαινομενου*, *the time when the star appeared*. So Luke i. 57, *ο χρονος του τεκειν*, *the time for her delivery*. The absence of the definite article creates no objection, because, as Bishop Middleton remarks, where the verb connecting the subject and the predicate is the *verb substantive*, the article is omitted. The sense given to *ετι* as signifying "as yet," is, I admit, more questionable. We read, however, 2 Cor. i. 23, *ουκ ετι ηλθον*, *I came not as yet*, and this single example, supposing there were no other, is sufficient authority for so translating the word in the present instance.

“That, whereas there had been a disposition to anticipate God’s purposes, and to endeavour to establish his kingdom by crushing his adversaries before the time appointed, it is now solemnly announced that all endeavours to this end would be unavailing, inasmuch as it was decreed by him that his secret purposes in regard to the thing especially referred to would not be accomplished until the seventh trumpet should sound.” This, it appears to me, is the probable import of this oath, in which there is evidently something enigmatical, a tacit reference to something not expressed; I should say, indeed, to the lion-like cry and the seven thunders. For why should the angel swear that “the time shall not be yet;” or even supposing we adopt the other rendering, “that there shall be no longer delay;” unless, as before hinted, there were a reference to some attempt involved in the voices of the seven thunders to anticipate God’s time?

Now, supposing this view of the subject to be correct, the explanation of the oath and everything connected with it becomes easy. It is a sort of forced acknowledgment put into the mouth of the cloud-clad angel who had uttered the lion’s roar, that he had been mistaken, and that that roar and the responsive seven thunders were a presumptuous anticipation of God’s intentions. And how wonderfully was all this verified in the history of the Popes and of Christendom, at the close of the Crusades! Wearied and disheartened with so many failures in their attempts to recover the Holy Land, the Popes about the end of the thirteenth century gave up the contest in despair; and by transferring the place of pilgrimage from Jerusalem to Rome, virtually declared that the time

for the ransom of the holy sepulchre was not yet come.*

Before dismissing this subject, I would direct the reader's attention to another remarkable fact connected with it. Towards the close of the tenth century the idea almost universally prevailed that the end of the world was at hand. This idea was founded on a misinterpretation of the prophecy of the thousand years' reign, which the clergy then explained to signify, that after a thousand years from the birth of Christ, Satan would be loosed from his prison, Antichrist come, and the conflagration of the earth speedily follow. So general was this impression, that multitudes of persons sold their possessions, and abandoning their native country and all their private and social connexions, repaired to Palestine, where they expected that Christ would descend from heaven to judge the world. † This delusion indeed soon passed away, but the idea had taken possession of men's minds, and there can be little doubt that many of the Crusaders acted under the impression that in fighting for the recovery of Jerusalem and the Holy Land, they were preparing the way for the immediate estab-

* "The evil (of indulgences) did not expire with the occasion; and after the Crusades were at an end, the Popes discovered for it a new and perhaps more profitable object. By the institution of the Jubilee (in the year 1300), the place of pilgrimage was skilfully changed from Jerusalem to Rome; and the tombs of the apostles supplied, in the popular infatuation, the cross and the sepulchre of the Saviour."—*Waddington*, p. 467.

† Almost all the donations that were made to the Church during the tenth century commenced with these words: *Appropinquante mundi termino*, "the end of the world being at hand," &c. See *Mosheim*, cent. x., c. iii., s. 3; also *Waddington*, pp. 260 and 457.

lishment of Christ's kingdom.* And here, therefore, we have another obvious reason for the introduction of this prophetic oath in this place.

THE LITTLE BOOK.

Ver. 8—10.—We now come to the more particular consideration of the circumstances of the Little Book. I have already hinted that the sweet and bitter taste of this book seems to indicate something of falsification about it; and we shall, I think, find that everything connected with it strongly corroborates this idea. St. John, in his representative character—in other words, as one of the actors in the symbolic vision, and as the representative, therefore, of some person or persons destined to take a prominent part in the transactions of the period to which the vision refers,—is told to go and *take* the Little Book out of the angel's hand, and he accordingly goes and asks for—I might almost say, *demand*s—the Little Book. And it is given to him. But the very words with which the delivery of it is accompanied, imply that it is given up with some reluctance. “Take it,” says the angel, “and eat it, if thou wilt have it, but I warn thee, that however sweet it may be in thy mouth, thou shalt find it bitter in thy bowels.” Such, I think, is the natural import of the angel's answer. He resigns the book unwillingly, and, as it were, by compulsion; and he warns the party

* It should be observed that a similar idea was entertained by the Waldenses. That very remarkable poem, entitled *LA NOBLA LEYCZON*, written about A.D. 1200, begins thus: “O brethren, hear a noble lesson, we ought often to watch and be in prayer; for we see that this world is near its fall. We ought to be very careful to do good works, for we see that the end of this world is approaching.”

who takes it from him, as in anger, that he shall suffer for so doing.

And what, then, is this Little Book? With the key already supplied, can we be at any loss for a reply? This Little Book doubtless corresponds in general character with the other larger book in the right hand of him who sat upon the throne; and if that were a covenant deed, a sort of title to an inheritance or possession, so will this be. And such, I think, everything said about it proves it to be. It is the written charter on the authority of which the colossal angel founds his claims to universal sovereignty. He seems apparently to have taken the Book out of the hand of the Lamb—for the seven seals of that larger Book,* it must be remembered, are now loosed,—and to have come down from heaven with it open in his hand, as if to say, “The inheritance is mine; it has been conveyed to me; behold my title-deed!”

But have the Popes, then, ever founded their claims to universal supremacy and dominion on such a document as this hypothesis assumes the Little Book to be?—a document pretending to be a grant of the world to them from him to whom of right it belongs? Is it not notorious, that they *have*, and do to this day? For what are all their pretensions to supremacy founded upon but the manifest misapplication of our Lord’s words to Peter: “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my Church.” “Christ,” say they, “in these words gave to St. Peter, and his successors, the Bishops of Rome, the supremacy in the Church

* Why is it called a *little* book but with reference to some larger book previously mentioned?

and the dominion of the earth.”* But was there ever a more glaring imposition attempted to be practised on mankind than this? Does it require the acumen of one skilled in law to prove such a title null and void?

But the Roman Pontiffs have, or once affirmed that they had, other title-deeds to show. “Constantine,” said they, “granted to the Bishop of Rome, and his successors, the free and perpetual sovereignty of Rome, Italy, and all the Western Empire; behold, here is his donation!” And what does this boasted donation prove to be? A document composed *three hundred centuries after* Constantine’s death, and now universally known and admitted to be a gross and deliberate forgery! † In addition to this, they had also the pretended decretals of former Popes and Councils, composed, like the Constantinian donation, centuries after the alleged date of them. ‡ By instruments such as

* See, *e.g.*, the commencement of the Bull against Queen Elizabeth: “He who reigneth on high, to whom all power in heaven and earth is given, hath committed the one Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church to one alone in the earth; that is to say, to Peter, the chief of the apostles, and to the successors of Peter, the Roman Pontiff,” &c.—(See the whole Bull at the end of the volume.)

† “The Vatican and Lateran were an arsenal and manufacture, which, according to the occasion, have produced or concealed a various collection of false or genuine, of corrupt or suspicious acts, as they tended to promote the interest of the Roman Church. Before the end of the eighth century, some apostolical scribe composed the decretals and the donation of Constantine, THE TWO MAGIC PILLARS OF THE SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL MONARCHY OF THE POPES.”—*Decline and Fall*, c. xlix., vol. ix., p. 159.

‡ “In order to gain credit to this new ecclesiastical system, and to support the haughty pretensions of the Pontiffs to supremacy and independence, it was necessary to produce the authority of ancient deeds to stop the mouths of such as were disposed to set bounds to their usurpations. The Bishops of Rome were aware of this, and employed some of their

these did the Roman Pontiff hold the Christian world in subjection for nearly a thousand years. And with these facts before us, can we be at a loss to understand the meaning of that symbolic drama we are now contemplating? John, in his representative character, goes by Divine command and takes the Little Book, the foundation of his claim to the dominion of earth and sea, out of the cloud-clad angel's hand. Can a more exact representation be conceived of how the Reformers, raised up by God, and guided *as by a voice from heaven*, were led to *examine into* the claims of the Roman Pontiff to universal supremacy, and how, after a careful investigation, they found them to be baseless forgeries, and thus took away the title of his usurped dominion from his reluctant hand?

Let us hear Luther himself on this subject: "I have been reading," says he to Spalatin, in 1518, "the *decretals* of the Pontiffs, and let me whisper it in your ear, I know not whether the Pope is ANTICHRIST HIMSELF, or whether he is his apostle,—so misrepresented, and even crucified, does Christ appear in them." And again to Linke: "My pen is ready to give birth to things much greater. *I know not myself whence these thoughts come to me.*" (How striking is this! It was the voice of God telling him to go on, although he knew it not.) Again, in his celebrated "Appeal to the Emperor and Princes of Germany," published on the 23d of June, 1520, he writes thus: "It is monstrous to see him who is called the Vicar of Christ most zealous partisans IN FORGING CONVENTIONS, ACTS OF COUNCILS, EPISTLES, and such-like records, by which it might appear that in the first ages of the Church the Roman Pontiffs were clothed with the same spiritual majesty and supreme authority which they now assume."—*Mosheim*, cent. ix., c. ii., § 2.

displaying a magnificence unrivalled by that of any emperor. Is this to resemble the poor and lowly Jesus, or the humble St. Peter? The Pope, say they, is the *Lord of the world!* But Christ, whose Vicar he boasts himself to be, said, '*My kingdom is not of this world.*' Ought the power of the Vicar to go beyond that of his Lord?"

"The Pope says, 'I am the Vicar of Christ, and the shepherd of his flocks. Let the Germans submit to my authority.' Shall we endure these robberies and extortions? Who can keep silence? Has not all that the Pope possesses been obtained by robbery? for he has neither purchased it, nor inherited it from St. Peter, nor gained it by his labours. Whence, then, does it all come? Is it not ridiculous that the Pope should pretend to be the LAWFUL HEIR of the empire? *Who gave it to him?* Was it Christ, when he said, '*The Kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, but it shall not be so with you?*' Let the Pope renounce all pretensions to the kingdom of Naples and Sicily. *He has no more right to it than I have.* It is without *any just claim*, and inconsistent with the directions of Christ, that he holds possession of Bologna, Ravenna, &c. We must relieve him from this burden."

Towards the close of the "Appeal" he again reverts to the Empire and the Emperor. "The Pope," he says, "not being able to manage the ancient masters of the Roman Empire, bethought himself of the plan of appropriating their title and empire, and then giving them to us Germans. Thus it happens that we have become vassals of the Pope. The Pope took possession of Rome, extorting from the Emperor an oath not to reside there; and hence it is that the Emperor is

Emperor of Rome without Rome! We have the name, and the Pope the treasure, the power, and the privileges."

Luther terminates this bold harangue with these words: "I can easily believe that I have held too high a tone, but what can I do? Let the world be offended rather than God! God has, by their own instruments, compelled me continually to lift up a louder and a louder voice against them."

And, "What," says the historian, "could embolden this obscure German to stand up in the midst of his own long-enslaved nation, and to strike such mighty blows against the Papal authority? May we not answer that he had heard these words of God, addressed to one of the holy men of old: 'Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces; fear them not.'—(See D'Aubigné's *Hist. Reform.*, vol. ii., pp. 16 and 109, &c., Walter's edition.)

Yes, assuredly, thus it was. The voice from heaven had commanded him to go and take the Little Book, the forged title-deed, out of the hand of the great usurper, and he dared not disobey.

The detection, however, of such a forgery could not be accomplished without pain and difficulty. And this probably is another thing signified by the sweetness in the mouth and bitterness in the stomach of the Little Book. It may imply that the exposure of the forgery would be attended with grief of mind and sorrow of heart to the individuals appointed to perform the arduous task. How this was fulfilled in the case of the early Reformers is matter of notoriety. Luther, the leader of them, again and again declares, that it was nothing but the strongest sense of duty that made him

go forward with the work, and frequently sets forth, in the most pathetic language, the grief and anguish of spirit which it occasioned him. Bitter indeed was the suffering which the unmasking the abominations of Popery, and the discovery of the falsehood of those pretensions on which the authority of the Pope was founded, brought with it. Let one extract from the great historian of the Reformation suffice:—

“He felt himself alone in the Church—alone against Rome—alone at the foot of that ancient and formidable citadel, whose foundations reached to the bowels of the earth, and whose walls, ascending to the skies, appeared to deride the presumptuous stroke which his hand had aimed against them. *He was disturbed and dejected at the thought.* “Who was I,” said he, “to oppose the Pope’s majesty, before which not only the kings of the earth and the whole world trembled, but, if I may so speak, heaven and earth were constrained to obey the slightest intimation of his will? No one can know *what I suffered* those first two years; in what dejection, I might say, in what despair, I was often plunged.”—(*D’Aubigné*, vol. i., pp. 331, 332.)

Thus, then, was the after-bitterness of the Little Book fulfilled, and the prophecy verified. Luther thought by looking into the decretals of the Popes to find in them what was sweet and refreshing to his soul, but he was bitterly disappointed; and the discovery that the whole thing was a cheat and a forgery, whilst it gave him great joy, as it is always pleasant to have found out truth, caused him also much mental suffering, and brought with it, at the same time, trouble from without.

We have now to consider the results of eating the Little Book. Before, however, entering upon the sub-

ject, it is necessary we should determine accurately the true reading and grammatical meaning of the text. It will be observed that my translation differs in two material points from the authorized version, which is as follows:—"And *he* said unto me, Thou must prophesy again *before* many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings." Thus, according to this translation, the commission to prophesy is given by *the angel* from whose hand the book is taken, and the prophesying is to be *before*, or *in the presence of*, peoples, and nations, and kings, *not about* them. It is obvious that the difference here is of some importance, and it will be expected, therefore, that I should justify the rendering I have adopted, and show the authority on which it rests.

With regard, then, to the first clause, translated in the A.V., "*he said unto me*," it may be sufficient to state, that the Alexandrine and other ancient MSS. read the verb in the plural (*λεγουσι μοι*), and that this reading, after careful examination and comparison with ancient texts and versions, is adopted as the true reading by that most accurate critic, Mr. Tregelles, who renders the verb impersonally, as I have done. This, then, will I hope be considered sufficient justification of my departure from the A.V., as respects the clause in question, and satisfy the reader that the variation is not a mere conjecture, taken up with the view to serve a favourite theory, but a justifiable emendation, supported by the highest authority.

And here I would direct attention to a remarkable fact connected with the words spoken to St. John on this occasion. It is this; that in *every* instance in which the colossal angel is represented in the received text as speaking,—and his so uttering the words attributed to

him would involve beyond dispute his being the great "angel of the covenant," the Lord himself,—*there is a variation in the manuscripts*; and the most ancient, and those of greatest authority, give a different sense, and ascribe the words, not to the angel, but to some other speaker. Thus, in the instance before us, the received text has, "And he said unto me," but the most ancient MSS. read, "And *they* say, or (impersonally) it was said, unto me." So in the first verse of the next chapter, the received text has, "And the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure," &c., but the most ancient MSS. and versions omit the words, "the angel stood," and give the passage thus: "And there was given me a reed like unto a rod, saying, Rise," &c. So that, in fact, the colossal angel speaks but twice throughout: once when he lifts his right hand to heaven, and utters the prophetic announcement respecting the seventh trumpet, and again when he gives the Little Book into the apostle's hands. Now there is surely something remarkable in this. It would seem as if, whilst the Divine Author of the Revelation had been careful to prevent mistake respecting the real symbolic character of this angel, some wily adversary had endeavoured surreptitiously to falsify the text, in order to produce the impression that it is the Lord himself who is represented by him, and so keep out of sight that great impostor of whom he is the personification.

As respects the other variation from the authorized version, I have already shown that the Greek preposition rendered *before*, generally, if not always, when joined with a dative (as is the case here), means rather, *about*, or *concerning*. (See the text and note.) And I think, in fact, that this rendering must approve itself, even to the mere

English reader. For the words, "Thou must prophesy *again before* many peoples," &c., would imply not only that the apostle was about to prophesy as a symbolic person, in the presence of kings and people, but that he had done so *already*. Now, when or in what part of the previous prophetic vision had he thus prophesied in the presence of kings? It seems, then, very obvious, that, independently of all grammatical criticism, the proper rendering of the preposition is *concerning*, not *before*.*

Whilst on the subject of verbal criticism, I would make one remark respecting the meaning of the word *prophecy*. Mr. Elliott thinks it signifies here to preach, and shows, in a somewhat elaborate argument, that it *may* have this meaning. Now, there can be no doubt whatever, that, *to prophesy*, both in the Old and New Testament, means simply to speak to men in the name of God. But I do not think we are warranted in giving it the specific meaning here, of *preaching the Gospel*, as Mr. Elliott contends. The word used in that case is, I believe, invariably that employed by our Lord when he gave the apostles their great commission, and said to them, "Go ye into all the world, and preach (κηρυξατε)† the Gospel to every creature." A word derived from the office of a herald, and implies the proclaiming aloud a message from one party to a third. *To prophesy* is a somewhat different thing. In the New Testament, when not used in the sense of foretelling future events, it

* Mr. Tregelles translates it *against*, but this gives too confined a meaning, and is not required by the Greek word, which has a more general sense.

† Sometimes, indeed, as in c. xiv. 6, we have *ευαγγελισαι*. But it comes to the same thing. The one is to proclaim as a herald, the other as a messenger.

appears to signify the expounding the Scriptures by immediate inspiration, or the act of communicating some new truth received directly from God. (See 1 Cor. xiv.) But in the present instance, I think the context shows that it is to be taken in its ordinary and more familiar meaning.

Having then settled these points we now proceed to the subject before us,—*The results of eating the Little Book.*

It will doubtless strike the reader as an objection to my interpretation that the eating of the Little Book should be followed by a renewed commission to prophesy. For why, it may be asked, if it be a forged title should this commission be consequent upon the eating of it? Does not this circumstance prove rather that, like the prophetic roll eaten by Ezekiel, it is a book containing prophetic announcements? Now I admit at once the apparent force of this objection, but I think, nevertheless, not only that it may be satisfactorily answered, but the objection itself be turned into an argument in favour of my interpretation. For what do I maintain this Little Book to be? A fictitious title-deed; a sort of imitation of the seven-sealed book, which the Lamb alone was worthy to open. And why, then, should not this Little Book, like that of which it is the pretended counterpart, as a symbol, answer a double purpose, and be both a symbolic deed and a roll of prophecy? Why, seeing that the successive opening of the seals of that roll was attended with a series of prophetic events, should not the eating of this roll be followed also by similar results? And, in fact, may not this, its double character, be one of the things signified by the sweet and afterwards bitter taste of the roll? As a prophetic roll, like the roll of Ezekiel, it was sweet (Ezek. ii. 3),

because it conveyed true announcements from the Lord ; but as a title-deed, when examined into, it was bitter, because it was a forgery and full of falsehoods.* Thus all is consistent. The two books correspond in character, and mutually throw light upon each other.

Nor is this double application of a symbol without parallel. The seven heads of the scarlet-coloured beast (c. xvii.) are explained by the angel to signify both the seven hills on which Rome was built, and seven kings, or forms of Government ; and the woman herself in that same chapter is both the city of Rome and the Church of Rome. This twofold application of a symbol, then, being clearly admissible, the explanation of the renewed commission to prophesy is obvious. The apostle having eaten the Book is told by a voice from heaven that he must prophesy again (or, as the original implies, going back again, beginning as it were from the beginning) concerning peoples, and nations, &c. That is to say, he was now to begin a new series of prophecies, relating not only to the destinies of the Church, but to the history also of the nations and kingdoms of the earth connected

* It is not a little remarkable that Ariosto speaks of the pretended gift of the Lateran by Constantine to Pope Sylvester in very much the same language as the above, and represents its worthlessness by a somewhat similar figure. He humorously places it in the moon, among the things lost or abused on earth :—

“ Di vari fiori al un gran monte passa,
Ch' ebber già *buono odore*, or *puzzan forte*,
Questo era il dono (se pero dir lece)
Che Constantino al buon Sylvestro fece.”

Orl. Fur., c. xxxiv., st. 80.

Thus translated by Milton :—

“ Then pass'd he to a flowery mountain green,
Which once SMELT SWEET. now STINKS AS ODIOUSLY ;
This was that gift, if you the truth will have,
That Constantine to good Sylvester gave.”

See Cary's *Dante*,—*Hell*, c. xix.

with it. This is the natural import of this transaction, and nothing therefore, I think, can be clearer than that what follows must have reference to events to take place under the preceding trumpets, and not to anything under the seventh trumpet, which has not yet sounded. The prophetic narrative begins, as it were, afresh, and, as in a well-arranged history, a variety of important and interesting facts are now brought before us, which could not have been introduced in the previous visions without breaking the continuity of the prophecy.

CHAPTER XI. 1—13.

THE TEMPLE MEASURED.

WE enter now upon one of the most difficult, and at the same time most interesting prophecies in the Apocalypse. The various explanations given by different expositors of this chapter, and the confidence with which opposing schemes of interpretation have been put forth and asserted, should make us distrustful of our own judgment, and teach us, whatever may be our sentiments, to state them with modesty and diffidence. May the Spirit of truth guide both the writer and the reader in endeavouring to attain to the true meaning of this important prophecy.

Our first business must be to realize accurately what St. John saw, and heard, and did. Having, then, eaten the Little Book, which we have supposed to be a forged document, on the authority of which the angel from whose hand the apostle took it founded his claim to universal dominion, and the sweetness of which

in the mouth and bitterness in the stomach evidenced it to be a forgery; and having been told after eating the book, that he must now prophesy anew concerning many nations and kingdoms, which would imply that the discovery of the forgery would lead to other discoveries, and open out to the Church the meaning of the prophecies that had gone before, as well as of those which follow after: these things having taken place, a reed resembling a *measuring-rod*, or staff,* was given him, and he was told to rise and measure THE TEMPLE OF GOD, and THE ALTAR, and THE WORSHIPPERS; but to leave out the court and not measure that, because it was given to the Gentiles, who would tread it under foot forty-two months. Now, the first point to be determined here is, by whom this command was given. Our translation, following the common printed editions of the Greek text, attributes the command to the angel: “*And THE ANGEL stood, saying;*” but these words, “the angel stood,” are wanting in all the most ancient Greek MSS., as well as in the Latin Vulgate, and are admitted by all the best critics to be an interpolation. How they first crept in it is difficult to say; but that they were not in the original text as written by St. John, may almost be considered as an established fact.†

* Gr. ὁμοιος ῥαβδος.

† In proof of this, it may suffice to quote the words of Vitranga, one of the most slow, perhaps, of all biblical critics to admit of any change in the *textus receptus*:—“*Et datus mihi est calamus, similis virgæ, STABATQUE ANGELUS, dicens, &c.* Sic legit hunc locum Beza, quam tamen lectionem in NULLIS SUIS CODICIBUS reperit Stephanus. In omnibus, inquam, illis verba illa: καὶ ὁ ἄγγελος ἐστήκει, et *Angelus stabat*, omittuntur, et λέγων in oratione ἀμεσῶς (*immediate*) nequitur eum voci ῥαβδος, ut pariter est apud Aretham. Vulgata Græcæ editiones sequuta, habet: *Et dictum est mihi*, aesi legisset interpres: καὶ ἐλεχθη μοι. Syrus tamen interpres id expressit, quod est in editione Complutensi, *Et stabat angelus*. Ut tamen verum fateor, est mihi hæc lectio ob

Instead, therefore, of reading the passage as it stands in our English Bibles, we must read it thus: "*And there was given me a reed like unto a rod, saying,*" &c. But it will be asked, who then speaks? Now, I think it very evident that the speaker here is the same as in the former instance. Whoever it was that gave the apostle the renewed commission to prophesy, the same it is who now commands him to rise and measure the temple. But it appears from ver. 3, where we read, "And *I* will give power to *my* two witnesses," that it is the Lord himself who speaks in both instances. It is, in fact, the voice from heaven that speaks: that voice which had forbidden the apostle to write what the seven thunders uttered, which had commanded him to go and take the little book out of the angel's hand, and which had told him he must prophesy again: this same voice it is which now bids him take the measurement of the temple. The sentence, therefore, is elliptical, and, fully expressed, might be read something in this manner: "And there was given me a reed like a rod, [and I heard the voice from heaven speaking to me, and] saying, Arise," &c. Thus it appears that this command to measure was given, not by the angel that stood upon the earth and sea, but by the Lord himself, speaking immediately from heaven. It should be observed also that the instrument with which he was directed to perform this measurement was A REED LIKE UNTO A ROD. Now, the Greek word for *reed* means also a *pen*. In fact, the pens of the Jews, like those

constantem codicum Græcorum dissonantiam suspecta, et vere puto verba, καὶ ὁ ἄγγελος εἰσθήκει, non esse à Joanne."—*Vitr. in Apoc.*, p. 445. These words are also pronounced spurious by that most diligent and accurate of modern critics, Tregelles; and I think, therefore, the question may be considered as settled.

of the Hindoos and Persians to this day, were made of reed. Thus St. John in his third Epistle says, "I will not with ink and pen (or reed, *καλαμῶ*) write unto thee." "A reed like unto a rod," therefore, seems intended to convey the twofold idea of writing and measuring. As if it meant, that the measurement being taken would afterwards be put down in writing. Just as in Ezekiel, c. ix., the man clothed with linen, who accompanied the men with the slaughter-weapons in their hands, had an inkhorn by his side; and this man, when the slaughter was accomplished, returned "and reported the matter." I think, then, we must connect with this act of measurement the idea also of a written record; that is to say, that he who measures the temple would write the measurement in a book. The bearing of this remark will appear presently. But what is the import of the act itself? Before we can give a satisfactory answer to this inquiry, it will be necessary to consider the structure of that temple to which there is a manifest allusion.

Now, the Jewish temple was built thus: it consisted of three courts or compartments. The first, which was six furlongs in compass, was open to all persons, Gentiles as well as Jews. The second, which is here called "the court without the temple," was accessible to Jews only, being separated from the outer court of all just mentioned, by a wall and pillars, on which were engraven in Greek and Latin these words, "LET NO STRANGER ENTER HERE." The third court, or proper temple, contained two divisions. The first of these, where was the golden candlestick, and the altar of incense, and the table of shew-bread, was called the sanctuary, and here the priests officiated, being

separated from the people by a low wall. The second division, in which was the ark of the covenant, was called the Holy of Holies, into which no man ever entered but the High Priest, and he only once a year, on the great day of atonement.*

Such being the structure of the temple, the meaning of the imagery now before us is apparent. The whole temple, with its several courts and subdivisions, is a type of the visible Church. The inner court, with its altar and worshippers, is a symbol of the true Church of Christ; of those who are, indeed, "an habitation of God through the Spirit." The "court without" is the symbol of the *nominal* Christian Church, that vast body of persons who, whilst they have the name of Christians, and partake of the external ordinances and privileges of the Church, are destitute of living faith, and have not the Spirit of Christ dwelling in them. These are figuratively called GENTILES, by the same kind of metaphor as spiritual Christians are called JEWS (c. ii. 9), because, although bearing the name of God's people, and worshipping in the outer courts of the temple, they resemble Gentiles in their character and conduct.

Now, supposing this to be a correct view of the meaning of this symbolical temple, the import of the act now commanded to be done is obvious. To measure is to reduce within certain boundaries. Hence, measurement is almost always associated in the Scriptures with limitation and curtailment. (See Isaiah xxvii. 8; John iii. 34.) This act, therefore, taken in connexion with the concomitant circumstances, implies the reduction

* A full description of the temple, of which the above is an abstract, will be found in Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, b. v., c. v.

of the true Church within very narrow limits. The court without the temple, which ought to be frequented only by Jews, is given up to the Gentiles to be trodden down by them; *i.e.*, the Christian Church, which ought to be a company of holy persons, sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and delivered from the pollutions of a sinful world, is to become, with the exception of a very small remnant, bearing no larger a proportion to the whole body of Christians by profession than the Holy of Holies did to the whole temple, altogether corrupt and polluted; and the corrupt majority are to have the upper hand, and to persecute and trample upon the small minority, the only remaining portion of the true Church of God. So that this act of measurement is, in fact, only a dramatic, symbolical representation of the prophetic announcement of St. Paul, when he says, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men (*i.e.*, men professing themselves to be Christians, and belonging outwardly to the Church) shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, proud, boasters, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection; heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." (2 Tim. iii. 1—5.) Let the reader compare this description of the professing Christian Church with that given of the Gentile world, Rom. i. 28—32. He will find that in almost every point they are precisely similar. This treading down, therefore, of the holy city by the Gentiles, is nothing more or less than the secularization and desecration of the visible Church by the influx into it of vast multitudes of mere nominal professors of Christianity, whose worldly-mindedness and unholy lives would tarnish its glory, and, to use an inspired

metaphor, "lay its honour in the dust." How this was fulfilled in the condition of the Church during the middle ages, has already been shown in the commentary on the Epistle to the Church of Sardis, also on chap. ix., vers. 20, 21, and thither the reader is referred who may wish to see this point more fully illustrated.

But why, it may be asked, does this measuring take place now? To what period in the prophetic history does it belong? Now, I think it is very evident that this measurement is supposed to take place at the commencement of the forty and two months, during which the holy city is trodden down. For that event is spoken of as future in point of time to the act of measurement. It is not said, the holy city *have* they trodden down, but the holy city *shall they* tread down. The treading down, therefore, is subsequent to the measurement.* Consequently, before we can determine when this measurement takes place, we must determine the commencement of the forty-two months of Gentile desecration. This, then, is the point which now claims our attention.

It is very generally assumed by commentators that this period of forty-two months, during which the holy city is trodden down, coincides with the several other periods mentioned in this and the two following chapters, — that is to say, with the *twelve hundred and sixty days'* prophesying of the two witnesses (ver. 3), and the sojourning of the Church in the wilderness (c. xii. 6), and *the time, times, and half*

* I cannot, therefore, agree with Mr. Elliott, who makes this measuring of the temple a continuation of the prophetic drama of the former chapter, and supposes that it prefigures the excommunication of the members of the Papal Church by Luther and his coadjutors. See Appendix.

a time, during which she is nourished there (c. xii. 1-4), and *the forty and two months* of the continuance of the power of the wild beast from the sea (c. xiii. 5). And of the *general* correctness of this theory there cannot, I think, be the slightest doubt. All these several periods, although differently expressed, manifestly signify about the same space of time. Forty-two months of thirty days each, and three times (or years) and a-half, of three hundred and sixty days, are equivalent to twelve hundred and sixty prophetic days, *i.e.*, ordinary years.* This is, then, the period during which the temple is to be trodden down by the Gentiles, or, in other words, the visible Christian Church is to be debased and desecrated as regards by far the larger portion of it, by being composed of an overwhelming majority of mere nominal professors of Christianity, persons calling themselves disciples of Christ, but who are destitute of spiritual life, and who hate and persecute his true disciples.

But when do these twelve hundred and sixty years commence? This is a question of no little difficulty. If we identify the treading down of the Church of Christ with the prevalence of Popery, then it is obvious that these forty-two months must commence at the same time as the Papacy, and consequently whatever date we assign to the beginning of Papal usurpation, the same must we assign to the beginning of the Church's desecration. It is not, however, quite clear to my mind that all these periods *exactly* synchronize, both as to their commencement and their

* For the grounds on which the year-day theory is founded, see p. 330.

close. I am rather inclined to think that one reason why these various modes of computing time, all of them being symbolical in character, were employed, was purposely to intimate that the several events foretold, although in a general sense synchronical, would not be of *precisely* the same duration, nor begin and end at precisely the same point of time. Assuming this to be the case, it will not be necessary to determine with exact precision the commencement of this Gentile desecration of the holy city. That it began at a very early period after Christianity became the religion of the Imperial Court there can be no doubt; and perhaps if we date it somewhere between the commencement of the fifth and the end of the sixth century, we shall approximate as near to the truth as in such a case is required.

Supposing, then, we assume that this charge to measure the temple is given to the apostle as an actor in a vision, and therefore, as Daubuz remarks, as a symbolical person, about the commencement of the fifth century, we might infer that some such measuring as is here described would take place at that period. That is to say, that some individual would arise in the Church who would fulfil the office symbolized by the apostle, and do what he is directed to do,—viz., measure the Church, or define its true nature and character, and cast out from it those who belong to it only by outward profession. Now, is it not remarkable, that just at this period—just about the time when the true Church began to withdraw into the wilderness, and its living members were few and hidden, there appeared a book, written by a great doctor of the Church, the fame of which soon spread everywhere, and

which has come down to our times,—there appeared, I say, a book, the great object of which is thus to define the true Church, and to show how it consists not of the vast multitude of those who call themselves Christians, and are brought by outward profession within its pale, but of a comparatively small number of living members, who, being scattered thinly here and there, make up in the aggregate the inner-court worshippers, the true Israel, the holy part of the temple, “built up for a habitation of God by the Spirit?” I scarcely need say, that I refer to Augustine’s “City of God.” This his great work was published in the beginning of the fifth century, and the very title of the book may suggest the idea of some connexion between it and the prophecy under consideration. One extract may suffice to show that this connexion is not imaginary: “In this evil age,” he says, “when the Church, by her present *depression* (per humilitatem presentem), prepares for future exaltation, and is instructed and disciplined by terrors, by sufferings, by labours, and by temptations, rejoicing only in *hope* when she rejoices *aright*, many reprobate are mingled with the good, and both are taken together, as it were, in the Gospel net, and being inclosed in its meshes in this world as in a sea, both swim together promiscuously, until it is drawn to the shore, when the evil will be separated from the good, and God be all in all, dwelling in the good as IN HIS TEMPLE.”* Now here we have the realization of that symbolical act performed by St. John in vision. The temple, and the altar and its worshippers; *i.e.*, the Church and its professing members are measured by the standard of God’s Word, and the great mass of nominal

* De Civit. Dei, l. xviii., c. 49.

Christians are *cast out*, and the small remnant only of true believers declared to be the temple of the living God. I think, then, we may date the beginning of the fulfilment of this prophecy from the publication of Augustine's "De Civitate Dei." A broad line of distinction was then drawn (and it had previously been very much lost sight of) between the visible and invisible Church, and the latter alone shown to be the temple of the living God.

We must not, however, confound the measuring of the temple with the treading down of the Holy City. They are not absolutely simultaneous acts. And it does not therefore follow, although we admit the temple was measured in the commencement of the fifth century, that we must date the commencement of the treading down of the holy city also from that period. The Church began, undoubtedly, to be desecrated by the influx of multitudes of unholy professors of Christianity about this time, but they had not yet the upper hand. Primitive piety, that is, spiritual, vital religion, was still honoured, and not made, as it was subsequently, the subject of scorn and hatred. It was not until a century or two after Augustine's decease, that the unconverted, carnal portion of the nominal Church became the overwhelming majority, and the small minority, consisting of the truly pious, the living stones of the temple (1 Pet. ii. 5), were beaten down, and trodden underfoot. It was not, in short, until the ten-horned wild beast from the sea, and the two-horned beast from the land (*i.e.*, the Emperors and the Popes), arose, and acting conjointly, excommunicated (*cast out*) from the Church all who did not acknowledge the supremacy of Rome, that the outer court was wholly given up

to the Gentiles, and the holy city, the Church of Christ, trodden down by them. And here, then, I think we must fix our foot. The forty-two months of the treading down of the holy city correspond with the forty-two months of the reign of the wild beast from the sea (c. xiii. 5), as the similarity in the mode of computation plainly intimates, and I think, therefore, it will be better to defer the further consideration of the chronology of this event till we come to the details of the sea-born wild beast, as given in the above-named chapter.

CHAP. XI. 3—13.—THE TWO WITNESSES.

We come now to that much-disputed question, the meaning of the two witnesses. I confess I enter upon the discussion with some apprehension. Not so much because I have any misgivings as to the truth of the views I have been led, after much deliberation, to adopt, as because I distrust my own ability to put those views in the most favourable light, and so to exhibit them as to produce conviction in the minds of my readers. If, however, they are indeed correct, the truth will doubtless eventually commend itself to the candid and careful inquirer, even although it be presented in a homely dress, without the attractiveness of eloquent writing.

Two interpretations, as the reader is probably aware, are given of these witnesses. The generality of modern commentators suppose them to represent A SUCCESSION OF FAITHFUL MEN, OR CHURCHES, raised up by God during the twelve hundred and sixty years of Papal domination, to bear witness to the truth, and testify on his behalf against the false doctrine and corrupt practices of the Church of Rome. This, however, is not the most ancient idea of the symbolical meaning of the witnesses.

Tichonius, one of the earliest expositors of the Apocalypse, who published his commentary about A.D. 480 (and I notice this fact thus early in the discussion that the reader may see that the view I am about to advocate is no novelty), considers that the two witnesses are the Sacred Scriptures, the books of the two Testaments.* This view has also been recently adopted by a few, although, as before intimated, by only a few modern expositors.†

After having given the subject much anxious consideration, and having carefully studied, first, the text of the prophecy, and then what has been written on both sides of the question by their respective advocates, I have no hesitation in declaring my conviction, that the old interpretation of Tichonius is the natural and true interpretation, and that the two witnesses are the Old and New Testaments. In pursuing this discussion, I shall confine myself for the present to the establishment of this theory. In my analysis of the “*Horæ Apocalypticae*” of Mr. Elliott, the latest and ablest advocate of the other hypothesis, the arguments for and against it will be fully considered, but to introduce them here would only occasion confusion and perplexity.

It will, doubtless, have struck the reader that this prophecy consists of two parts: 1st, *The description* of the witnesses; and, 2dly, *Their history*. Assuming, then, that the Old and New Testaments are the witnesses, we have to show that the description is suitable to them,

* *Duobus testibus meis; i.e., duobus Testamentis.* I give this quotation on the authority of Mr. Elliott, “*Horæ Apoc.*,” vol. iv., p. 326.

† Major-General Burn was, I believe, the first person in modern times who took this view. He published a pamphlet upon the subject, under the impression that it was entirely a new idea. He had probably never heard of Tichonius.

and that the prophetic history (supposing the time of its accomplishment to be past) has been fulfilled in them. I think it will be found desirable, for the sake of perspicuity, to keep the two subjects quite distinct from each other.

Description of the Witnesses.

First, then, as to the description. This comprises the following leading points: 1st, They are God's witnesses; 2dly, They prophesy; 3dly, They are clothed in sackcloth during a period of twelve hundred and sixty days; 4thly, They are called the two olive-trees, and the two candlesticks which stand before the God of the earth; 5thly, If any one would injure them fire proceeds out of their mouth, and destroys their enemies; 6thly, They have power to shut heaven, and prevent its raining during the time they prophesy in sackcloth; and also to turn the waters into blood, and to smite the earth with every kind of plague; and, 7thly, It is stated incidentally (v. 10) that they *torment* the men that dwell upon the earth. Now we have to show that all these things may be rightly predicated of the Scriptures. Let us take them then in the above order.

1. The Scriptures may be called God's witnesses.

Can there be any doubt as to the propriety of this appellation? Are not the Scriptures, in fact, the only sure and infallible witnesses for God? What has preserved the truth from utterly perishing from the earth but the Scriptures? Can this be affirmed of any individuals or Churches? Was it the Paulicians, or the Lollards, or the Waldenses? or was it Wiclif, or Huss, or Luther, that preserved God's truth, and prevented it from disappearing altogether from the world? Surely not. No; it was the Scriptures which these pious men

studied, and which, by the help of the Holy Spirit, they were enabled to understand. What authority, in fact, could they have had as witnesses for Christ, but for the Scriptures? Here it was they themselves took their stand. "TO THE LAW AND TO THE TESTIMONY," was the language they ever held to their adversaries. "Convince us from the Scriptures that we are wrong, and we will retract. They are Christ's witnesses, and we will receive their testimony with implicit submission; but we acknowledge no other paramount authority, whether of individuals, or tradition, or Churches." And they were right. The Scriptures are the only infallible witnesses for God. Wise and good men are fallible, and may err; and pure and orthodox Churches, as composed of men, are fallible and may err; but the written Word of God can never change, and, therefore, its testimony in itself can never mislead.* "For ever," indeed, "is his Word established in the heavens;" and never shall it "pass away."

It has been objected, however, to this view, that the term by which the witnesses are here designated implies personality. It is argued that the word (*μαρτυρ*) *witness*,

* The following extract from Neander's "History of the Church," is in striking accordance with the above views: "When they (*i.e.*, Dioclesian and his coadjutors) attempted, by burning all the copies of the Bible, to annihilate Christianity, with its sources, for ever, they certainly made choice of a means which was more efficacious than the extirpation of the *living* witnesses" (let the reader mark the language) "of the faith amongst mankind; for their example only excited a greater number of followers. On the contrary, if they could succeed in annihilating all the copies of the Bible, they would by that means have suppressed the *very source* from which true Christianity and the life of the Church had constantly risen up afresh and unconquerable. Let them execute as many preachers of the Gospel as they would, nothing was done as long as this book, which could always form new teachers, remained to the Christians."—Vol. i., p. 152. Rose's translation.

although it occurs in nine other places in the New Testament, and upwards of fifty times in the Old, invariably means, in every other instance, persons; why then should we suppose it has a different meaning here? * But this is surely not a legitimate argument. The cases are entirely different. Admitting that in every other instance in the New Testament the Greek word here translated witness signifies a person, does this prove that it must necessarily imply personality in the Revelation? Are not words constantly used in this metaphorical book in an unusual sense? Are not things, for example, put for persons, as stars and candlesticks for ministers and Churches;—and persons for things, as a woman, *e.g.*, for a city, and a king for a kingdom? (C. xvii.) And why then should not witnesses, which ordinarily signify persons, in a book so highly figurative, represent, symbolically, writings? Indeed, might we not almost assume that as the altar, and the temple, and the court, do not mean things, but persons, so by the analogy of contrast, witnesses would not mean persons, but things? Had the altar, the court, &c., signified literally an altar, a court, &c., then we might have argued that witnesses also must signify persons; but as this is not the case, we must, I think, reverse the inference, and argue, that witnesses, in consistency with the rest of the imagery, must signify things.

* See "Horæ Apoc.," vol. ii., p. 201, fourth edition. It is not, however, true that the word translated *witness* always in the Bible implies personality. In the Old Testament we have several instances to the contrary; *e.g.*, in Gen. xxxi. 48, Jacob says the *covenant* he was about to make should be a *witness* (עֵד) between himself and Laban. And in Deut. xxxi. 19, Moses tells the Israelites that the *song* he was about to teach them should be a *witness* (עֵד, *i.e.*, a personal witness, not a record) against them.

But we may go further than this. We have more direct proof than is derived from inference, that the Scriptures may rightly be called God's witnesses. His written Word is so called by God himself. I would request the reader's attentive consideration of three very remarkable passages, bearing, as it appears to me, in a striking manner upon this subject. The first to which I refer is in Deut. xxxi., as follows: "And it came to pass when Moses had made an end of writing *the words of this law in a book* until they were finished, that Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a WITNESS against thee." (Ver. 24—26.) Now the word in the original here rendered *witness*, is a personal noun (עֵד, not עֵדוּת), and just as much signifies a person as μαρτυρ in Greek signifies a person. Again, in Exod. xxv. 21, we read, "And thou shalt put the mercy-seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put THE TESTIMONY that I shall give thee." Now what was this testimony? If we turn to Exod. xxxi. 18, we find that this testimony was the ten commandments. "And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon Mount Sinai, TWO TABLES OF TESTIMONY (*i.e.*, witness), tables of stone written with the finger of God." Thus, then, the testimony, or witness for God, under the law, consisted of two *written documents*, the stone tablets on which the finger of God had inscribed the ten commandments, and the book written by Moses. These were *his witnesses* under the law. Whatever might be the character of the Jewish people; however depraved and wicked they might be,

and however much they might hide or adulterate the truth, still these two written tablets witnessed for Jehovah in the midst of them.* And have we not something very analogous to this under the Christian dispensation? Do not the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, written by inspiration of God, and committed to the keeping of the Church, correspond with the tables of testimony, and the book of Moses under the law? And as the ten commandments, and that book laid up in the sanctuary, were a standing witness for God to the Jews, are not the Old and New Testaments, committed as they are to the keeping of the Church, a standing witness for him to Christians?

Nor is the idea of the personification of the Scriptures regarded as witnesses altogether without inspired authority. David says of that portion which then existed, "Thy testimonies are my delight, and my counsellors." (Ps. cxix. 24.) In the original it is, "*men of my council.*" Here, then, we have a plain personification of the written word. Can we require higher authority than this to justify our calling the two Testaments, the Old and the New, witnesses? †

Nor should the *number* of these witnesses be passed

* Our Lord himself also, it should be observed, speaks of the Scriptures of the Old Testament as his witnesses, and ascribes to them the *act* of witnessing for him: "Search the Scriptures," he says to the Jews, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which BEAR WITNESS (*ἀν μαρτυροῦσαι*) of me." (John v. 39.)

† It is curious to observe how ecclesiastical historians unconsciously adopt the metaphors of Scripture. Thus, in Le Bas' *Life of Wiclif* we read: "During the time which elapsed from the reign of Henry IV. to the period of the Reformation, the owner of a fragment of Wiclif's Bible was conscious of harbouring a WITNESS *whose* appearance would infallibly consign him to the dungeon, and possibly to the flames." (C. vi., p. 241.) Have we not here the Bible personified?

over without notice. I would not, indeed, dispute Mede's explanation, who says, that the number *two* is adopted because that was the smallest number allowed by the Mosaic law to constitute a conclusive testimony. And, therefore, that the meaning is simply that God would always raise up a *sufficient* number of witnesses, and only just sufficient, to render their testimony satisfactory, and preserve the truth from perishing. Still, it seems to me more natural to assign a specific meaning to the number; and the designation of the Scriptures as the two Testaments is so universal and so appropriate, that I cannot but think that the number *two* refers specifically to them. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are, in fact, two separate witnesses, entirely distinct from each other, and yet both bearing in a most remarkable manner precisely the same testimony. It would be difficult to find elsewhere two such witnesses. Indeed, the way in which the Old and New Testaments throw light one upon the other, and corroborate each other's evidence, is, to my mind, so wonderful, and so unlike anything ever devised by man, that it incontestably proves them both to be true witnesses for God.

2. *The witnesses prophesy.*—Can this be rightly affirmed of the Scriptures? Does not the act of prophesying imply personality? We might think so, but there is a passage in St. Matthew's Gospel which proves the contrary, "All the prophets, and the law," says our Lord, "*prophesied* until John." (Chap. xi. 13.) Now, there were no prophets (persons) from the days of Malachi; the prophets and the law, therefore, here must mean the Scriptures of the Old Testament, which, consequently, are said to prophesy. In fact, as before

remarked, to prophesy is to speak in the name of, or for God; and whether this be done by articulate sounds or by visible signs, as letters, the term is equally appropriate. Certainly, if it could be said, correctly speaking, of the Old Testament writings, that they prophesied from Malachi to John, much more may it with truth be affirmed of the inspired writings of both Testaments that they have *prophesied* from the time of the apostles to the present hour. The next characteristic of the witnesses is,—

3. *Their sackcloth clothing.*—Now sackcloth was the token of mourning. (Gen. xxxvii. 34; 2 Kings xix. 1.) It was also the ordinary clothing of the prophets under the law, (Isa. xx. 2; Zech. xiii. 4,) to indicate, no doubt, that as the messengers of God, it was distinctively a part of their office to reprove and mourn for the sins of the people. The sackcloth clothing, then, of these witnesses implies that they would have to fulfil their office under mournful circumstances. That the professing Church would be in such a condition as to call for sorrow and lamentation. Now if we refer to what is said of the state of the Church (c. ix. 20, 21,) which is a description of its condition, be it remembered, during the twelve hundred and sixty days of the sackcloth prophesying of the witnesses, we shall have no difficulty in understanding why they are described as thus attired. Who, indeed, that knows anything of the ecclesiastical history of those times but must see the propriety of the emblem? “We are penetrating,” says Milner, speaking of the state of religion in the ninth century, “into the regions of darkness, and we are carried by every step into scenes still more *gloomy* than the former.”

The sackcloth attire, however, we may suppose, indi-

cates not only the condition of the Church, but also of the witnesses themselves. It would imply that they will bear their testimony in a low and depressed state, covered, as it were, with sackcloth and ashes. And was not this the condition of the Scriptures during that long period of darkness which overspread Europe soon after the destruction of the Western Empire of Rome? There is nothing, indeed, more striking in the history of the Church than the manner in which the Scriptures were silently and gradually withdrawn from the eyes and hands of the people, just in proportion as the priesthood increased in power, and the darkness of superstition took the place of the light of truth.* Buried beneath a heap of human traditions; † locked up from the laity in an unknown tongue; hidden in the cells of monasteries, or covered with dust in the libraries

* In proof that the Scriptures were at an early period taken out of the hands of the laity the following extract from the "History of the Paulicians," by Petrus Siculus, may suffice. It is part of a dialogue said to have taken place between Sergius (or Constantine), the founder of the sect, and a (reputed) Manichean woman, who is represented as attempting to convert him. "I hear," says the woman, "Master Sergius, that you are both a good and learned man; tell me then why you do not read the holy Gospels?" To whom he answered, "It is not lawful for us profane persons to read those sacred books, but only for the priests." But she replied, "Not so; you are under a mistake. There is no respect of persons with God. The Lord will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. But your priests, because they *adulterate* the Word of God, and *hide* the mysteries contained in the Gospel, therefore do not read in your hearing all things which are written therein." (*Petrus Siculus*, quoted in Waddington's "History of the Church," p. 607.) It appears from hence, that at this period, A. D. 650, the clergy had completely shut up the Bible from the people.

† It is worthy of remark, that Bossuet, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Meaux, explains the Fourth Trumpet to signify, "the obscuration of the Scriptures (which were as lights, he observes, to the Jews), by the compilation of *their Talmud*." How much more has the Church of Rome clothed the Scriptures of the Christian Church in sackcloth by the compilation of her traditions!

of the curious; the book of God, while it still bore testimony for him, bore it almost literally "clothed in sackcloth."* We come next to,—

4. *The two olive trees, and the two candlesticks which stand before the God of the whole earth.*—And does this part of the description apply to anything so well and so truly as to the sacred writings? These witnesses have both light and oil within themselves; the light they give is always clear and bright, and the oil that supplies the light never fails. And are not the Scriptures "a lamp unto the feet, and a light unto our path?" And is not the light which they give a *perennial* light? a light that never wavers, never grows dim, but shines with a steady, undiminished lustre, being self-supplied? And "they stand before the God of the whole earth." Yes; they are his representatives, and witness for him. They stand before him as the golden candlestick in the tabernacle stood before the *Shekinah*, or visible symbol of the Divine glory, and they make known that glory to men. There "we all beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."†

* "Then," says Milton, speaking of the period of the Reformation, "was the sacred Bible sought out from dusty corners: Divine and human learning raked out of the EMBERS OF FORGOTTEN TONGUES; princes and cities trooped apace to the newly-elected banner of salvation; martyrs with the irresistible might of weakness, shook the powers of darkness, and scorned the fiery rage of the old red Dragon."—(Milton on the Reformation, quoted by Le Bas, "Life of Wiclif," c. vi., p. 241.) How strangely does the language of the poet accord with the scriptural emblem.

† We meet with similar imagery in Zech. iv., only that there the *candlestick* is but one, although the *olive trees* are two in number. The candlestick is supposed in that vision to symbolize the Jewish Church, and the olive trees Zerubbabel and Joshua, as types of Christ. But this interpretation appears to me very questionable. Why should not "the two anointed ones" be "the law and the prophets" which our Lord declared "prophesied until John?"

5th and 6th characteristics.—We are now arrived at that part of the description which at first sight seems least capable of being explained of the Scriptures. Can it with any truth be said of the Old and New Testaments, it may be asked, that “fire proceeds out of their mouth,” and that “they have power to shut the skies and restrain the rain?” There is, however, no real difficulty here. The Scriptures being personified as witnesses, everything stated concerning them is of course stated in language which would be suitable only in speaking of persons. Thus, a body is ascribed to them, (ver. 7); and here a mouth, from which fire issues; but to suppose that this necessarily implies a literal mouth and literal fire would be absurd. Every one acquainted with scriptural language must be aware that nothing is more common than for things and persons to be said *themselves to do* what they are only the remote cause of being done, or which they even declare shall be done. Thus, Jeremiah is said to have been appointed by the Lord over nations and kingdoms to root out, and pull down, and pluck up, (c. i. 10), because he was commissioned to foretel the destruction of kingdoms. So here, when it is affirmed of the witnesses that *fire proceedeth out of their mouth*, all that is implied, whether we suppose the subject of the prophecy to be persons or writings, is that they declare the wrath of God, of which fire is the emblem, to be impending over those who should attempt to injure them. And when it is added, “and if any man will hurt them, he must be so killed,” this is only declaring that their denunciations shall be verified. And does not *fire* thus proceed out of the mouth of God’s word? Do not the Scriptures, in point of fact, proclaim the Divine wrath to be impending over all the enemies of the truth?

What better illustration indeed can we desire of this particular feature in the description of the witnesses than the concluding words of the Apocalypse itself, which, placed as they are at the close of the sacred volume, seem to be intended to apply to the whole Bible :—“ If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book ? ”

The foregoing remarks apply also to that other part of the description, viz., the power ascribed to the witnesses of shutting heaven, “ that it rain not in the days of their prophecy.” God has willed that where the Scriptures are honoured and freely circulated there shall be an abundant blessing ; that the Holy Spirit, which is spiritual rain, shall be plentifully poured out, and the Church enjoy peace ; but when, instead of this, the Bible is withheld altogether from the people, or cautiously permitted only to a few ; then the heavens are, as it were, *shut* ; the refreshing influences of the Spirit, the dews of Divine grace, descend not, and the Church becomes a parched and arid desert. Moreover, the “ wells of salvation,” the ordinances of the Church, are in a manner converted *into blood* : the people who drink of them, instead of drinking in the life-giving truths of the Gospel, drink in pollution and death ; and the inevitable result is, all the *moral plagues* which afflict mankind. Now, although the Scriptures, being things inanimate, cannot positively and actively occasion results such as these, yet, inasmuch as their suppression is the *negative* cause of these and similar effects, they may rightly be said to *have power over them* ; the existence of the plagues being inseparably connected with the dishonour thus done to God’s word, as the effect with the cause.

7th. One other feature only remains to be considered,

—*the torment* occasioned by the witnesses to the men that dwelt upon the earth. And this will require but little illustration. The Bible is, and ever has been, the great instrument of moral torture to the men of this world, whether avowed Infidels or nominal Christians. It bears upon its front the impress of truth. There is an awful majesty about it which, however much they may affect to despise it, they cannot meet face to face. More especially, it is the instrument of torture to the bigoted emissaries of Rome. It speaks with a simplicity and power they cannot resist; yet they dare not deny its authority, whilst they would gladly get rid of it if they could. Witness the Encyclical letter of the late Pope Gregory XVI., before quoted, against Bible Societies. This is so characteristic and important a document that I must again beg the reader's attention to a few extracts from it. Let him observe the commencement: "Amongst the principal machinations by which in this our age the Anti-Catholics of various names endeavour to ensnare the adherents of Catholic truth and to turn away their minds from the holiness of the faith, a prominent position is held by the Bible Societies." Then the summing up:—"Having gravely and maturely weighed the whole matter, we have decided to issue this epistle to you, Venerable Brethren, in which, as respects all the aforesaid Bible Societies, already reprobated by our predecessors, we again with apostolical authority condemn them. And it will be your duty *to seize* out of the hands of the faithful NOT ONLY BIBLES TRANSLATED INTO THE VULGAR TONGUE, published contrary to the directions of the Roman Pontiffs, but also proscribed and *injurious* books (*proscriptos damnososque libros*) of every sort, and thus to provide that the faithful may be taught

by your monitions and authority what sort of pasture they should consider salutary to them, and what NOXIOUS AND DEADLY !” *

“ *Noxious and deadly;*” —such are the epithets the head of the Roman Catholic Church applies to the Authorized English Version of the Scriptures! How tormenting must the spread of those Scriptures be to the men of the Roman earth!

Thus, I trust, it has been shown that this description of the witnesses, without doing violence to language or having recourse to any forced and unnatural interpretations, may with strict propriety be applied to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. We have now to consider,—

THE PROPHETICAL HISTORY OF THE WITNESSES AND ITS FULFILMENT.

Before attempting to show the fulfilment of this prophecy, it will be necessary to determine two leading points:—1st. The time of the war against the witnesses, and of their slaughter. 2dly. The agent by whom they are to be slain.

With regard to the first point, nothing I think can be clearer than that the war against them is to commence when the period of their sackcloth prophesying is completed, *i.e.*, either *at* its close, or immediately *after* its close. The literal and grammatical translation of the clause relating to this point is as given in our Bibles:—“WHEN THEY SHALL HAVE FINISHED THEIR TESTIMONY.” † No ingenuity of criticism can alter the natural

* Encyclical Letter of Gregory XVI., dated Rome, May 8, 1844.

† ‘Όταν τελέσωσι τὴν μαρτυρίαν αὐτῶν.

and obvious meaning of these words. These witnesses were to prophesy, clothed in sackcloth, for twelve hundred and sixty days, and at the expiration of the period (not necessarily after it had entirely expired, but *at*, or about, its expiration), and not before, the war against them was to commence. No one who was not biassed by some pre-conceived application of the prophecy, or had not some particular theory to establish, would ever for a moment think of giving any other meaning to the words.* This is so obvious, that those of my readers to whom the subject is new, will be surprised perhaps that I should think it necessary to say one word about it. Obvious, however, as the meaning of these words may appear to be, it has been denied that what I have just stated is their meaning; and it is on this ground that I have thought it desirable to direct especial attention to the subject. Let the reader carefully consider the clause and say, whether in the original Greek or as it stands in our English version, it can have any other meaning than that which I have assigned to it.

As respects the other point, there is more difficulty. The witnesses, indeed, are to be slain by the beast from

* This is admitted by Mr. Elliott, although his theory of the accomplishment of the prophecy requires that the words should be explained in a different sense. Speaking of the clause in question he says, "In our authorized English version it is translated, 'And when they shall have *finished* their testimony,' as if referring chronologically to the *end of the 1260 years* of the witnessing. And in so far as the clause itself is concerned, *that is, I at once admit*, the most NATURAL MODE of translating and understanding it." And again: "Different renderings have been proposed instead of the above," but "objections grammatical or of some other nature occur against them all." ("Horæ Apoc.," vol. ii., pp. 399, 401. Fourth Edition.) How then, it will be asked, does he justify his departure from that which he allows to be the most natural translation and sense? For an answer to this question I must refer the reader to the Appendix, where he will find Mr. Elliott's explanation fully given.

the bottomless pit. Here there is no ambiguity. And, perhaps, to any person reading the Revelation for the first time, and unacquainted with the controversies which have been carried on upon the subject, it might seem as if the only point to be considered was, who or what this wild beast may represent. Commentators, however, have raised another question, and that one of no little importance, which must therefore be determined before we proceed any further. That question is, whether the beast from the bottomless pit (c. xvii.) and the beast from the sea (c. xiii.) are altogether and absolutely identical, being, in fact, only different representations of precisely the same thing. The importance of this question in regard to the fulfilment of the prophecy is obvious. For if the two beasts are identical, then we shall have to show that the witnesses have been slain, or are to be slain, by a power resembling *both* beasts; but if they are not identical, then we shall have to show that they have been slain, or are to be slain, by a power corresponding in character with the beast from the bottomless pit *alone*.

And what reason then have we to suppose that these two wild beasts *are* identical? To enter fully into this question would involve an explanation of both the chapters in which they are respectively described, and would be anticipating undesirably the commentary upon them. I say *undesirably*, for my decided opinion is, that these two prefigurations, instead of being mixed up with each other and confused, as it were, together, as though they made but one picture, ought carefully to be kept apart, and considered each by itself distinctly and separately. This, I am convinced, is the only way to attain to the true meaning of either one or the other. I cannot think that in a book in which everything is

expressed with so much fulness and yet so much brevity, one and identically the same persecuting power is made the subject of two of the most minutely descriptive visions contained in it.* I shall not, therefore, here enter into the discussion of this question as to the identity of these wild beasts. I would, however, direct the reader's attention to one or two circumstances which appear to me alone sufficient to prove that they cannot be one and the same.

In the first place, then, the prophecy expressly states that the witnesses are to be slain by the beast from the *abyss*, who is not described until chapter xvii., but the wild beast from the sea is described in the next vision but one. Now can any reason be assigned for this? Why should it be written, "The beast that ariseth out of *the bottomless pit* shall make war with them," and not, "The beast that ariseth out of *the sea*"? Surely, supposing the two beasts to be identical, it would be more natural to refer to the description of the one first following, rather than of that so remote. The mere fact that the beast who is to slay the witnesses is characterized as rising from the *bottomless pit*, and not from the *sea*, seems to me purposely intended to put us on our guard against the error of confounding them together, and, in fact, to mark their distinctness.

Again, the period of the sackcloth prophesying of the witnesses, corresponds with the period of the power to hurt of the wild beast from the sea; they are contemporaneous periods. How then can the witnesses be slain

* This is Mr. Elliott's view. "Its history," he says, (viz., that of the wild beast) was too important to be described parenthetically; and was made, in fact, the subject of those two supplemental visions of chapters xiii. and xvii. to which I have just referred."—*Horæ*, vol. ii., p. 398.

by him, seeing that his power expires at the same time with their sackcloth prophesying ?

But the most striking point of difference in the history and acts of the two beasts is this, that the wild beast from the sea *makes war* and *kills* during the whole time of his continuance (c. xiii. 5—15), whereas the beast from the abyss makes war with the witnesses, and slays them, *after* they have finished their prophesying in sackcloth. This circumstance appears to me conclusive as to the diversity of the two beasts. Surely it is not conceivable, that if it had been intended to convey to us the idea that the beast from the bottomless pit had been making war with the witnesses during the whole period of their prophesying in sackcloth, it would have been written, “and when *they shall have finished* their testimony,” &c.*

Assuming, then, that the wild beast from the bottomless pit is not merely another designation for that from the sea, what power shall we say he represents ? Those persons who are accustomed to prophetic studies will at once gather from the foregoing remarks, that, in common with many other modern expositors, I suppose him to represent the kingdoms of the empire of Charlemagne, or the ten European kingdoms of the Papacy, under the government of an Atheistical democracy. My reasons for taking this view will be found in the commentary on the eighth verse of chap. xvii. For the present, I must take it for granted that the wild beast from the bottomless pit is a personification of Infidelity and Democracy ruling over the ten Papal

* Mr. Elliott would translate, “when they shall have *completed* their testimony;” but this rendering, even with his explanation, does not, to my mind, remove the difficulty.—(See Appendix.)

kingdoms, and that this wild beast began his eventful career in France in 1789. It will now, therefore, be my business to show that all the circumstances of the prophecy which remain, had their fulfilment at the period just mentioned.

And, first, as to the time. The witnesses are to be slain at the expiration of the twelve hundred and sixty year-days of their prophesying. Supposing, then, this prophesying began about the same time as the treading down of the holy city by the Gentiles—*i.e.*, somewhere between the fifth and sixth centuries—twelve hundred and sixty years would bring us towards the close of the eighteenth. Nor need we, I think, attempt to attain greater accuracy than this. In fact, the circumstances of the case do not admit of it. Whether we suppose the Scriptures, or particular Churches, to be the witnesses, it is obviously impossible that their beginning to prophesy in sackcloth should be defined with precision to a day or a year. Their being reduced to this condition must, like the flight of the woman into the wilderness, be the result of causes working gradually and imperceptibly, and, therefore, as was before remarked, we are to regard the fact, that this one period is expressed in so many different ways, as indicating rather a general correspondence than exact and precise agreement.

But admitting this, has the prophecy, on the supposition that the Scriptures are the two witnesses, been fulfilled? I think it undoubtedly has, and that in a manner so extraordinary as to force conviction on the mind. It will be observed by the careful student, that there are eleven particulars in the prophecy, all of which must be verified in the supposed fulfilment,

or it cannot be allowed of. If any one of these particulars cannot be satisfactorily explained—that is, without having recourse to unnatural and forced interpretations of words and phrases, or to conjectural emendations of the text,—the hypothesis falls to the ground, or, at least, will be materially weakened. These particulars are: 1st, The locality of these transactions; 2dly, The warfare, and its results; including, 3dly, The exposure of the dead body (or bodies) of the witnesses; and, 4thly, The triumphing of their enemies; 5thly, Their resurrection after three days and a half; 6thly, The effect upon their enemies; 7thly, Their ascension; 8thly, The great earthquake which accompanies these events; 9thly, The fall of a tenth part of the city; 10thly, The slaughter of seven thousand names of men; 11thly, The effect produced upon a remnant.

We proceed, then, to show how each and all of these particulars were verified in what took place in France at the close of the eighteenth century. And,

1. *The locality*.—The dead bodies of the witnesses were to lie in the broad street of the great city, which is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt, where also the Lord was crucified. Here, therefore, was to be the principal theatre of the warfare. But what is this great city? The phrase occurs ten times in the Revelation, and by the universal consent of commentators in every one of them, except the last, (where we are told it means distinctly the *holy* city, New Jerusalem,) it signifies either the city of Rome itself, or the Roman Empire, or rather Roman Christendom. In chap. xvii. 18, the context shows it means the city itself (although not restrictedly), but in all the other instances it signifies, I believe, the Roman territory. Such is manifestly

its meaning here, for Christ was not crucified in the city of Rome, but he was in the territory of the Empire.* For Judæa, as every one knows, at the time of the crucifixion was a province of Rome, and our Lord was crucified not by Jews, but by Romans. This being the case, "THE BROAD STREET" of the great city must represent some country in the Papal Roman territory, which, on account of its extent and position, may be rightly so designated. Now let the reader attentively mark the distinctiveness of the designation, "THE BROAD STREET;"† if, then, a country be intended, it must be one of spacious territories, and lying in the midst of the great political city, European Christendom. A single glance at the map will show how exactly appropriate this designation is to France. Situated between the two great Papal kingdoms, with the seat of the Papacy at its south-western extremity, its very form and locality seem to point it out as the "broad street of the great city."

2. *The warfare, and its results; including the exposure of the dead bodies of the witnesses, and the triumphing of their enemies.*—Now here let me premise, that as the witnesses are assumed to be writings, not persons, whatever is stated concerning them must be understood and interpreted in accordance with this view. Thus, *the slaying* of them must be taken to signify the overthrow of their authority as witnesses, and the suppression

* It is true, he may be said to have been crucified afresh at Rome in his members. But there were but few martyrdoms in Rome itself after it became Christian; besides that the words, "where their (or our) Lord was crucified," seem necessarily to refer to Christ himself.

† The Greek is *τη πλατεια*, which word generally agrees with *δδος* understood, and signifies a *broad* road, or highway. It occurs in two other places in this book, c. xxi. 21, and xxii. 2.

f their testimony. The *exposure of their dead bodies*, &c. must be supposed to imply their being treated with contempt and insult after their authority shall have been denied and their testimony suppressed, and that openly and publicly. Their dead bodies are to be *seen* "by some (deputies, *i.e.*) from the people, and tribes, and tongues," and they are not "to suffer them to be buried."* We have, then, to show the verification of these things in the treatment of the Scriptures by the atheistical democracy of France. And, surely, it must have already occurred to those of my readers acquainted with the history of the first French Revolution how wonderfully all these particulars were then fulfilled! The atheistical French Republic sprang into being in 1789. Rising up suddenly, like a hideous monster from the bottomless pit, it seemed to attain to its full growth almost as soon as it was born. And what was one of its first public acts after it was left without restraint to pursue the dictates of its fiendish mind? Was it not, in the sense just explained, the slaughter of the two witnesses?—the utter denial, by a *legislative enactment*, of the authority of the Bible

* To be denied the rites of sepulture was considered by both Jews and Greeks the highest indignity, nor could a greater calamity befall any human being, in their estimation, than to be left unburied. (See 2 Sam. xxi. 10.) The "Antigone" of Sophocles is entirely founded upon the idea which the ancients entertained on this subject. Polynices had been killed fighting in single combat with his brother, and Creon the king had forbidden him to be buried, denouncing death on any one who should attempt it. Antigone, the sister of Polynices, in defiance of her uncle's prohibition, goes by night and casts dust upon the body. Being discovered and taken before Creon, she is by his orders buried alive. This shows the light in which the exposure of a dead body was regarded by the Gentiles. Rather than suffer so great an indignity to be put upon her brother, a young and delicate female undertakes the performance of the sepulchral rites herself, and that at the risk of her life.

and the truth of its testimony? Let us hear the words of history: "The throne being annihilated," says Sir Walter Scott, in his "Life of Napoleon," "it appeared to the philosophers of the school of Hebert, that in *totally destroying* such vestiges of religion and public worship as were still retained by the people of France, there was room for a *splendid triumph* of liberal opinions. It was not enough, they said, for a regenerate nation to have dethroned earthly kings, unless she stretched out the arm of defiance towards those powers which superstition had represented as reigning over boundless space." And what did they accordingly do?

"An unhappy man," proceeds the historian, "named Gobet, Constitutional Bishop of Paris, was brought forward to play the principal part in the most impudent and scandalous farce ever acted in the face of a national representation." Heading a procession, "he declared to the Convention that the religion which he had taught so many years was, in every respect, a piece of priestcraft, which had no foundation either in history or sacred truth. He disowned, in solemn and explicit terms, the existence of the Deity, to whose worship he had been consecrated, and devoted himself in future to the homage of Liberty, Equality, Virtue, and Morality."

Then followed the installation and worship of the Goddess of Reason. "A band of music, preceded by the members of the municipal body, escorting an abandoned female, veiled, entered the Convention in solemn procession, singing a hymn in praise of Liberty. Being brought within the bar, and unveiled with great form, the woman was placed at the right hand of the president; and to this fit representative of that Reason

whom they worshipped did the National Convention of France render public homage.”

“And thus,” says the historian, “the world for *the first time* heard an assembly of men uplift their united voice to deny the most solemn truth which man’s soul receives, and renounce unanimously the belief and worship of a Deity.”

The further consequences of this unheard-of mixture of absurdity and impiety are thus described: “The churches in most districts of France were closed against priests and worshippers, the bells were cast into cannon, the whole ecclesiastical establishment destroyed, and the republican inscription over the cemeteries declared DEATH TO BE A PERPETUAL SLEEP.”*

Nor let it be supposed that these mad and fiendish proceedings originated exclusively, or chiefly, in hatred of priests and establishments, and the mummeries of Popery. It was against *Christianity*, as the revealed religion, and against the *Scriptures*, as the depositaries of revelation, that the Infidel democracy of France directed their attacks.† The warfare began, or rather the preparations for it, in that school of modern French philosophy of which Voltaire, Diderot, and D’Alembert were the founders. The grand object of these men was to undermine the authority of the *Scriptures*. The errors or the follies of Popery were to them, comparatively, matters of indifference. Romanism and Protestantism were in their eyes much the same things.

* “Life of Napoleon,” vol. ii., p. 304, &c.

† “The Popish clergy were persecuted under the *character of Christians*. When the Archbishop of Paris and others endeavoured to screen themselves from its effects by a recantation, what did they recant? Was it Popery? No; but the profession of Christianity.”—*Note appended to a sermon by Robert Hall, on “Modern Infidelity.”*

They cared not whether the supremacy of the Pope and the doctrine of transubstantiation, were allowed or denied. But what they did care about, and what they laboured with untiring energy to accomplish, was, to annihilate Christianity, and prove the Bible to be a lying imposture. And in this, as we have seen in the opinion of the majority of Frenchmen, they unhappily too well succeeded. France as a nation rejected revelation, and affirmed, in the sight of the world, by a solemn decree of the Legislature, that the Bible, instead of being a revelation from heaven, and a true witness for God, is a forgery and a lie, and utterly unworthy of credit.

And were not the Scriptures, then, regarded as witnesses for Christ, as long as this law of the Convention continued in force—a law decreeing, be it remembered, that there is no such Being as God (incredible absurdity!), and that death is an eternal sleep,—as long, I say, as this law continued in force, were not the Scriptures as witnesses for Christ slain? For, the truth of their testimony being by an act of the Legislature denied, and submission to that denial insisted upon and enforced, what had they become in the eyes of the nation but a *dead* letter? Certainly, it may be said, so far as France was concerned, that the victory for the time was complete. The witnesses ceased not only to prophesy in sackcloth, but to prophesy at all. The beast from the bottomless pit had made war with them, and overcome them, and slain them. Nor were the other circumstances of the prophecy wanting. The dead bodies* of the witnesses lay openly exposed “in the broad place of the great

* Some MSS. have the word in the singular, and if this be the correct reading, it would make the application of the prophecy to the Scriptures

city," and every indignity that human ingenuity and Satanic malignity could devise to show hatred and contempt, was practised against them. Tied to the tail of an ass, the sacred volume, the Old and New Testament witnesses, like a dead and mangled corpse, were dragged, trailing in the mire, through the streets of the second city of the empire, exposed to the scorn and derision of a savage multitude.* And this, too, in the face of all Europe. For these things were not done in a corner, nor was there any attempt at concealment, as if the perpetrators of them were ashamed of their doings. On the contrary, they gloried in them, and the death of Christ's witnesses was celebrated throughout the empire with music and dancing and feasting, as on the occasion of some great victory, just as is described in the prophecy. A sort of mania for feasts and processions seems to have seized the whole nation, and France from one end to the other exhibited the spectacle of a people intoxicated with joy at an unexpected and mighty deliverance. "This impious and ridiculous mummery," says Sir Walter Scott, "had a certain fashion, and the installation of the Goddess of Reason was renewed and imitated throughout the nation."—(P. 306.)

The reign of the Goddess of Reason, however, was but short. In a few months, this same Convention, which had decreed that there was no God, rescinded its decree, and condescended to acknowledge the existence of a Supreme Being. But did it then rescind its decree

still more striking; for although two distinct witnesses, they form but one volume.

* I cannot recollect where I first met with this fact; it will, however, be found stated in substance in Mr. Irving's "Babylon and Infidelity foredoomed of God," vol. i., p. 134.

respecting the witnesses? Did it acknowledge the truth of their testimony? No; the very decree which affirmed the existence of a God, affirmed the former denial of his witnesses. The account given of this matter, and the attending circumstances, by the writer just named, is so interesting, and so illustrative of the prophecy before us, that I cannot doubt but that it will be acceptable to the reader.

Having stated that Robespierre, affecting to be disgusted with the atheism of Hebert, had made a long and pathetic address upon the subject, he proceeds thus: "But the summary of this extraordinary oration was a string of decrees, commencing with a declaration, that the Republic of France *acknowledged the existence* of a Supreme Being. The other decrees established the nature of the worship to be rendered to the Great Being whom these frail atoms had restored to his place in their thoughts; and this was to be expressed by dedicating a day in each decade to some peculiar and established virtue, WITH HYMNS AND PROCESSIONS in due honour of it, approaching as near to Paganism as could well be accomplished. The last decree appointed *a fête* to be given in honour of the Supreme Being himself, as the nation might have celebrated by public rejoicings a pacification with some neighbouring Power."

The speech embodying these proposed decrees was received, we are told, with servile applause; and a member of the Convention, "with affected enthusiasm, demanded that the plan should be TRANSLATED INTO ALL LANGUAGES, AND DISPERSED THROUGH THE UNIVERSE."*

Now, before we proceed any further in this inves-

* "Life of Napoleon," vol. ii., p. 321, &c.

tigation, I would ask the reader to pause for a moment, and seriously consider whether there is not something more than a mere fanciful coincidence between the historical facts we have been contemplating and the prefigurations of this wonderful prophecy. When or where did such things ever happen before? When did a nation ever before openly make war against the written testimonies of God, and by the mouth of its Legislature declare the Scriptures to be an imposture and a lie, celebrating its deliverance from the terror of their awful sanctions by feasting and rejoicing?

5. We come now to THE RESURRECTION OF THE WITNESSES. “*And after the three days and a half the spirit (i.e., the breath) of life from God entered into them.*”—As before observed, so long as the decree forbidding the exercise of Christianity remained in force, so long must the witnesses be considered as lying dead. Now how long did that decree continue to be law? Precisely the period named in the prophecy during which the dead bodies of the witnesses were to lie exposed. For that decree was passed in November, 1793, and on June 17, 1797, Camille Jourdan brought up his report on the freedom of religious worship, which was ordered to be printed by the unanimous vote of the Council of Five Hundred.*

Thus, then, did God’s witnesses once more rise up in the broad street of the great city, and stand upon their feet. They again began to bear their testimony in the face of their enemies.

6. But greater honours awaited them. It would seem as if the Lord for whom they witnessed had permitted them to be overcome, and apparently slain,

* See Annual Register, 1797. See also *Alison’s Hist.*, vol. iii., p. 315.

just to show man when he has done his worst, and put forth all the strength of his malignity, how poor and impotent a thing he is. “AND THEY HEARD* A GREAT VOICE FROM HEAVEN, SAYING TO THEM, ‘COME UP HITHER.’ AND THEY ASCENDED UP INTO HEAVEN IN THE CLOUD, AND THEIR ENEMIES BEHELD THEM.” Before showing how this part of the prophecy was fulfilled, I must direct the reader’s attention to two circumstances in it especially deserving of notice. The first is, the departure from the rule generally observed throughout the Apocalypse in regard to the words *they heard*. In every other instance in which the voice from heaven speaks, it is the apostle who hears it, and the words spoken are always preceded by the announcement, *I heard*, but here it is the witnesses themselves who hear the voice. Why is this? It appears to me that it may be explained in this manner. In every other case, St. John tells us what he himself saw and heard, but here, he is not describing a vision seen by himself, but delivering a prophecy relative to the fates of the two witnesses. He did not himself see the witnesses slain, nor their bodies exposed, and neither, therefore, did he hear the voice which called them up to heaven. And this consideration supplies a key to another question of some difficulty,—viz., where Christ ceases to speak,

* Mr. Elliott would read the verb in the singular, ἤκουσα, *I heard*. But although, as he justly observes, this reading has the evidence of *analogy* in its favour, it being the apostle in every other instance who is represented as *hearing* the words that were spoken, whatever they might be, not the figurative characters brought upon the scene, it is not supported by MSS. nor ancient versions, and must, therefore, I think, be rejected as a mere modern conjectural emendation. The Vulgate, which in a case like this is high authority, agrees with the *textus receptus*, which is also followed by Tregelles in his translation. There may be a meaning in this anomaly not apparent at first sight.

and the apostle's prophetic narrative begins. It seems to me, then, very evident that our Lord ceases to speak at the end of the third verse, and that St. John begins his explanatory and prophetic narrative in the fourth. The statement, "*they* heard a voice," not *I* heard, proves that the whole is a prophecy in narrative, not in vision, and being so, it seems most natural to ascribe it *all* to the apostle as the narrator.

The other point is, the use of the definite article in describing the witnesses' ascent. *They ascended up to heaven in the cloud.* It has puzzled several critics not a little to understand why the definite article is here employed.* In fact, until lately it has been thrown out by most translators as a mere expletive, and read, as in the English version, *and they ascended—in a cloud, &c.* But we may rest assured that there are few, if any, expletives in Scripture. Every letter, and every word, as here, has its meaning. The insertion of the definite article before the word CLOUD, shows that there is reference to some particular cloud previously mentioned. And has, then, any cloud been mentioned? Yes; was not the colossal angel with the little book clothed with a cloud? Here, then, is the thing wanted. *The* cloud is undoubtedly the cloud in which that angel was enveloped. In this same cloud did the witnesses ascend. And what does this fact import? This will appear immediately. But first we must show the historical fulfilment of the prophecy.

The witnesses hear a voice from heaven calling them to ascend, and they do ascend accordingly in the cloud

* Thus Bishop Middleton, in his treatise on the "Greek Article," says, "No cloud has been mentioned; yet there is not any instance in the New Testament in which *νεφέλη* has the article, where there is not *reference*."

with which the Christ-like angel is clothed, *the angel himself*, let it be observed, remaining where he was, standing upon the earth and sea, *the cloud only* which enveloped him being removed.* Now, how were these things accomplished in what happened to the Scriptures after that signal and apparently complete triumph over them in France in 1793? It is almost enough in answer to this question simply to mention the name of the BIBLE SOCIETY. For who has not heard of the British and Foreign Bible Society? And who that knows anything of its objects and operations but must recognise in its formation and proceedings a verification of the things here foretold?

Assuming that the witnesses are the sacred Scriptures, and the broad street of the great city, France, it is predicted, that after having been reviled, and vilified, and figuratively put to death in that country, they shall hear a voice from heaven calling them to ascend thither. Which is just as if it had been said, that having been dishonoured and cast down in one place, they shall be glorified and exalted in another. For the heaven here spoken of is not the abode of the blessed, but that political heaven so often referred to in this book, the place of authority and honour.

* Mr. Elliott indeed says, "The cloud that mantled the discoursing angel, and *of course the angel with it*, is said to have ascended upward from the Evangelist's presence." ("Horæ," vol. ii., p. 447.) But I should draw an inference exactly the reverse. I should say rather, the cloud, and of course, *not* the angel, ascended. For had it been intended to convey to us the idea that the angel went up with the cloud, would not the fact have been specifically stated? Would it not have been written, "And they ascended up to heaven (*ἐν τῇ νεφέλῃ μετὰ τοῦ ἀγγέλου*) in the cloud *with the angel*," or words to that effect? But seeing there is no intimation of the kind, it seems to me, I confess, a purely gratuitous assumption that the cloud and the angel ascended together.

And what are the facts relating to this subject? In the year 1805 the British and Foreign Bible Society was formed in this country, just eight years after the witnesses were again set upon their feet in France. Small in its beginnings, it grew with incredible rapidity. Kindred Societies were established in the heart of the Infidel kingdom itself, and in the course of a few years the operations of the British and Foreign Bible Society were known and felt throughout the world.* Now was not this as if a voice from a high and exalted throne had said to God's written witnesses, "Come up hither?" And did not their enemies behold them? France in 1793 proclaims aloud to all the earth that the Scriptures are a lie; Britain, the chief of the nations, in 1805, repels the charge, and says to all the earth, "Behold God's witnesses! The Bible is not an imposture; it is the infallible word of Him who cannot lie. Ye nations of the world, hear its testimony." Thus, I say, did England, as it were, take the oracles of God by the hand just as they were recovering from their apparent defeat and prostration in France, and exalt them to heaven.

Nor must we omit to notice here the effect of the formation of the Bible Society generally on the minds of men. Or, if it cannot be called an *effect*, at least a concomitant circumstance attending the formation of the Society. I mean, the extraordinary honour which has of

* There are now in Great Britain 3,313 Auxiliary and Branch Bible Societies and Associations; in the colonies, 496; Foreign Agencies and Societies, with numerous Auxiliaries, 72. The Society has published translations of the Scriptures in ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY-EIGHT LANGUAGES OR DIALECTS, of which ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-ONE are translations never before printed; and it has issued since its formation more than TWENTY-FOUR MILLION copies of the Scriptures. See *Compendium to the Report for 1851*.

late years been put upon the Scriptures. Who ventures now openly to impugn the truth of the Bible? How implicitly do men defer every disputed question to its decision? So strong and so general amongst religious people is this reverence for the Old and New Testaments as the sole witnesses for Christ whose testimony can be implicitly relied on, that it has given rise to a new term, and there are those who call it *Bibliolatry*, THE WORSHIP OF THE BIBLE! Is not this something like a literal fulfilment of the words, "And they heard a voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither?"

But now, as to the import of the ascent of the witnesses in the cloud enveloping the colossal angel. It is obvious that if the cloud alone ascended; the angel would remain standing as before, with his right foot on the sea, and his left upon the earth, claiming still universal dominion; and seeing that no mention is made of the angel's ascent, I think we must assume he did not ascend with the cloud. And need I say what these things mean? The Reformers of the sixteenth century took out of the hand of the Roman Pontiff the forged titles by which he held the world in subjection, and the circulation of the Scriptures even in Roman Catholic countries since the French Revolution, has in a great measure removed the cloud of mystery with which he was for centuries enveloped, and stripped him of his fictitious glory, (for a cloud is the emblem of divinity); but nevertheless he has not renounced his claims to universal supremacy; he stands still in the same commanding attitude, and proclaims himself still the Vicar of Christ, and the Vicegerent of God upon earth! Can anything be conceived more exact than the agreement between the prefigurations and the accomplishment?

8th, 9th, 10th, and 11th.—We now proceed to the particulars contained in the thirteenth verse.—AND IN THAT HOUR THERE WAS A GREAT EARTHQUAKE, AND THE TENTH PART OF THE CITY FELL; AND THERE WERE SLAIN IN THE EARTHQUAKE SEVEN THOUSAND NAMES OF MEN; AND THE REST BECAME TERRIFIED, AND GAVE GLORY TO THE GOD OF HEAVEN. Four particulars here demand distinct notice. There is, first, the *earthquake*. It will be observed that this earthquake is to take place contemporaneously with the war against the witnesses. It is not said, *after this*,—but, “*in that hour* ;” they are, therefore, simultaneous events. And was there not indeed “a great earthquake” in Europe and Christendom when the events we have been considering took place? This is a subject so trite and so familiar to every one, that it is almost impossible to write about it without repeating what has been said a hundred times before. The French Revolution of 1789 was indisputably one of the greatest political and social earthquakes that ever disturbed the framework of human society. It shook every kingdom of Europe, and its effects were felt even at the extremities of the earth. Never I believe in the memory of man was there so sudden, so general, and so violent a disruption of the long-established bonds by which men for ages had been held together as on that occasion. “All circumstances taken together,” says Mr. Burke, “the French revolution is the most astonishing that has hitherto happened in the world.”* We may say, in fact, that men seem to have

* “Thoughts on the Revolution in France,” vol. v., p. 39, of his works. We must be careful, however, not to confound this earthquake with that of chap. xvi. 18 under the seventh vial. This was indeed a great earthquake, but that is to be such an one “as was not since men were upon the earth.” It is surprising, indeed, that some commentators of note should

agreed by general consent to designate that event a GREAT EARTHQUAKE,* and to go about therefore to prove by a laboured argument that it might with propriety be so called in prophecy is perfectly unnecessary.

9. Nor is the fall of the tenth part of the city less easy of verification. The great city, as we have seen, is European Papal Christendom. Now this great city consists of ten kingdoms. The fall therefore of a tenth part of the city *by the shock of the earthquake* (for that is evidently implied) will signify the falling as it were to pieces of one of these kingdoms; the thorough dislocation and disruption of all its establishments, civil, political, and ecclesiastical; and, as a consequence, its temporary severance from the rest of the city. And can it be necessary to show more fully than has been already done how all this was accomplished in France in the Revolution of 1789? Did not the laws and institutions of the kingdom, the whole social fabric in short, then tumble, as in a moment, to pieces, just like a city shaken by an earthquake? I know not that I can give any better illustration of this subject than by quoting the words of the historian just named:—"The monarchy of France (it was supposed) had

not have perceived the plainly marked distinction between the three earthquakes of the Apocalypse. Thus Dr. Wordsworth, one of the most recent expositors, speaking of the earthquake under the sixth seal, says: "This earthquake is described hereafter more fully under the sixth trumpet (c. xi. 12), and *again* under the seventh vial (c. xvi. 17—21); and thus, if we may so speak, it seems a *Catchword* to connect all these together, and so enables us to fix the chronology of the Apocalypse." (Expos. of the Apoc., p. 190.) But why, if these earthquakes were one and all symbols of the same event, should the last be described as *the greatest* that ever happened upon earth?

* Thus Sir Walter Scott, speaking of the effects of the revolution, says, "But that GREAT EARTHQUAKE, by throwing down distinctions of birth and rank, had removed obstacles," &c.—*Life of Napoleon*, vol. ii., p. 385.

fallen for ever. But all agreed that it was necessary, in the first place, *to clear away the remains* of the ancient state of things." Again: "We must now revert to the condition of the kingdom of France at large, while her ancient institutions were *crumbling to pieces*." (Ibid, vol. i., p. 170, 175.) How remarkably does this language correspond with the figure of the prophecy!

Nor does the historical fulfilment fail in regard to that other point, the temporary severance of the tenth part of the city, that fell from the centre of unity. The same National Assembly which decreed the revolution decreed the separation of the National Church of France from the See of Rome, and every clergyman was required to renounce by a solemn oath his dependance upon the Roman Pontiff.* Thus then did a tenth part of the Papal city fall.

10. "AND THERE WERE SLAIN IN THE EARTHQUAKE SEVEN THOUSAND NAMES OF MEN."—This is one of the most remarkable and important facts in the prophecy, and demands the most careful and attentive investigation. The reader will doubtless be struck with the peculiarity of the phrase, "*names of men*," and it is clear that the first thing we have to do is to determine its meaning. With regard then to the translation of the Greek there can be no dispute.† It is literally as above given. The English version indeed is, "And in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand." But this omission of the word "names" cannot be justified. *Names of men*, and

* "A civil constitution was by the same code framed for the clergy, declaring them totally independent of the See of Rome."—*Life of Napoleon*, vol. ii., p. 224.

† καὶ ἀπεκτανθησαν ἐν τῷ σεισμῷ ὀνόματα ἀνθρώπων χιλιάδες ἑπτὰ. It is strange that our translators should take no notice of the ὀνόματα. They appear to have considered the phrase equivalent to *persons of men*.

men are certainly not the same thing. The question then is, what this peculiar phrase may mean ?

Now there are two senses, and but two, as it seems to me, in which it can with any show of reason be understood. "*Names of men*" may signify names *imposed* by men ; that is to say, all honorary titles and distinctions, all names or appellations whereby one human being is as it were classified and distinguished from his fellow-creatures. And, as the designation is sometimes put for the person designated—as we say, *e.g.*, such an institution is supported by *great names*, meaning persons—*names of men* may mean men distinguished in an especial manner from their fellows by their names ; in other words, men of rank and distinction. So that, in fact, "names of men," viewed thus, as having a civil bearing, may signify both the individuals and their designations ; or, in other words, both men of rank and their titles. This, I think, it must be admitted, is a very natural and satisfactory explanation of the phrase.* And thus understood the import of the prediction is obvious. It implies the utter destruction of all privileged classes, and the abolition of all distinctive names

* Vitringa, without having any hypothesis to serve, gives this sense to the words : "*Septem itaque millia Nominum hominum* hic sunt septem millia hominum Clarorum, Nobilium, Illustrium, Ecclesiastica vel Politica dignitate conspicuorum. Quod non ita est intelligendum acsi in illo terræ motu ἀποτόμως occumberent Septem ejusmodi Hominum millia ; sed ita haud dubie est exponendum, aliquot millia hominum Dignitate vel Familia Nobilium illo in casu esse interitura, ut *septenarius numerus*, quod nemo negat, sæpius pro indefinito sumitur." (Com., p. 485.) "Therefore these *seven thousand names of men* are seven thousand RENOWNED, ILLUSTRIOUS, NOBLEMEN, CONSPICUOUS EITHER IN THE CHURCH OR STATE. Which is not to be so understood as if *exactly* seven thousand men of this description would be slain, but that *some* thousands of men ILLUSTRIOUS BY THEIR HIGH OFFICE OR BIRTH would perish in that calamity, since no one denies that the number seven is often to be taken indefinitely."

and titles. For the definite number of “*seven thousand*” is clearly put for a vast multitude indefinitely great. It may, in fact, mean *all names*. For since both seven, and a thousand, are numbers implying perfection and completeness, when joined together, they may well be supposed to signify totality, and to comprehend the whole of those things to which they refer.

These words, however, may have another meaning. *Names of men* may designate those who have the names of men but are not men. And thus understood this phrase will signify, in an ecclesiastical sense, *Christians in name*, and nothing more. Men who have been baptized in the name of Christ, but have not the Spirit of Christ, and, therefore, are not really *Christian men*. As we say, mere *nominal* Christians. There is a passage in the Epistle of Ignatius to the Philadelphians which is strongly confirmatory of this idea. Speaking of certain Judaizing teachers, he says,—“If they speak not of Jesus Christ they are both of them to me like monumental pillars and sepulchres of the dead, on which are written only NAMES OF MEN.”* Names of men, then, according to Ignatius, are men who, like the members of the Church of Sardis, “have the name to live and are dead.”

Both these senses of the phrase seem to me so natural and probable, that I confess I scarcely know which of them to prefer. But why should we not take both? Why should we not suppose that the Holy Spirit dictated this peculiar phraseology to the apostle in order that, in accordance with that comprehensive brevity which dis-

* Ἐὰν δὲ ἀμφοτέροι περι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ μὴ λαλώσω, οὕτοι ἐμοὶ στηλαὶ εἶσι καὶ τάφοι νεκρῶν εἰς οἷς γέγραπται μόνον ὄΝΟΜΑΤΑ ἈΝΘΡΩΠΩΝ.
—*S. Ign. ad Philadel.*, s. 6, *Patres Apost.*, Jacobson, Oxon, vol. ii., p. 410.

tinguishes the sacred writings, it might convey both ideas? In that case the substance of the prophecy, stripped of its metaphorical dress, might be expressed thus: "And in that great political and ecclesiastical revolution all honorary titles and social distinctions were abolished; the names whereby men had been wont to confer honour upon certain individuals ceased to exist; all were reduced to one level. And not only were distinctive titles abolished, but the possessors and upholders of them in vast multitudes put to death; many thousands of men of rank and distinction were slain in that revolution; but although they all bore the name of Christians, they had little more of Christianity belonging to them than the name. They were of those who "had the name to live and were dead."

Such is in substance the prophecy. And if such be indeed its meaning, can there be any question as to the historical application and fulfilment? We turn again to the history of the great Continental revolution, in which the witnesses were slain, and what do we read? On the 4th August, 1789, we are told, "The whole privileged classes seemed at once seized with a spirit of the most lavish generosity, and hastened to despoil themselves of all their peculiar immunities and feudal rights. Clergy and laymen vied with each other in the nature and extent of their sacrifices. Privileges, whether prejudicial or harmless, were renounced in the mass."* Thus did the abolition of *names* begin. In this instance, however, the renunciation was voluntary; soon did it become

* It was on hearing what had been done, that Mirabeau, who was not present in the National Assembly on this occasion, made that cutting remark, "This is just like Frenchmen; they spend three months in disputing about syllables, and abolish an ancient monarchy in one night."

compulsory. Again we take up the words of history:—

“With a view to this great experiment on human society,” viz., the attempt to reduce all men to an absolute equality, “the Assembly abolished ALL TITLES OF HONOUR, all armorial bearings, and even the insignificant titles of Monsieur and Madame. The first of these abrogations affected the nobles in particular. *The aristocracy* of France, so long distinguished as the flower of European chivalry, were now, so far as depended on the Legislature, *entirely abolished.*” (“Life of Napoleon,” vol. i., p. 171, 217, 227.)

The *descriptive title*, in short, of everything was changed. All ancient *names* given by men in honour of individuals were obliterated. The name of the Sovereign was changed; the names of the divisions of the kingdom were changed; the names even of the days of the week and the months of the year were changed. “NAMES,” says the historian, “which had existed for years were at once *obliterated.*” Thus not a vestige remained in the language of France of ancient institutions and distinctions; all former recollections, as far as *names* were concerned, were swept away, and “everything brought down to one general level of liberty and equality.”

But the most awful part of the prophecy yet remains. I have shown that the terms employed admit of a twofold application, and may be explained of a literal and figurative slaughter—figurative of the names, literal of the persons. And can it be necessary to prove the fulfilment of it in the latter sense in the events of the Revolution of '89? Who has not heard of the wholesale executions

of that appalling period of human history? Who has not heard of the Reign of 'Terror? Who has not read how at that time the streets of Paris literally flowed with the blood of its richest and noblest citizens? How they were brought out by twenties and fifties at a time, and one after the other without a moment's intermission beheaded? And how, when the guillotine seemed to do its work too slowly, they had recourse to *fusillades* and *noyades*, shooting and drowning their victims by companies,* until upwards of TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND FRENCHMEN, beginning with the King and Royal family, the majority of the remainder being men of *name* and note, were taken off by violent and cruel deaths? † These things are notorious even to a proverb, and therefore need no proofs. Nor is there, I believe, to be found in history any parallel to them. The utter extermination within one year, not only of all titles of honour, but of the bearers of them; the thorough sweeping away of the whole aristocracy of a great nation consisting of thirty millions

* "All ordinary process, and every usual mode of execution, was thought too tardy to avenge the death of a Jacobin proconsul. The Judges of the revolutionary Commission were worn out with fatigue, the arm of the executioner was weary, the very steel of the guillotine was blunted. A more summary mode of slaughter was devised. A number of from two to three hundred victims at once were dragged from prison to the Place de Brotteaux, one of the largest squares in Lyons, and there subjected to a fire of grape shot."—*Ibid*, vol. ii., p. 268.

† The exact number of those who perished by violent deaths in the French revolution has never been ascertained. But when it is considered that at the commencement of the Reign of Terror, *six thousand prisoners* were butchered in four days, and that subsequently in Paris alone fifty persons on an average were guillotined per day, and to this is added the multitudes who perished by hundreds in the provinces, the above cannot but appear a moderate computation.

of people in the short space of six months, is, I believe, an event like to which nothing has ever happened before, and we may hope will never happen again. Truly there were slain in that great earthquake "seven thousand names of men."

But were all who suffered at that time mere *names*? Were they all godless men, having the name of Christians, and nothing more? This it would be uncharitable to affirm. But that the large majority were of this description, and might therefore with strict propriety, taken collectively, be designated "Christian names," not "Christian men," is, I fear, too indisputable a fact to be called in question.

11. "AND THE REST BECAME TERRIFIED, AND GAVE GLORY TO THE GOD OF HEAVEN."—Was this the case? Did the other nations of Europe, when they heard of what was being done in France, "become terrified, and give glory to God?" Every person acquainted with the history of that period will, I imagine, at once admit that the effect produced was precisely that here described. *Terror*, arising from a sense of personal insecurity mixed with a kind of religious awe, was the prevailing feeling of those times. There were few men so deadened to all humanity and so hardened in unbelief, as not to view with indignation and horror the proceedings of the Atheistical faction in France. Few even of the most thoughtless and irreligious who were not occasionally brought on their knees, and like men in a storm at sea, driven by their very terrors to "give glory to the God of heaven." Even Atheists themselves began to be terrified at the horrible form which the monster

they had aided in calling into existence had assumed.* Even those who had been most violent in their denunciations against everything sacred became alarmed, and were ready to admit that there may be “a God who judgeth the earth.”

Thus, then, I trust it has been shown, on the hypothesis that the two witnesses are the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, that every particular in this remarkable prophecy has had its accomplishment in the events of the great French Revolution. Upon the calm and considerate review of the whole subject, I cannot but be struck with astonishment at the accuracy with which every circumstance in the prophetic narrative has been verified in the facts of history. Let the reader carefully compare them one by one together. Surely there is something here more than a number of curious coincidences. The details of the

* In proof of this I would adduce the following extract from a letter addressed by the Earl of Orford (not a religious man) to Mrs. Hannah More, in 1793:—

“Oh! have not the last five years brought to light such infernal malevolence, such monstrous crimes, as mankind had grown civilized enough to disbelieve when they read anything similar in former ages! Louis Seize perishes on a scaffold the best of men; while the assemblies of fiends, *calling themselves men*”—(we can hardly help thinking of the *names* of men),—“are from day to day meditating torment and torture for his widow. But who can wonder when the Almighty himself is called by one of these wretches the *soi-disant* God! You say, these outrageous follies tempt you to smile. Yes, yes; at times I could have laughed too, but their abominations *leave one not leisure enough to leap from indignation to mirth*. That execrable nation overwhelms all moralizing.” (*Life of Mrs. H. More*, vol. ii., p. 383.) These were not the sentiments of an individual only, they were the sentiments more or less of a whole nation. (See Burke’s Essay; also Addendum (2) to this volume

prophecy are minute and circumstantial, yet they are met in all their minuteness and circumstantiality by corresponding historical facts. Can there be any doubt, then, that the prophecy is of Divine origin, or that it has been correctly applied?

Since the above was written, I have met with an exposition of this prophecy by a French minister, published in London in 1688, *a hundred years before* the Revolution, of so remarkable a character, that I am sure the reader will require no apology for its insertion. It silences at once those who might be disposed to object that the foregoing interpretation is fanciful and arbitrary, invented only to serve a particular hypothesis.

On Rev. xi., vers. 11, 12, 13 :—

“ I am much deceived if it doth not signify, that God who is the master of all hearts, shall change the heart of the King and of his Council, and that we shall see a revolution in France. As it is the King of France who contributed most to the glory of the Papacy, so it shall be the King of France who shall contribute most to its ruin. The tenth part of the city shall fall (the *Papal kingdom*). France itself will increase both its strength and glory by that falling off and withdrawing; so that, upon the whole, I do not doubt but that it is the conversion of that beautiful kingdom which is promised in this place. The first event is the death of seven thousand *names of men*, which is a figure where seven thousand *names of men* are put for seven thousand *men of name*, that is, *quality, reputation, and dignity*: these men of name are, doubtless, either the *Doctors*, who make

a great deal of noise in France, in the Sorbonne, in the Society of the Oratory, of the Jesuits, and amongst the clergy, or else *persons of quality who are distinguished from others by their birth and by their honour*; the number of seven thousand denotes an indefinite number, but *very considerable*. The meaning is, that they shall no more dare to write or to speak in favour of Popery against the Reformation, that their Societies shall be put down, and that *they shall banish themselves out of the realm*, all which will be a death unto them; that is, there shall be no more of that kind of Doctors who are now distinguished by societies and fraternities, no more monks, no more Jesuits, and it may be, no more *archbishops*, no more *abbots*, and no more *cardinals*, in this kingdom."

The above is taken from the "Gentleman's Magazine," February, 1793.

The announcement of the speedy coming of the third woe,
chap. xi. 14.

VER. 14.—"THE SECOND WOE HATH PASSED AWAY; BEHOLD, THE THIRD WOE COMETH QUICKLY."

This verse, although it merely declares the second woe to be ended and the third woe to be near at hand, is a most important link in the prophetic chain of the Apocalypse. It comes in, indeed, like a direction post to a traveller, who having proceeded for some length of time without a guide along an unknown intricate road, is beginning to be in doubt whether he may not have taken a wrong turn, and be going backwards instead of forwards. Just thus opportunely, does this announcement meet our eyes at this point of the prophetic history. We have lost sight for some time of the second woe, and we begin

to ask, where is the third woe, the coming of which had been proclaimed simultaneously with the second? Is it past, or is it yet to come? This verse answers these inquiries; and as we are now approaching that period in the Apocalyptic history personally most interesting to us, as relating to our own times, I would crave the reader's indulgence whilst I briefly retrace our steps; and by exhibiting in regular order the links of the chronological chain which has guided us thus far, show the grounds we have for thinking that we have hitherto proceeded in a right direction.

It will be borne in mind, that the seven-sealed book is assumed to be a deed containing the terms of the world's redemption, the seals of which none but the Lamb that had been slain, the mighty *Goel*, who alone could fulfil the awful conditions of man's ransom, had a right to open—that the opening of the seals one by one marks the gradual process by which the world would be restored to its original owner, and man, in the person of the second Adam, the man Christ Jesus, be reinstated in the possession of that earth which the first Adam by sin had forfeited—that the first six seals foreshow the triumphant progress of the Gospel, attended by judgments upon Pagan Rome, concluding with the overthrow of Paganism in the empire—that the seventh seal being opened, after a short pause of peaceful progress, a declension from the truth is prefigured, and judgments, in consequence, announced—that these judgments commence with the sounding of four trumpets in rapid succession, foreshowing the ravages of the nominal Christian Empire by the Huns, and Goths, and other barbarous nations, until, under the fourth trumpet, the Western Empire, or third part of the sun, and

moon, and stars, was extinguished. This brought us to the 12th verse of chap. viii., and, chronologically, to the year A.D. 476. We then were presented (ver. 13) with an angel flying in the midst of heaven, and announcing three more woes yet to come upon the inhabitants of the earth. The ninth chapter contains an account of two of these woes; one of them being the locust woe, which was fulfilled in the rise and establishment of Mohammedism, and the conquests of the Saracens, commencing about the year 600, and ending about 750; and the other that of the Euphratean horsemen, who represent the Ottomans or Turks, which woe began about the year 1000, and attained its height at the taking of Constantinople, A.D. 1458, although it did not *end* then, but was to continue as a woe for a long period after that event. And thus we were brought to the close of the ninth chapter, and, chronologically, to the end of the eighteenth century. We may gather, however, from the announcement we are now considering, that the events prefigured in the tenth chapter, and the first thirteen verses of the eleventh, are *contemporary with*, and not *subsequent to*, the second woe, and therefore that they precede, and are not contemporary with, the third woe. This is a point of great importance, and I would request the reader's particular attention to the proofs on which the assertion rests.

It is obvious, then, I think, that these announcements are inserted simply to assist us in understanding the chronology of the book. They mark *the time when* the events predicted would take place. Viewed in this light, nothing can be more wonderful than the accuracy with which they speak. In order to illustrate

the truth of this remark, let us compare the three announcements together. The first is to this effect: "Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels which are yet to sound." (viii. 13.)

The second runs thus: "One woe is past: and, behold, there come two more woes *hereafter*." (ix. 12.)

The third says: "The second woe is past: behold, the third woe cometh *quickly*." (xi. 14.)

Now, there is surely a nicety and accuracy of language here which may be truly called wonderful. The first announcement simply informs us in general terms of three woes about to come in succession upon the inhabitants of Christendom, without determining in any degree the duration of each, or the period that would intervene between them. The second, having declared that the first woe, the details of which had been given, and the duration of which was limited to a hundred and fifty years, had passed away, says, "Behold, there come two more woes HEREAFTER." Now this word *hereafter* has, in this connexion, a most important meaning. For seeing that the history of the second woe follows *immediately* upon this announcement, we might suppose, were it not for this word *hereafter*, that it would begin instantly upon the cessation of the first, but the use of this word forbids such an expectation, and plainly implies that a considerable space must intervene between the first and second woes. And accordingly, the Turks, who were the instruments of the second woe, did not begin to harass Christendom until two or three centuries after the Saracens had ceased to be formidable.

On the other hand, the third announcement says,

“Behold, the third woe cometh *quickly*.” Now, the meaning of this word *quickly*, here, is no less important than that of the “hereafter,” in the former instance. For since a great deal of matter, several whole chapters, in fact, comes in between this announcement and the third woe, which is not detailed till chap. xvi., were we not told that the third woe would *quickly* follow upon the slaughter of the witnesses, we might have supposed that a long interval would elapse between the two events, and that that interval would be filled up by the circumstances related in the 12th, 13th, and 14th chapters. In order, therefore, to correct this natural, although erroneous, inference, we are admonished, immediately after the details of the *second* woe and its concomitant circumstances are completed, that “the third woe cometh quickly.” I have assumed that this third woe is not detailed until the 16th chapter, and this, I think, is incontestible. For upon the sounding of the seventh trumpet, instead of a woe, we have a song of triumph. Nor do we find anything in the 12th, 13th, or 14th chapters which can be construed as a woe. But when we come to the 15th chapter, there we are presented with seven angels, having “the seven *last* plagues, in which is filled up the wrath of God.” Now, as the third woe is the *last* woe, it is manifest that it corresponds with the seven vials, and that the two are in fact identical. Consequently, the history of the vials, chap. xvi., is the history of the third woe. But if so, then that woe must be subsequent to the slaughter of the witnesses, and its attendant circumstances, all of which must have passed away before the third woe can commence. Now this is a point well deserving the attentive consideration of those

expositors who admit that the third woe began about the period of the French Revolution, and yet think that the slaughter of the witnesses is still future. This appears to me to be an evident inconsistency. If the third woe has indeed *commenced*, the slaughter of the witnesses must be *past*. For nothing, surely, can be plainer, than that all that precedes this declaration, "the second woe *is past*," must be prior in point of time to that third woe, the speedy coming of which is at the same time announced.

There is, however, another point here which must be noticed. This announcement implies that the cessation of the second woe, and the slaughter of the witnesses, with the concomitant circumstances, would be contemporaneous events, and, consequently, according to the foregoing theory, the second, or Turkish woe, must have ceased about the time of the French Revolution. Was this the case? Did the Turks, or Ottomans, cease to be a woe to Papal Christendom simultaneously with the revolution of 1789? Here again the agreement of historical facts with the terms of the prophecy is exact and wonderful. The slaughter of the witnesses took place, as we have seen, in 1793, and the earthquake and its accompaniments occurred also at the same time. And what, then, is the history of the Turkish Empire at this period? In 1787, the Porte declared war with the allied sovereigns of Austria and Russia; and though beaten by the Russians, the Turkish armies gained some advantages over the Austrians. But this was the last time Turkey ever occasioned any alarm to Papal Christendom. In 1791 peace was concluded with Austria, and in 1792, with Russia. Since then the Porte has never ventured to attack any one of the ten kingdoms

belonging to the Papacy, nor has it from that time caused them the slightest alarm. It ceased, in fact, in 1791 to be a woe.

Here, then, is another apparently trivial circumstance strongly corroborative of the foregoing interpretation. The prophecy intimates that the cessation of the second woe, and the slaughter of the witnesses, and the great earthquake attendant thereupon, would be simultaneous events. And, accordingly, the French Revolution, and the renunciation of Christianity by the Legislature, and the last aggressive war of the Turks, took place all within a few months of each other.

I would again commend these things to the reader's earnest attention. Surely there is something inexplicable in all this minuteness of detail and precision of language in so vast and grand a subject, but upon the supposition that St. John wrote under the inspiration of omniscience.

CHAP. XI. 15—18.—THE SEVENTH TRUMPET SOUNDS.

We are now arrived at that part of the Apocalypse which cannot but be deeply interesting to every person who believes this book to be indeed a revelation from God. The sounding of the seventh trumpet brings us to the close of the present dispensation. For it is expressly declared that under this trumpet "the mystery of God,"—*i.e.*, the hidden purpose of God in the Gospel dispensation,—shall be finished. (c. x. 7; see also Ephes. i. 9, 10; 1 Cor. xv. 51—54.) If, therefore, this trumpet has already begun to sound, and we are actually living under it, with what intense interest, with what feelings of *solemn anxiety*, should we enter upon the consideration of the details before us! To take no interest in a subject like this argues something more

than apathy, or even want of faith ; it indicates positive unbelief. May the Spirit of Truth guide us as we endeavour to unfold the meaning of this interesting prophecy !

The immediate results of the sounding of the seventh trumpet are very different from what we should have anticipated. At the close of the eighth chapter, it will be remembered, an angel was seen flying in the midst of heaven, and proclaiming a triple woe about to come upon the inhabitants of the earth "by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels who were yet to sound." Now from this announcement we should have expected that these three trumpets (commonly called woe-trumpets), would be introductory only to troubles ; but instead of this, the seventh, or the third of the woe-trumpets, is followed only by songs of triumph and rejoicing. How, then, it may be asked, can it be a *woe* trumpet ? This apparent inconsistency is easily explained. This trumpet does announce a woe, but that woe is the *last*, and preliminary to the final establishment of Christ's glorious kingdom. And this triumphant song of the elders, therefore, is sung in the way of anticipation. The absorption of the kingdoms of this world in the kingdom of the Lord and his anointed is not the *immediate* but the *ultimate* result of the sounding of the seventh trumpet ; and because such will be the ultimate result, therefore do the elders overleap in their joy the short interval of trouble that must come between, and celebrate the triumph of Christ over all his enemies, as if the victory were already won. It is obvious, however, that a woe of some kind must intervene between the first sounding of the trumpet and this glorious consummation ; and it is no less obvious,

as I have already shown, that the details of this woe are given in chap. xvi. And so far from there being anything contradictory or inconsistent in all this, it is in exact accordance with the rest of this Divine book and the great leading principle on which it is composed and arranged, which is this, to give, first of all, a comprehensive summary of the final issue of each act in the prophetic drama, and afterwards fill up the vacant space with the minuter details. Thus we have at the very commencement of the book, an announcement of the grand closing event of all, the advent of Christ in the clouds of heaven. (Chap. i. 7.) So here, we have in the first instance, the closing scene of the seventh trumpet act announced, the intermediate events which are of a different character being omitted. And the reason of this seems to be, that, as believers, we may have our eyes directed rather to the glorious consummation associated with this trumpet than to the intervening woe. No notice is taken on the first sounding of the trumpet of the woe, because of its comparative insignificance. Compared with the transcendent scene of glory to which it is introductory, it is as nothing. The gloom and sorrow of the one is, as it were, annihilated in the surpassing brightness and joyfulness of the other. Just as the apostle says, speaking generally, “our light affliction which is but for a *moment*, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things *which are seen*, but at the things which are *not seen*.” And hence, I would observe in passing, we may gather, that it is our wisdom and duty to keep the eye of faith steadily fixed upon the future glory and blessedness of the believer, rather than upon the crosses and afflictions which must be first endured. The latter

must not, indeed, be altogether overlooked, but they should not occupy, as they perhaps too often do, the chief place in the prospective vision which must be ever before the mind's eye of those who walk by faith, and not by sight. "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." Let the sufferings, then, in our anticipations, be swallowed up in the glory.

But to return to the prophecy before us. As these four verses are but an epitome of the events under the seventh trumpet, which are so fully detailed hereafter in chapters xvi., xviii., xix., and xx., I shall not now enter into the consideration of them. All that I wish to do is to convince the reader that those chapters are indeed only an amplification of the subject-matter of these four verses. And the proofs of this are very simple. Let the following passages be compared together, and no doubt, I think, can remain upon the mind as to the correctness of this view of the subject:—

Chap. xi. 15.

"And there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever."

Chap. xi. 18.

"And the nations WERE ANGRY, and thy wrath is come."

Chap. xix. 6.

"And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, saying, 'Hallelujah; for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.'"

Chap. xix. 19.

"And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken and the remnant were

slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse."

Chap. xi. 18.

... "And the time of the *dead* that they *should be judged*, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints," &c.

Chap. xx. 4, 12.

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and *judgment* was given unto them, &c.

"And I saw the *dead*, small and great, stand before God : and the *dead were judged* out of those things which were written in the books," &c.

Chap. xi. 18.

"And shouldest destroy those that destroy (or *corrupt*) the earth."

Chap. xix. 2.

... "He hath judged the great harlot, who did *corrupt* the earth. . . . and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand."

The parallelisms in the above passages are palpable and obvious, and they demonstrate beyond all question, that this burst of triumphant exultation which proceeds from the voices in heaven on the sounding of the seventh trumpet, is but an epitome of the contents of the four last chapters of the book.

VER. 19.—" *And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen the ark of his covenant in his temple; and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.*"

This verse is still the continuation of the programme, so to speak, of the events of the seventh trumpet. It contains a condensed summary of what is exhibited in detail in chapters xv. and xvi., and also xx., xxi., and xxii. The opening of the temple, and the exposure of the ark of the covenant to general view, implies the

approach of a new and glorious era. Ordinarily the ark, which was kept in the inner temple, in the most holy place, into which none ever entered but the high priest, was carefully excluded from the public gaze. Its being thrown open, therefore, to all, can signify nothing less than the arrival of that period of blessedness when we shall no longer "see through a glass darkly, but face to face;" when God shall no longer "dwell in the secret place," but openly manifest himself to men; when every opposing barrier of separation being removed, there shall be free and uninterrupted communion between the Lord and his people; and "they shall see his face, and he shall dwell with them, and be their God." (Chap. xxi. 3.) All this is implied in the opened inner temple, and the ark seen within. But a reference to chap. xv. 6—8, where the same imagery is repeated, showing that the subject-matter of the two places is the same, and where it is declared, that "no man could enter into the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled," shows that the discovery of the ark at this time, like the preceding triumphant song of the elders, is anticipative, and that the temple will not be entered, nor the glory of the Lord be visibly displayed, until after the outpouring of the vials of his wrath. And this also is implied in the lightnings and voices, &c., which are the symbols of God's judgments upon the nations of the earth, and intimate the occurrence of great political convulsions, as introductory to the state of blessedness signified by the opening of the temple, and discovery of the ark. In chap. xvi. 18—21, on the outpouring of the seventh vial, we have these symbols repeated, and exactly in the same order in which they here occur. The only

difference is, that *there*, the earthquake and the hail are described more specifically. The earthquake is represented as "greater than any that had ever before been on the earth," and the hail is described as being "each stone the weight of a talent." That that earthquake, however, and hail, are identical with those in the verse under consideration, is manifest from hence, that they constitute a part of the third woe, or seven last plagues, to which alone also the corresponding symbols in this verse can be referred. To enter, therefore, into the consideration of the meaning and application of those symbols here, would be premature. We have before us now but, as it were, the *table of contents*; the proper time for examining their meaning will be when we come to the fuller development contained in the text itself; *i.e.*, in the chapters before mentioned.

And here, then, we pause. We have now arrived at that precise point where the Apocalypse naturally divides itself into two parts. The seventh trumpet brings us to the closing scene of the present dispensation. Upon its sounding, we are carried at once to the final consummation of God's hidden purposes, and voices from heaven proclaim the destruction of all his enemies, and the establishment of his kingdom. Here, therefore, time ends, and eternity begins. And, consequently, all that follows must be *supplemental*. That is to say, the remaining prophecies of the book cannot extend chronologically beyond those which have been already considered. They *must* be comprised *within* the period of the seventh trumpet, and cannot, therefore, carry on the prophetic history beyond it, but must contain only a fuller development of facts and

events the general nature of which has been already declared. They are not altogether *new* pictures, but the filling up of the grand outline already sketched. In contemplating these more finished pictures, this great fact must never be lost sight of—the prophecies which remain to be considered are not *progressive* in respect of time, but *retrospective*; and no scheme of interpretation, therefore, can be correct which makes them extend beyond the boundaries of the seventh trumpet.

ADDENDUM TO VOL. I.

A TRANSLATION OF THE BULL OF POPE PIUS V., DEPOSING QUEEN ELIZABETH, ABSOLVING HER SUBJECTS FROM THE OATHS OF ALLEGIANCE, AND ANATHEMATIZING SUCH AS CONTINUED IN THEIR OBEDIENCE.—(See chap. x. and the Commentary.)

[This is so remarkable a document, and so important in the present day, as illustrating the real character and principles of the Popedom, that I am induced to give a translation of the whole Bull. It would be well if a copy of it were put into the hands of every Englishman. The majority of us know not what Popery is. Here we have it in its own dress, and speaking its own language,—the genuine, undisguised sentiments of its heart. And let it be remembered that the assertions made in this Bull, and the sentiments herein contained, have never been disclaimed. It stands, therefore, to this day a written record of the actual claims and assumptions of the Papacy.]

PIUS THE BISHOP, SERVANT OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD.

He who reigneth on high, to whom all power in heaven and earth is given, hath delivered the one Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, out of which there is no salvation, to one alone in the earth, that is to say, to Peter the chief of the apostles, and to the successor of Peter, the Roman Pontiff, to be governed in the plenitude of his power. Him alone hath he appointed chief over all nations and over all kingdoms, that he may pluck up, destroy, scatter, plant, and build: that he may retain the

faithful people bound together by a bond of mutual charity in unity of Spirit, and present them safe and unhurt to their Saviour. In the discharge of which office, we being called, by the goodness of God, to the government of the aforesaid Church, cease not from our appointed work, striving with all our might that the unity itself and the Catholic religion (which its author for the trial of the faith of his people, and for our correction, hath permitted to be tossed with so great tempests), might be preserved entire.

But the number of the impious hath so increased in strength, that there is now no place left in the world which they have not tried to corrupt by their most vile doctrines; amongst others, THAT SLAVE OF INIQUITY (*flagitiorum serua*), ELIZABETH, the pretended Queen of England, lending them her assistance, to whom our most bitter enemies have fled as to a place of refuge. This same woman having seized the kingdom, monstrously usurping to herself the place of the supreme head of the Church in all England, and its chief authority and jurisdiction, hath brought back the kingdom itself to wretched destruction after it had been but just restored to the Catholic faith and good fruits. For she having prohibited the practice of the true religion, which Mary, the lawful Queen of illustrious memory, after it had been overturned by the apostate (*desertore*) Henry the Eighth, had repaired under the guardianship of this see, and having embraced and followed the errors of the heretics, hath dissolved the Royal Council composed of the nobility of England, and filled it with obscure men of those sentiments; hath oppressed the worshippers of the Catholic faith, and hath restored the wicked (*improbos*) preachers and ministers of iniquity; hath abolished the sacrifice of the mass, prayers, fasts, distinction of meats, celibacy, and Catholic rites—hath commanded books containing manifest heresy to be proposed to the whole kingdom, and impious mysteries and institutes, according to the prescriptions of Calvin, to be observed by her subjects—having daringly ejected Bishops, the rulers of the Church, and other Catholic priests, from their churches and benefices, and disposed of them and other ecclesiastical things to

heretics, and given judgment concerning ecclesiastical causes—hath forbidden the Prelates and clergy and people to acknowledge the Roman Church, and to obey its commands and canonical rules—hath compelled many to come into her nefarious laws, and to abjure the authority of the Roman Pontiff, and to acknowledge her, by oath, as sole mistress (*dominam*), both in temporal and spiritual things—hath imposed pains and penalties on those who should refuse obedience, and exacted the same of those who persisted in the unity of the faith, and in the aforesaid obedience—hath cast the Catholic Prelates and ecclesiastical rulers into chains, where many, worn out with sickness and sorrow, have ended their days wretchedly :

All which things being too well known amongst all nations, and resting upon too unquestionable proofs, to admit of any excuse, defence, or tergiversation,—we, seeing that impieties and misdeeds are continually multiplied, and added one upon another ; and, moreover, that the persecution of the faithful and depression of religion, at the command and by the aid of the said Elizabeth, is daily growing worse ; since we hear that her mind is so hardened that she not only despises the entreaties and admonitions of Catholic princes, urging her to return to the right way, but does not even permit the Nuncios of this See concerning this matter to pass over into England ; being driven of necessity to have recourse to the arms of justice against her, we cannot soothe the pain we feel in being obliged to pass sentence (*animadvertere*) upon one whose ancestors have deserved so much of the Christian republic.

Supported, therefore, by His authority who hath willed to place us, although unequal to so great a work, on this supreme Throne of Justice, in the plenitude of the apostolical power, we declare the aforesaid Elizabeth a heretic, and a favourer of heretics, and that those who adhere to her in the matters aforesaid, have incurred the sentence of excommunication (*anathematis sententiam*), and are cut off from the unity of the body of Christ. Moreover, that she herself be deprived of her pretended right to the aforesaid kingdom, also of all and every kind of dominion, dignity, and privilege ; and likewise we

release the nobles, subjects, and people of the said kingdom, and all others who have in any way sworn allegiance to her, for ever from such oath, and from all obligation of dominion, fidelity, and obedience, by the authority of these presents; and we deprive the said Elizabeth of her pretended right to the kingdom, and all other rights aforesaid; and we command and charge all and singular nobles, subjects, people, and others aforesaid, that they DARE NOT TO OBEY HER, NOR HER ADMONITIONS, COMMANDS, OR LAWS. Whosoever shall act otherwise, we bind with a like sentence of excommunication. But since it would be too difficult a work to convey these our presents everywhere, we will that copies of them, made by the public notary, and marked with the seal of the Ecclesiastical Prelate, or his Court, have the same authority, both within and without our jurisdiction, wherever it may be, as these presents themselves would have if they were exhibited or shown.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, in the year of the Lord's Incarnation, One Thousand Five Hundred and Sixty-nine, on the Fifth of March, in the Fifth year of our Pontificate.

Cæ. Glorierius,

II. HUMYN.

Such is the famous Bull of Pius V. against our Queen Elizabeth.* Well would it be if it were printed as a handbill, and posted on the walls of every house and cottage in the kingdom. It requires no comment. The plain common sense of every Englishman will know how to interpret and apply it.

* The translation is made from the Latin of the original Bull, as given by Burnet in his "History of the Reformation," in the Collection of Records, No. 9.

ADDENDUM (2).

REFERRED TO PAGE 454.

Apoc. xi. 13.—“*And the rest became terrified, and gave glory to the God of heaven.*” In further confirmation of the interpretation I have given of this clause, I subjoin the following letters, extracted from the “Gentleman’s Magazine” for 1794. Having accidentally lighted upon them in looking over the records of that period, they struck me as so exceedingly interesting and affecting in themselves, and so strikingly illustrative of the view taken in the commentary of the general bearing of the prophecy, that I could not feel satisfied without endeavouring to rescue them from that obscurity in which they have long been buried. After having perused them, my readers will, I am sure, require no apology for their insertion. The contributor of the article to which they belong thus introduces them to our notice:—

“It is astonishing how little of what is going forward in that neighbouring nation, to which the eyes of all Europe are now turned, is known on this side the Channel. Indeed, the frontiers of it are so strictly guarded by its jealous tyrants, that it is hardly possible to keep up any communication with it. It is generally supposed that Christianity is entirely eradicated out of France, in consequence of the bloody persecution which has long been carried on against it; and not a minister of religion is now to be found, at least engaged in his functions, in that vast country. Those persons who entertain this idea will be surprised to hear that a great majority of the French nation still inviolably adhere to the faith of their ancestors; that the present persecution has only served to confirm their belief, *and to purify their lives*: that there are many zealous *missioners* in every part of France, who, in defiance of the guillotine, which is ever reeking with the blood of some of their number, continue to exercise their heroic ministry; and,

what is most extraordinary, that innumerable conversions to the cause of Christianity are constantly made AMONGST THOSE WHO WERE THE DECLARED FOES OF IT WHEN IT WAS PROTECTED BY ALL THE POWER OF THE STATE. Many proofs of that I assert have come within my knowledge. Amongst these, I think it will not be unacceptable to your readers if I lay before them certain extracts in English, from three French letters written at Marseilles, according to the dates here put down. They were written by a zealous *missioner* in that diocese to the Vicar-General of the same, who was then a refugee in Switzerland; and the conveyance of the last of the three to its destination, though at no very great distance, *cost fifty Louis* in specie. I can answer for their authenticity. The necessity, however, of concealing names and other circumstances will be readily admitted.

“Yours, &c.,

“J. M——R.”

EXTRACT FROM THE FIRST OF THE AFORESAID LETTERS,
DATED MARCH 4, 1794.

“Our affairs go on very ill. All good people are here murdered, sometimes to the number of seventeen at a time. Religion is abolished, the churches are destroyed, and the figure of Christ crucified is dragged through the streets and pelted by the very children. My heart will not permit me to tell you the rest. I come now to speak of myself. I have made an offering of my life to God, and have taken the Holy Sacraments by way of *viaticum*, or preparation for my exit. Thus armed, I go about from house to house, and, raising the crucifix which I usually wear at my breast, I exclaim, ‘My brethren, take your part; will you or will you not adhere to Jesus Christ?’ The answer is generally in the affirmative. ‘Well then,’ I rejoin, ‘prepare yourselves to martyrdom; I come to assist you in this preparation.’ Clothed like a shepherd of the country, with my assistant, the late intruding priest of ——, who, like St. Peter, endeavours to atone for his fall with

constant floods of tears, I assemble the Catholics to the number of 300 at a time, in the caverns of ———; there, whilst the trickling drops from the moist ceiling bedew our heads, I perform the several services of the Church, and administer the sacraments to the whole company; after which, approaching to me by two and two at a time, they swear that they will confess the name of Christ on the scaffold, and in his cause will shed the last drop of their blood. This band being dismissed, another equally numerous succeeds, when the same services and ceremonies take place. In conclusion, all the faithful thank me and embrace me, as those of Ephesus did St. Paul when he left them for the last time. It is impossible to conceive how affecting this scene is without being witness to it; I have scarcely any time for eating, and as to sleep, I have now been forty-eight hours a stranger to it, having been taken up all this time in the labours of my ministry. I never could have conceived that these labours, amidst the impending dangers of death, were so full of comfort. If I see you again, I shall have many edifying details to give you.”

EXTRACT FROM THE SECOND LETTER, DATED MARCH 7.

“Idolatry is here publicly established. Several worthless ministers have abjured their religion and their priesthood, and have even denied the existence of a God. Ricaud, the intruding Vicar-General, has been guillotined, but he revoked the civic oath before he suffered. Francion has died for the faith, as have already above 200 lay persons. My assistant in his whole deportment presents the most striking model of a true penitent. He fasts every day upon bread and water, and sometimes passes almost the whole of the twenty-four hours upon his knees. This is the very centre of faith and Christian heroism. Present my duty to the Bishops of ———, and beg their blessing in order to strengthen me. To-night I go to kiss the guillotine persuaded that it will soon be my fate. But God enables me to exult at the prospect.”

EXTRACT FROM THE THIRD LETTER, DATED MARCH 9.

“The face of this city is wonderfully changed. EVERY ONE NOW SPEAKS OF GOD, and prayer and penance take place of worldly amusements and the pursuit of wealth. I have hardly any time for sleep, having been these four or five days employed without interruption in the functions of my ministry. And who, think you, have been the subjects of it? OUR FASHIONABLE PRETENDERS TO PHILOSOPHY and superior understanding; MEN WHO HITHERTO RIDICULED EVERY PRACTICE OF RELIGION, and who are now taken up in fervently repeating David’s Psalms of penance. I am bedewed with the tears of those who once treated all religion as folly, and who now are possessed of the humble faith of a peasant. I own my heart warms for these extraordinary penitents. I am enchanted with their piety, and, instead of reproaches, I commonly address them in some such terms as the following:—*My dear friends and brethren, &c.*

“I have found young men who lately were in a scandalous degree luxurious, sensual, worldly, and incredulous, now with a catechism in their hands, learning the first elements of their religion, and spending the greatest part of the day in prayer. I leave you to judge of their interior dispositions by the following sentiments which, amongst others of the same nature, I have frequently heard them repeat:—‘My God,’ some cry out, ‘it is in thy mercy thou hast humbled us: but for our present misfortunes we should have ever remained strangers to the consolations which thou hast reserved to those who are faithful to thee.’ Another exclaims, ‘Now that I am so happy, O God, as to have recovered thy favour, let the bloodthirsty Infidels come and seize me when they will.’ A third sighs out, ‘Call us, O Lord, to thyself, that we may never more offend thee.’

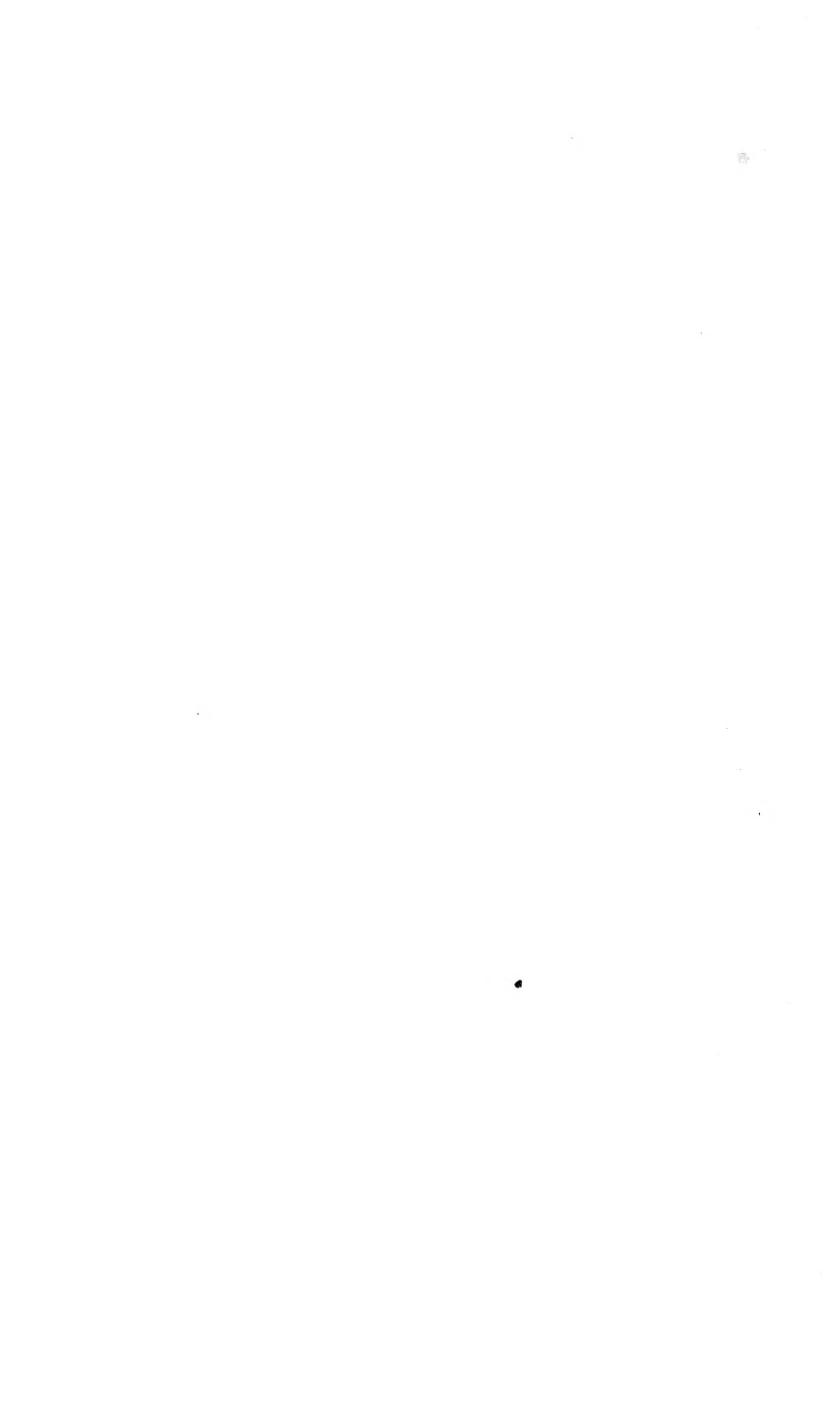
“I now comprehend that passage of the prophet, *Quam speciosi pedes evangelizantium pacem!* No pleasure upon earth can be compared with that of preaching the name of Christ in the midst of persecution. Such is my present occupation, and such are the wonders that God works in our unhappy country. From the merciful heart of an insulted and blasphemed Redeemer

I salute you, who have the honour to remain, &c."—*Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. lxiv., p. 1071.

These letters require no comment. One thing only I would have the reader specially remark. There is no mention of St. Peter, or the Virgin Mary, or any of the saints; *glory is given to the God of heaven*, and to none other.

END OF VOLUME I.





BS2825 J54 v.1
Rationale apocalypticum;

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 00014 1103